

Building and district administrator perceptions of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives

by

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B.S., Fort Hays State University, 2012

M.S., Fort Hays State University, 2014

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine building and district administrators' perceptions of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Their awareness and experiences may influence how administrators understand, plan for, and align the current approach for reading instruction within their respective buildings or district in relation to the dyslexia requirements. While other studies have documented the perceptions of teachers, principals, parents, and other stakeholder's understanding of dyslexia, there appeared to be limited research that related specifically to Kansas' efforts to address dyslexia in the public-school setting.

The study aims to answer three research questions. First, what factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives? Second, how do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives? The overarching research question for this study explored administrators' understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

A rural, kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade Kansas public school district was selected for this study. Five school personnel -- a superintendent, a director of special education, and three building principals -- were first surveyed to identify demographic information of the participants, role in the school system, and years of experience in school/district leadership. Research participants were then interviewed to share their knowledges of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, past and current reading instructional practices, and efforts to adhere to the initiatives. A review of relevant documents provided by the school district was completed.

Data analysis utilized Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis. After interviews were transcribed verbatim data analysis begun by reading all transcriptions, making sense of the transcribed data, and listing all of the topics and clustering similar topics together. Then,

columns were created with clustered topics. Topics were abbreviated as codes and included next to the appropriate segments.

Five themes were discovered during this study: (a) need for quality and effective professional development, (b) time constraints to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, (c) availability of resources to intervene for students with dyslexia, (d) alignment of curriculum to satisfy necessary instructional changes, and (e) difficulty of change.

The study includes descriptive data from surveys, interviews, and review of artifacts that further the knowledge in the field of education related to efforts to assist students with dyslexia. Based on the findings, I identified 15 implications for teaching and learning, administrators, and the Kansas State Department of Education.

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Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Lotta C. Larson

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## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

In 2018, the Kansas Legislature created a Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia to advise and make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) regarding the use of evidence-based practices for students with dyslexia. These recommendations by the Dyslexia Task Force, approved in November 2019 unanimously by the KSBE, resulted in reading initiatives that school districts in the state of Kansas must meet to be accredited. Reading initiatives required professional learning to include the science of reading and structured literacy with the purpose of changing reading instruction practices in the general education setting (Kansas State Department of Education, 2021). Administrators -- including superintendents, principals, and curriculum directors -- are involved in the task of leading instructional changes to implement in their school districts/buildings. These decisions not only guide what content is presented to students, they can also influence the instructional strategies that are employed by educators in the classroom (Pak et al., 2020; Gibson & Brooks, 2012).

This qualitative study will examine building and district administrators' experience in the implementation of the recommendations by the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force. Qualitative data was collected through a survey and interviews with building and district administrators in a rural Kansas school district. Discussion in this chapter is organized in the following sections: (1) overview of the issues; (2) statement of the problem; (3) purpose of the study; (4) research questions; (5) significance of the study; (6) limitations of the study; (7) subjectivity and positionality statement; (8) definition of terms; (9) organization of the study, and (10) summary.

## Overview of the Issues

Dyslexia is a specific neurological learning disability that primarily affects an individual's language skills; including reading, spelling, and written expression (Lyon et al., 2003; Ward-Lonergan & Duthie, 2018). Individuals who have dyslexia, experience problems with accurate and/or fluent word recognition along with poor spelling and decoding abilities (International Dyslexia Association, 2020). Consequences of these difficulties can include struggles with reading comprehension and/or written expression, and limited vocabulary growth due to reduced reading experiences. Students who do not receive necessary intervention to address their needs are at risk of negative outcomes (Ward-Lonergan & Duthie, 2018).

The effects of dyslexia vary from person to person, both in characteristics of symptoms and the degree of severity (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2019). The cause of dyslexia continues to be debated, though the consensus of medical professionals is that it can be linked to certain genes that affect how the brain processes reading and language. Other risk factors include premature birth or low birth weight, exposure during pregnancy to nicotine, drugs, alcohol, or infection that may alter brain development, and individual differences in the parts of the brain that enable reading (Mayo Clinic, 2017).

According to Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2020), about 15-20% of the population exhibit characteristics of dyslexia. Additionally, 80% of students who are identified for special education services under the term "specific learning disabilities" are identified as possessing characteristics of dyslexia (Rief & Stern, 2010). The characteristics of dyslexia can depend on the age and educational level of the individual. Typically, students exhibit several characteristics that persist over time (IDA, 2020).

Challenges in reading ability can have a significant impact on the educational progress of students throughout their lives. Early identification in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of these challenges can identify students who need targeted intervention of specific reading skills and/or the nature of the reading instruction that they receive (IDA, 2020). The lack of early identification for individuals creates a risk of a downward spiral of reading achievement, where students who struggle continue to struggle and fall further and further behind. Prevention of a negative Matthew effect in reading, where the poor-get-poorer, is imperative as students advance into more difficult reading material without the necessary skills to be successful (Tunmer & Greaney, 2010). A negative Matthew effect in reading is not only disadvantageous for individuals who are slow starters, but it also creates a wide gap between fast starters and those who struggle (Stanovich, 1986). According to the hypothesis, proficient readers improve their reading skills at a faster rate than poor readers over a period of time because proficient readers read more fluently and have stronger decoding and word recognition skills (Protopapas et al., 2011).

In response, the Kansas Legislature created a 19-member Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia in 2018. The task force was comprised of individuals from KSBE, the Kansas House of Representatives and the Kansas Senate, and the Kansas Department of Education staff, as well as university faculty, K-12 education professionals, and parents. In November 2019, the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force made recommendations to the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE), which were approved unanimously. Those recommendations included preservice, professional learning, screening and evaluation, and evidence-based practices.



## Statement of the Problem

In a small school district, an administrator's time and attention can be divided into multiple different directions, including but not limited to instructional leadership for teachers, business and community stakeholder engagement, disciplining and advising students, providing a safe school and environment, and the daily operation of the school or system. Furthermore, educational professionals face pressure from policymakers, business leaders, and parent groups to improve student achievement (O'Donnell, 2008).

The Kansas State Board of Education has set requirements for K-12 schools including professional learning opportunities, utilization of structured literacy teaching methods, implementation of a tiered instructional model, and screening of students to identify those at risk of dyslexia (KSDE, 2021). These requirements are incorporated into the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) model, which K-12 schools must complete in order to be a recognized accredited school system in the state of Kansas. District and building leaders guide their respective schools through the KESA accreditation model.

Reading instructional practices change as one instructional reading approach shifts to another through debate with educational stakeholders and policymakers (Pearson, 2004). Pearson (2004) created the term *Reading Wars* to describe changes to reading instructional practices. Recently, debate has centered about the merits and effectiveness of the phonics approach, whole-language approach, and balanced literacy.

One must understand the present beliefs of reading instruction and the push for explicit, systematic instruction. Additionally, one must understand the history of the discussion in order to have a holistic view of the issues. The experience, knowledge, and beliefs of administrators vary among individuals. Concurrently, shifting from one approach to another is both methodological

and philosophical. Knowing the current instructional practices and understanding of reading instruction methods are essential to determine the shift to explicit, systematic phonics instruction that the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives seeks to change.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine building and district administrators' awareness and views of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. The experience and understanding of the various approaches to reading may differ, and similarities may arise. These experiences may influence how administrators understand, plan for, and align the current approach for reading instruction within their respective buildings or district in relation to the dyslexia requirements.

The involvement of key stakeholders in curriculum and instructional decisions is abundant. Allen and Seaman (2017) found through their survey of 584 school districts in 48 states, that most all districts include teachers, district-level administrators, and principals in the adoption process. Teachers have decision-making power in 94% of districts, followed by 75% of district-level administrators, and 73% of principals. However, although parents were included in half of the districts, only 18% held any decision-making power in the adoption process (Allen & Seaman, 2017).

External influences, government leaders, and special interest groups are also present in curricular decisions. Federal policies and state mandates affect curricular decisions as consequences for school systems exist for failure to meet political efforts (Sun et al., 2013; Ylimaki, 2012). Politics from decision-makers has greatly influenced reading instructional practices during the last century from the whole-language approach to balanced literacy to explicit, systematic instruction (Schoenfeld, 2009).

The process of proposing curriculum recommendations or instructional methods can be viewed as a shift, or change, from one set of norms to another. Change is defined as a “movement from one state to another” (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 288). Further, change can be classified as either being first-order change in which changes are made within the existing framework, without requiring changing basic assumptions, or a second-order change that is transformational requiring the adoption of new beliefs and values. The way one perceives change can also determine if it is first- or second-order change. If the change is viewed as disruptive, it would be considered a second-order change (Goodwin, 2015). Curriculum decisions and changes to instructional methods can be viewed as either a first- or second-order change contingent on what is being altered and how the change is being viewed.

In instance of changes to curriculum and instructional strategies initiated by external influences, emphasis should be focused on the purpose of the changes. Understanding the purpose and benefit of proposed changes can lead to greater buy-in among stakeholders. By doing so, the professional development efforts become needs-focused rather than the view of a mandate by a higher-decision maker (Kempf, 2015).

## **Research Questions**

Specifically, this qualitative study examined building administrators’ and district administrators’ experience in the implementation of the recommendations of the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force. Through a qualitative approach, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?”

**RQ2:** How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

**Overarching Question:** What are administrators understanding of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

### **Significance of the Study**

The selection and implementation of adopting a new curriculum and teaching methods present a significant and important challenge to school systems as the adoption of a new curriculum could potentially impact what thousands of students are taught and learn (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Additionally, curricula decisions not only guide what content is presented to students, they can also influence the instructional strategies that are employed by educators in the classroom (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Pak et al., 2020). Together, the outcome of curricular decisions carries a noteworthy weight on the stakeholders involved (Flores, 2005).

With the focus by the Kansas State Department of Education on shifting reading instruction in Kansas public schools to a systematic, explicit approach, a qualitative study of the change may illuminate similarities and differences of such change between various administrators. If this change is to be effective, then understanding the past and present educational experiences of building and district leaders who are leading the change is necessary. Teachers may respond differently to different changes and by different leaders of the change (Sun et al., 2013; Ylimaki, 2012). Flores (2005) argued that a new mindset for schools regarding change is needed in which the concept of ‘ownership of the change’ is employed. To do this, effective communication between educators and leaders is essential to develop motivation towards change that is personally held.

This study may provide information and be beneficial to policymakers, educational leaders, and teachers who are involved in first-order change regarding curricular and/or instructional strategies. This study seeks to explore the connection between a statewide reading initiative and experiences of building and district administrators. Contributing to current literature and research, this study attempts to build a link between changes in reading instruction through the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives and understanding the perception of Kansas educational leaders' understanding of various reading approaches.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research study has several limitations to consider. First, the sample size is small and limited to one, rural school district in Kansas. The participants in this study were purposefully selected. Therefore, the results and conclusions discussed may not apply to other areas with different population demographics, population, and resources.

The second limitation is that I also serve as a building administrator and curriculum director in the school district potentially participating in the study. In those roles, I guide educators within the district on the selection of various content curriculums, including reading and English-Language Arts. In addition, I have attended and participated in required Dyslexia trainings with the research study participants.

### **Subjectivity and Positionality Statement**

I was previously an elementary education teacher who implemented balanced literacy principles within my classroom. balanced literacy was used during both core instruction and during reading-intervention time with students. My pre-service education was influenced by this approach to reading as it was a focus within reading methods courses.

Because I am employed in the school district where this study occurred, I have professional relationships with the research participants. The superintendent in this study is my direct supervisor, and I report to the special education director on issues related to special education. I also have been a mentor to one of the building principals in their first year as an administrator. My experiences in the district have given me great insight as a researcher in this study. I tried to address potential biases by relying on documented notes and interviews to accurately reflect the perceptions of subjects in this study.

I also hold the belief that local control of education is a key principle of education in the United States. I also believe that the “one size fits all” approach to education policy is not effective without allowing for adaptations due to school population, demographics, and needs. Therefore, I skeptically question curricular mandates from policymakers as to their purpose and effectiveness.

### **Definition of Terms**

Many of the following terms are relevant in the area of reading and literacy. Acronyms are frequently used in literature. The following definitions provide understanding for the terminology used in this study.

**Balanced literacy:** an immersion in literature and literacy experiences combined with instruction in literacy skills and strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

**Comprehension:** the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read (International Reading Association, 2003).

**Dyslexia:** A specific neurological learning disability that primarily affects an individual’s written language skills; including reading, spelling, and written expression. (Lyon et al., 2003; Ward-Lonergan & Duthie, 2018).

**Elementary students:** For this study, elementary students are individuals enrolled in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Fluency:** the capacity to read text accurately and quickly (International Reading Association, 2003).

**Guided reading:** small group instruction using leveled texts that are at the student's instructional level (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

**Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and Alignment (MTSS):** MTSS is a set of evidence-based practices to rapidly address student's academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. (KSDE, 2019).

**Literacy:** reading, writing, and the acts involved in comprehending texts (International Reading Association, 2003).

**Phonemic awareness:** the ability to hear and identify sounds in spoken words (International Reading Association, 2003).

**Phonics:** the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language (International Reading Association, 2003).

**Professional development:** the training of a teacher post-certification or post-licensure.

**Simple View of Reading (SVR):** a method of reading instruction that focuses on two basic components, word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension, to acquire reading comprehension ability (Lonigan et al., 2018).

**Strategies:** rereading, self-monitoring, syntactic cues, visual cues, and one-to-one matching are problem-solving strategies (Flynt & Cooter, 2004).

**Vocabulary:** the words students must know to communicate effectively (International Reading Association, 2003).

**Whole language:** a method of teaching children to read by recognizing words as whole pieces of language (Alwerger et al., 1987).

## **Organization of the Study**

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to introduce the study. Included in this chapter are an overview of the issues, statement of the problem, purpose of the student, significance of the study, methodology, research questions, definition of terms, summary, and an organization of the study.

The literature review included in Chapter 2 contains past, relevant scholarly work and resources available surrounding the topic of dyslexia, the science of reading, state and federal legislation, and the role of an educational leader. Specifically, subtopics will consist of theory and research of the background of dyslexia, various approaches to reading instruction, and relevant laws and legislation related to the topic. This chapter provides a critical analysis of the previous scholarly research, trends and debates of dyslexia, and gaps in the current knowledge in order to provide a clear picture of the current state of research.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research, a rationale for qualitative research, a description of research design, research site and participation, means of data collection, means of data analysis, and ethical considerations. An overview of the research participants is also provided.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research study after the collection and analysis of the data. A detailed description of the data collection analysis is given. Organized by research question, themes are identified for each question.

Lastly, Chapter 5 offers discussion on the conclusions of each research question and the alignment to the theoretical framework. Implication for teaching and learning, administrators,



and the Kansas State Department of Education is provided. Finally, recommendation for future research and an epilogue are included at the conclusion of the chapter.

### **Summary**

This study seeks to determine similarities and differences in how building and district administrators describe, understand, coordinate, and align the various approaches to reading as represented in the building or district in relation to the dyslexia initiatives. Administrators were charged by the Kansas State Board of Education in 2019 with the task of leading instructional changes to implement the recommendation by the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force in their school districts and buildings. Reading initiatives require professional learning to include the science of reading and structured literacy with the purpose of changing reading instruction practices in the general education setting and influence the instructional strategies that are employed by educators in the classroom. These reading initiatives must be met by school districts in Kansas to be accredited. Qualitative data will be collected through a survey and interviews with building and district administrators in a rural Kansas school district. This qualitative study examined building and district administrators' experience in the implementation of the recommendations by the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force (KSDE, 2021).

## **Chapter 2 - Review of Literature**

The literature review for this study was organized into six sections. The first section addressed the theoretical framework for this qualitative study. The second section discussed the role of an educational leader. The third section outlined different approaches to reading. Next, an overview of dyslexia is offered. Federal and state laws concerning special education and dyslexia are provided in the fifth section. The sixth and final section contains history and requirements of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Cognitive-Processing Perspective**

Cognitive-processing frameworks attempt to explain “the internal workings of the mind as individuals engage in complex mental activities” (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p.193). More specifically, cognitive processing examines how information is stored and retrieved in the mind (Rosenshine, 1995). Information-processing theories and models are a subset of cognitive processing frameworks and describe how the mind processes, stores, and retrieves knowledge (Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin, American-born psychologists, proposed the Information-Processing Model in 1968. Atkinson and Shiffrin’s model illustrated information moving through different stages as it is processed, learned, saved, and retrieved through executive control processes, which include sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. As information is received, it moves first through the sensory memory where perception of the information takes place. It then is quickly moved into the temporary short-term memory where it is combined with knowledge from long-term memory. It is learned and saved in the long-term memory where it can be stored for retrieval by the mind. Attention is critical to

Atkinson and Richard's Information-Processing Model, as only information that receives sufficient attention when it is in the short-term memory will be stored in the long-term memory (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1977).

Phillip Gough, an American-born psychologist, applied information-processing models like Atkinson and Shiffrin's to reading acquisition (Dreyer & Katz, 1992). In Gough's Model, which has been modified and renamed as The Simple View, information moves through different stages including the iconic image, character register, phonemic tape, primary memory, and syntactic and semantic rules. Gough proposed that as an individual reads, information is received as an image and identified as a letter. Phonemes are attached to the letter, combined with other phonemes, and then, the mind searches for meaning. This model proposes that reading comprehension is the result of decoding skills and language comprehension (Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

### **Instructional Leadership Theory**

In *The Managerial Imperative and the Practice of Leadership in Schools*, Larry Cuban (1988) stated that "there are more than 350 definitions of leadership but no clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders (p. 190)." In education, leadership, management, and administration are concepts essential to school leadership that have similar definitions, though they differ in their focus. Examples of the three concepts include improving teacher, student, and school performance (leadership), continued effort of systems in place (management), and other lower-order duties (administration) (Dimmock, 1999).

The term *instructional leadership* became prevalent in the late 1970's and early 1980's as research was conducted on effective schools (Hallinger, 2010). Instructional leadership is an approach used by leaders to focus teachers' attention and efforts on tasks that indirectly impact

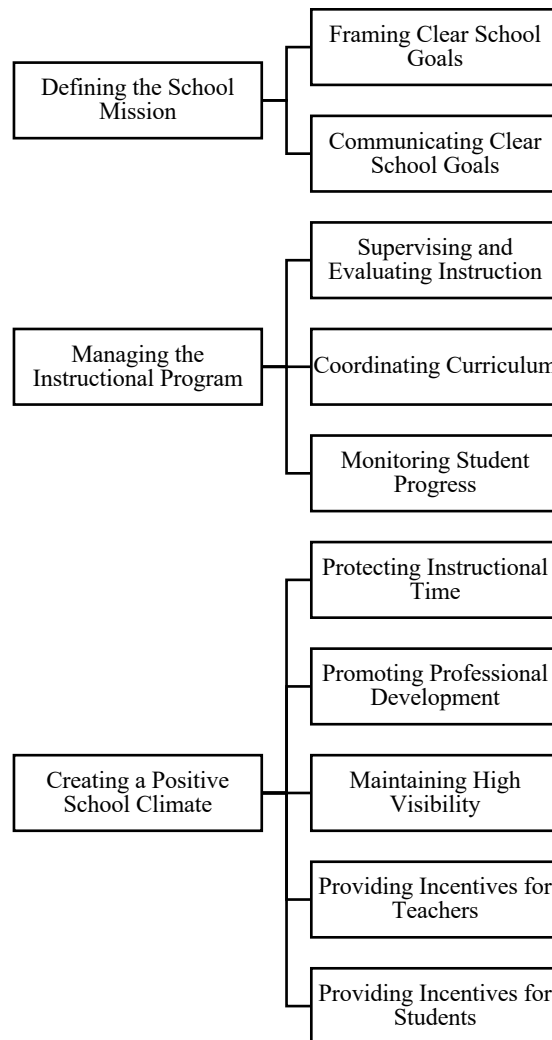
student learning and school performance (Ismail et al., 2018). As opposed to other leadership theories like transformational leadership, the emphasis is on the direction and impact of the leader on student achievement rather than on the processes themselves (Hallinger, 2010; NCSL, 2003).

The Instruction Leadership Theory by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) will be used in this study. Broadly speaking, this theory includes three dimensions for the instructional leadership of the leader to improve student achievement through defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and a creating positive school climate. Within each dimension, more specific functions of the leader's behavior and practices are identified (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Ismail et al., 2018).

Defining the school mission is the first dimension of the Instructional Leadership Theory. In this dimension, the focus of the instructional leader is to clearly define a clear mission of the school that is appropriate to the needs of the school's population. Two functions are incorporated within this dimension: framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals, with the purpose of having the mission articulated to all stakeholders, actively supported, and modeled by the leader (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Next, managing the instructional program is a dimension of an instructional leader. Functions included in the second dimension are supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. This dimension requires the leader to have expertise of the curriculum's content and developmental level of the student population. As this theory has evolved and been implemented in schools, the focus has shifted from the leader having control of teaching to the development of teaching through research-based practices (Hallinger, 2010).

The final dimension of the Instructional Leadership Theory is Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate. Several functions of the leader are included within this dimension as it is broader in scope and purpose. Functions include protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, developing high expectations and standards, and providing incentives for learning.



**Figure 1. Instructional leadership framework (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).**

As noted previously, instructional leadership has evolved since the 1980s as it has fallen in and out of favor with leaders, policymakers, and researchers (National College for School

Leadership, 2003; Kwan, 2020). In addition to the three dimensions and functions, a large component of instructional leadership includes modeling, mentoring, and monitoring (Southworth, 2009). Southworth (2009) also described instructional leadership as learning-centered leadership as the school leader's efforts must be focused primarily on teaching and learning.

Critics of this theory question whether an individual leader can possess this requirement, especially in schools with a large student population and secondary, content-centered schools (Cuban, 1988). Leithwood (1994) wrote that "instructional leadership images are no longer adequate because they are heavily classroom focused and do not address second order changes" (p. 499). Further criticism of the instructional leadership model is that it does not address other influences of school life, such as socialization, student welfare and student self-esteem (Leithwood, 1994).

### **The Role of the Educational Leader**

The role of an administrator in a school system continually has evolved in recent years as new requirements are placed upon schools to increase student success (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). In assessing the role of a school principal, Davis, Darling-Hammond, and Myers (2005) wrote:

More than ever, in today's climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interest of parents,

teachers, students, district office officials, unions, state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs. As a result, many scholars and practitioners argue that the job requirements far exceed the reasonable capacities of any one person. (p. 4)

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLCS) were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in the mid-1990s to create a framework for redefining school leadership. Since 1996, forty-three states have used ISLLCS in their entirety or as a template (Murphy & Shipman, 1998). The standards are highly regarded by a diverse and important collation of policymakers, practitioners, and researchers (Davis et al., 2013). In response to the changing roles and responsibilities of educational leaders, they were revised in 2015 as the “Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.” The new standards were created and approved by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in conjunction with the Council of Chief State School Officers (Smylie & Murphy, 2018).

After the adoption of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders in 2015, a committee of practitioners, state department of education representatives, and high education faculty began to develop the National Education Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards that were specific to either building leadership or district leadership. The NELP standards incorporate four principles: the learner and learning, content, instructional practice, and professional responsibility (NPBEA, 2018). Although the NELP standards include building- or district-specific focus, they both include the following:

1. Mission, Vision, and Improvement: Collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values

and priorities that include data use, technology, equity, diversity, digital citizenship, and community.

2. Ethics and Professional Norms: Understand and demonstrate the capacity to advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms.
3. Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness: Develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive school culture.
4. Learning and Instruction: Evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, data systems, supports, assessment, and instructional leadership.
5. Community and External Leadership: Engage families, community, and school personnel in order to strengthen student learning, support school improvement, and advocate for the needs of their school and community.
6. Operations and Management: Improve management, communication, technology, shared governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.
7. Internship: Complete an internship under the supervision of knowledgeable, expert practitioners that engages candidates in multiple and diverse school settings and provides candidates with coherent, authentic, and sustained opportunities to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills identified in NELP standards 1–7 in ways that approximate the full range of responsibilities required of building/district leaders and enable them to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult in their school.



8. Policy, Governance, and Advocacy (District-level only): Cultivate relationships, lead collaborative decision making and governance, and represent and advocate for district needs in broader policy conversations (NPBEA, 2018).

In 2007, the Wallace Foundation released a report titled *Educational Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform* to bring together key stakeholders in American education to discuss what was needed to improve district and school leadership. Key stakeholders included in the discussion were governors, mayors, superintendents, principals, researchers. Without effective leadership from educational leaders, as the report concluded, school reform and improvement are unlikely to succeed (Wallace Foundation, 2007).

The time that educational leaders spend on certain categories of tasks may have an influence on the effectiveness of the school. Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010) divided 43 separate but common tasks that they identified by shadowing principals into six categories: administrative, organization management, day-to-day instruction, instructional programming, internal relations, and external relations. They found that educational leaders appear to develop the least amount of time on day-to-day instructional tasks (6%) and instructional programming responsibilities (7%). They concluded that the more time that a principal spends on instructional programming, the more parents, teachers, and staff found the school learning environment to be positive (Horng et al, 2010).

### **Approaches to Reading Instruction**

Changes to reading instructional practices are not something that have emerged recently as the debate about the most effective way to teach a child to read is well documented over the past century (Pressley & Allington, 2014). The term *Reading Wars* was coined to describe the shift from one instructional reading approach to another through vigorous debate about the

merits and effectiveness of various reading instructional methods (Pearson, 2004). More recently, the arguments have involved the phonics approach, whole language approach, and balanced literacy. Castles, et al. (2018) describe the debate from one approach to another as a pendulum swinging to and in between the approaches as they fall in and out of favor with professionals, policymakers, stakeholders. The debate of reading approaches centers around which reading instruction method is more effective in teaching students how to read (Foorman, 1995).

Response to Intervention (RTI), which Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is modeled after, is a systems-wide approach to addressing learning gaps. Within the RTI Framework, tier one focuses on providing effective reading instruction for all students. Effective instruction in Tier 1 is research-based and focuses on the five parts of reading; phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency (Fuchs et al., 2008). Tier 1 is intended to prevent the risk of reading failure and to avoid inappropriate special education referrals (Balu et al., 2015).

Tier 2 of the RTI model includes secondary prevention of reading difficulties of students who have not met adequate progress through Tier 1 instruction and/or who are somewhat below grade level based on screening (Balu et al., 2015). Characteristics of Tier 2 intervention include research-supported interventions and frequent progress monitoring in a dedicated 20–40-minute period of the day. Interventions may include additional instruction of the core reading program in a small group setting with an adult. Depending on the effectiveness of the Tier 1 instruction, 20%-30% of the students may require Tier 2 interventions (Fuchs et al., 2008).

Students who do not respond to Tier 1 core instruction and Tier 2 secondary prevention supports are placed into more intense and personalized supports in Tier 3. Students who are

identified for Tier 3 of RTI model are students who are performing far below grade-level benchmarks, who are at high risk of reading failure, and/or whose progress is unsatisfactory after receiving Tier 3 supports for a reasonable time (Balu et al., 2015).

Assessment plays an integral role within the RTI model. In addition to effective instruction during the core reading instruction period, systematic screening and assessment are incorporated to identify students who need additional support (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Dougherty Stall, 2016). Fuchs et al. (2008) stated that “As schools implement validated interventions, even those that have been scientifically validated, the effects of those interventions on each student’s reading performance must be assessed (p. 45).

A structure to address learning gaps in Kansas is the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), which is a set of evidence-based practices to rapidly address a student’s academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs through instruction and intervention. Frequent assessment is conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention or to know when to make an adjustment. The core beliefs include the following:

- 1) Every child learns and achieves to high standards.
- 2) Learning includes academic and social competencies.
- 3) Every member of the education community continues to grow, learn, and reflect.
- 4) Every leader at all levels is responsible for every student.
- 5) Change is intentional, coherent, and dynamic (KSDE, 2019).

KSDE also includes four research-based practices regarding intervention effectiveness. The first practice focuses on the instruction that the student is receiving that should include explicit teaching of the skill, sufficient practice, and fidelity to the instruction. Next, the curriculum should be appropriate for the learner that teaches skills to mastery but provides

instruction at an appropriate rate to reach the student’s goal. Third, the classroom should include appropriate classroom routines, transitions that do occur are brief, and academic learning time is high. The last research-based practice focuses on the learner. Qualities and behavior that should be exhibited are that the learner is motivated, task persistent, and has a commitment to school (KSDE, 2019).

### **Simple View of Reading**

The simple view of reading (SVR) states that reading comprehension can be attributed to two components of reading: decoding and linguistic comprehension. The SVR suggests both components are important, with each being necessary, but not sufficient for successful reading comprehension. The SVR was proposed in the middle of the “reading wars” as a model to understand reading disabilities (Dreyer & Katz, 1992; Castles et al., 2018). The SVR was intended to provide a broad model for understanding the relationship between decoding skills and reading comprehension, while also providing a means to identify potential sources of reading disabilities (Cervetti et al., 2020).

Dreyer and Katz (1992) conducted a study to determine if the SVR was effective at predicting reading comprehension and if reading comprehension was directly influenced by decoding and linguistic comprehension in students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The study found that decoding skills were a stronger predictor of reading comprehension for younger children than older children. The study found that as a student’s decoding and linguistic comprehension skills improved so did his/her reading comprehension (Dreyer & Katz, 1992).

The simple view of reading is one that is frequently referred to in explicit, systematic phonics instruction as it focuses on core components of phonics instruction. This approach speaks to greater emphasis on phonics instruction as outlined in the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

However, it contrasts with current instructional practices highlighted in other sources (KSDE, 2019).

In *How the Reading for Understanding Initiative's Research Complicates the Simple View of Reading Invoked in the Science of Reading* (Cervetti et al., 2020), the authors analyze the effects of SVR on students who spoke English as a first language through the Reading for Understanding Initiative (RfU). This initiative was a United States Department of Education-sponsored initiative that partnered with the Council of Chief School Officers to accelerate research on reading in pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade through a series of grants. (Sabatini et al., 2018). Cervetti et al. (2020) included that although SVR was shown to be effective in primary grades, it may oversimplify the acquisition of reading skills as it included many subprocesses.

### **Whole Language**

The whole language is based on the constructivist learning theory which emphasizes the active construction of knowledge by the learner (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Instead of looking at the parts and sounds of words, whole language proponents believe that the words should be viewed in relation to each other for context (Moats, 2007). Froese (1991) defines this reading theory as “child centered, literature-based approach to language teaching that immerses students in real communications situations whenever possible” (p. 2).

The constructivist view to reading is that new learning occurs when one experiences something new and makes meaning with previous knowledge (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Thus, classrooms that incorporate the whole language approach are literature-rich, and materials are not specifically written to learn how to read and write (Altwerger et al., 1987). Whole language advocates, such as Watson (1989), contend that it is easier to define it as what it is not; as it is

not a “program, package, set of materials, method, practice, or technique” (p. 134). Instead, whole language is based on the following beliefs:

- a. Language is for making meaning, for accomplishing purposes,
- b. Written language is language; what is true for language is true for written language,
- c. Curing systems are present and interacting in any instance of language use,
- d. Language use always occurs in a situation,
- e. Situations are critical to meaning making. (Altwerger et al., 1987, p. 148)

Whole language became popular in the 1980s and into the early 1990s. However, the movement was challenged in the mid-1990s and fell out of favor with the passage of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Pearson, 2004). The difficulty of defining what it is, what it is not, and illustrating effective whole language practices made it difficult to defend with critics (Watson, 1989). Furthermore, opponents of whole language cited a lack of skills instruction, strategy instruction, emphasis on text structure, and reading in the content areas (Pearson, 2004).

### **Balanced Literacy**

Some researchers believe that there is not one characterization of what balanced literacy is and what is not (Fitzgerald, 1999). A balanced literacy approach is one in which teachers blend systematic direct instruction, which includes specific goal holistic instructional activities with direct instruction, such as phonics being taught within reading and writing and not as a separate entity (Spiegel, 1992). James Baumann and Gay Ivey (1997) argue that instructional balance is necessary between teacher-initiated instruction and instruction that is responsive to the needs and interests of the students. Another balanced literacy program, the Four Blocks Reading Program, gives equal time between guided reading, self-selected reading, writers’ workshop, and working with words (Cunningham & Hall, 1998). However, it was the recommendation of the

National Research Council in their report, *Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, that a balanced approach takes research evidence from explicit instruction in decoding instruction and comprehension strategies and blends it with research evidence of meaning-emphasis instruction for developing vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation to read. (Snow et al., 1998)

Fitzgerald (1999) stated “A balanced approach to teaching reading arises from a philosophical perspective about what children should know about reading, who has the knowledge, and how different kinds of knowledge can be learned” (p. 103). Three beliefs of a balanced approach are: 1.) there are equally important kinds of knowledge that students should attain, 2.) there are equally effective sources of knowledge, including the teacher, parents, or other children, and 3.) there are equally different ways of learning what students should attain (Fitzgerald, 1999). Spiegel (1998) claimed that a teacher can teach some of the children some of the time with one program, but not all children all of the time with the same program. In summary, there is a need for a balanced approach to teaching reading that will meet the reading needs of all children all the time by balancing reading aloud to children, shared reading, guided reading, paired reading, independent reading, language exploration, and writing with reading.

Guided Reading is a specific instructional model in which a teacher supports a reader’s development of effective reading strategies that falls within the balance literacy framework. Students work with a teacher in a small group setting with students who are homogeneously grouped (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Ford and Opitz (2001) described guided reading as “reading instruction in which the teacher provides the structure and purpose for reading and for responding to the material read” (p. 266). With teacher support, the development of effective strategies for understanding texts at increasingly difficulty occurs (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Although the goal of guided reading is to read for meaning, it provides an opportunity for students to work on skills and strategies that are explicitly taught and supported by the teacher. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) rationalize that the guided reading approach is at the core of a balanced literacy program because: (p. 1)

- a.) Children have the opportunity to develop as individual readers with teacher support,
- b.) Teachers have the opportunity to assess and observe students as they learn and engage in the reading process.
- c.) Individual readers have the opportunity to develop reading strategies in order to read more challenging texts.
- d.) It gives children enjoyable, successful experiences in reading for meaning,
- e.) It develops the abilities needed for independent reading.

### **Overview of Dyslexia**

Dyslexia is a neurobiological disability that can affect a person's reading processes; especially in regards to accurate and fluent word recognition, poor spelling, and decoding abilities (KSDE, 2021; Lyon et al., 2003; IDA, 2020). The word "dyslexia" has a Greek origin that means the condition of having impaired lexicon, or word skills (Berninger et al., 2015). The definition of dyslexia has continually evolved over the last century (Reid & Elbeheri, 2009). Additionally, it was not until the mid-1800s that societies attempted to teach all of its citizens to read, and as a result, it was observed that some individuals struggled to read and write more than others (Berninger et al., 2015). Therefore, a historical account of dyslexia is needed to understand the current environment.

The reading and spelling struggles were first identified by Adolph Kussmaul, a German Professor of Medicine at Strasburg, in 1877. "Word blindness" was used by Kussmaul to



describe these struggles as he believed that they were caused by an ocular, or eye, deficit of the individual (Kirby, 2018). In 1883 the term “dyslexia” was created by Rudolf Berlin who was influenced by Kussmaul’s work in order to align the diagnosis with contemporary international medical literature (Reid & Elbeheri, 2009). Berlin, a German ophthalmologist, observed that some of his adult patients had difficulties reading the printed word, but could not find a problem with their vision. Though it is believed that Berlin and Kussmaul were describing not only dyslexia, their work was influential in bringing attention to reading disabilities (Kirby, 2018).

In the 1890s, researchers in the United Kingdom began studying word-blindness and dyslexia; including James Hinshelwood, an ophthalmologist, and William Pringle Morgan, a general practitioner. These two individuals added to the research at the time by studying children who exhibited difficulty reading. By doing so, the cause for the challenges began to be explained by a neurological issue rather than a brain injury later on in the individual’s life (Stein, 2017).

Additionally, Hinshelwood and Pringle Morgan’s accounts of the children included details about their life and upbringing that included success in other areas of life and family history. This not only humanized the disorder, but helped others understand that it could affect those who had a normal or high ability to read (Kirby, 2018). Moreover, as result of the research into the family history of the individual, it began to be believed that the struggles were neurological in nature (Stein, 2017). Our current understanding of dyslexia is that it is both familial and heritable (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

In the United States, research of dyslexia expanded through the work of Samuel T. Orton, who was a neuropathologist at the State University of Iowa and the director of the State Psychopathic Hospital in Iowa (Kirby, 2018). In the later position, Orton evaluated students who were referred by teachers to the hospital who were failing in their schoolwork. Orton noted that

many of the students who were referred for evaluation had great difficulty in learning to read but had average or above-average IQ scores. Orton presented his first paper on word-blindness to the American Neurological Association at their 1925 annual meeting referencing the work of Hussmaul, Morgan, and Hinshelwood. However, he concluded that the cause of dyslexia was caused by deficits in cerebral dominance (Kirby, 2018).

Orton's theory of cerebral dominance believed that reading difficulties were a result of the failure of the left hemisphere of the brain to become dominant over the right. Although this theory has been proven incorrect, it focused on the development of the brain, or issues of it, as the cause of dyslexia (Stein, 2017). Orton advocated for the phonics instruction to address the reading challenges for those who are dyslexic. Further, Orton's work with Anna Gillingham, a psychologist, produced the Orton-Gillingham teaching method, which advocates for a systematic and orderly approach of teaching phonogram, single letters/letter pairs found in the English language (Terras et al., 2014).

According to Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2020), signs of dyslexia can appear as early as preschool. The following are symptoms of dyslexia in students:

1. Reading is slow and uncomfortable for the student when acquiring reading skills.
2. Difficulty reading unfamiliar words, often making guesses because they are unable to sound out the word.
3. Does not understand the methodology behind sounding out or reading new words.
4. Avoids reading out loud.
5. Searches for a specific word and ends up using vague language.
6. Confuses words that are alike.
7. Mispronunciation of unfamiliar or complicated words.

8. Trouble remembering names, telephone numbers, dates, or random list of items.
9. Struggles to finish assignments on time.
10. Poor spelling.
11. Illegible handwriting.
12. Lack of confidence or low self-esteem (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

Diagnosing an individual with dyslexia begins with an evaluation that includes gathering information from parents and teachers to understand what educational opportunities have been provided and to determine the individual's developmental level (IDA, 2020). A challenge to identifying an individual with dyslexia is that many professionals believe that although it can be diagnosed, it can be unrecognizable or hidden (Elliott, 2020). Areas that may be included in testing include oral language, word recognition, decoding, spelling, phonological processing, and vocabulary skills. Together, information gathered from interviews, observations, and testing can aid in a diagnosis of dyslexia by a trained professional (IDA, 2020).

### **Federal and State Legislation**

The struggles of those with dyslexia have garnered the attention of parents, professionals, and policymakers in recent years (Ward-Lonergan & Duthie, 2018). Now, dyslexia has a shared and more precise definition based on initiatives from the International Dyslexia Association. Additionally, with greater advocacy from stakeholders and awareness efforts that have translated into advocacy, rights of individuals with dyslexia have been cemented into law. Efforts to do so have occurred within both federal and state governments with laws focusing on a) dyslexia awareness, b) pilot programs for screening and intervention, c) teacher training, d) provision of interventions and accommodations, and e) the overall rights of individuals with dyslexia (Youman & Mather, 2018).

At the federal level, dyslexia laws and court decisions lay in the foundation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which was enacted in 1973 (Zirkel, 2020). Originally called the “Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA),” the United States Congress reauthorized EHA beginning in 1975 until 1990 when the name of the legislation was altered to IDEA. Both pieces of federal law concern the rights of individuals with disabilities to have the same opportunity as those who do not have a disability.

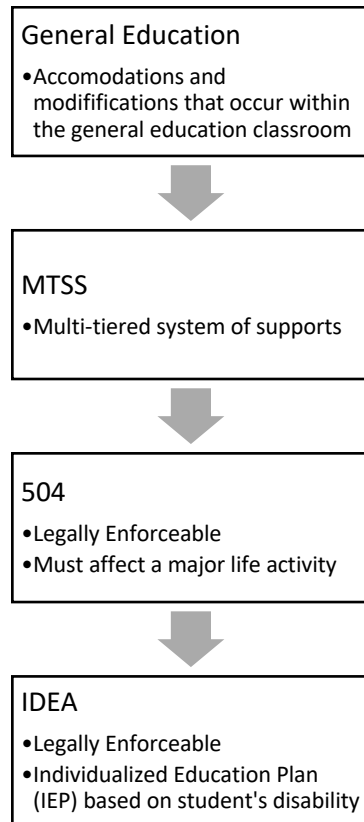
IDEA is comprised of four parts; Part A includes general provisions of the law; Part B contains assistance for the education of all children with disability; Part C concerns infants and toddlers with disabilities; and Part D specifies federal support programs that are administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Within its four parts, IDEA is composed of six elements: Individualized Education Program (IEP); Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE); Least Restrictive Environment (LRE); Appropriate Evaluation; Parent and Teacher Participation; and Procedural Safeguards. Overall, IDEA is a framework for stakeholders, including parents and schools that receive federal financial assistance, to provide an appropriate education for students with disabilities (Office of Special Education Programs, 2021).

Similarly, the Rehabilitation Act of 1979 was passed to guarantee certain rights to and prohibit discrimination of people with disabilities. In the context of the education of students with dyslexia, Section 504 created and extended civil rights to people with disabilities. It also requires that schools allow for reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to succeed (Office for Civil Rights, Protecting Students with Disabilities 2008).

Though the intent of both pieces of legislation is to aid individuals with disabilities, the scope and requirements of each differ in regard to identification and eligibility. IDEA requires

students to meet the criteria of one of thirteen categories of eligibility for special education services. Conversely, Section 504 includes a wider scope of eligibility for intervention in that it requires school districts to provide a free, appropriate public education to students who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (Office for Civil Rights, 2008).

Accommodations and modifications for students with academic and behavioral difficulties also vary in scope and intensity. The most stringent on this continuum is IDEA, then Section 504 because they are formal processes and legally enforceable under federal law (Zirkel, 2020). On the opposite end of the continuum are general education interventions by a child’s teacher and systematic and multi-tiered interventions to address difficulties.



**Figure 2. Zirkel “Legal Developments for Students with Dyslexia” (2020)**

Additionally, there have been efforts at the federal level to garner an enhanced understanding of dyslexia. As a part of the most recent reauthorization of IDEA in 2016, federal money was given to conduct research on dyslexia (Ward-Lonergan & Duthie, 2018). The Research Excellence and Advancements for Dyslexia Act (READ Act) allocated five million dollars to the National Science Foundation with the stipulation that they “Shall support multi-directorate, merit reviewed, and competitively awarded research on the science of specific learning disability, including dyslexia” (p. 39). Areas of research were to include early identification of children with dyslexia, professional development for teachers and administrators, curricula and educational tools, and implementation and scaling of successful models of dyslexia intervention (Youman & Mather, 2018).

Yet, federal laws such as IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act do not directly address dyslexia specifically. For example, in IDEA, dyslexia is not specifically one of the thirteen categories of eligibility for special education services in public; rather, it falls under the category of “Specific Learning Disability” (Ward-Lonergan & Duthie, 2018). To be diagnosed with a specific learning disorder, a person must meet four criteria.

1. Have difficulties in at least one of the following areas for at least six months despite targeted help:
  - Difficulty reading (e.g., inaccurate, slow and only with much effort).
  - Difficulty understanding the meaning of what is read.
  - Difficulty with spelling.
  - Difficulty with written expression (e.g., problems with grammar, punctuation or organization).
  - Difficulty understanding number concepts, number facts or calculation.

- Difficulty with mathematical reasoning (e.g., applying math concepts or solving math problems).
2. Have academic skills that are substantially below what is expected for the child's age and cause problems in school, work or everyday activities.
  3. The difficulties start during school-age even if some people don't experience significant problems until adulthood (when academic, work and day-to-day demands are greater).
  4. Learning difficulties are not due to other conditions, such as intellectual disability, vision or hearing problems, a neurological condition (e.g., pediatric stroke), adverse conditions such as economic or environmental disadvantage, lack of instruction, or difficulties speaking/understanding the language. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

If a child does not qualify under IDEA, though, Section 504 does classify reading as a major life activity (Zirkel, 2020). Because of this, many states have sought to clarify the definition of dyslexia and attempt to provide individuals with dyslexia greater rights and protections (Ward-Longergan & Duthie, 2018).

In the previous decade, the amount of legislation at the state government level has increased in the United States. In 2013, twenty-two states had dyslexia laws; many of which were broad and did not include much guidance as to how to identify individuals with dyslexia (Youman & Mather, 2018). In 2018, the number of states with dyslexia-specific laws increased to forty-two. The depth of these laws also increased through defining dyslexia, guidelines for identifying students with dyslexia, and a greater focus on providing evidence-based interventions. Additionally, eleven states have created dyslexia handbooks and resource guides for use by stakeholders (Youman & Mather, 2018). Ward-Longergan & Duthie (2018) predict in their article *The State of Dyslexia: Recent Legislation and Guidelines for Serving School-Age*

*Children and Adolescents with Dyslexia*, that it is highly likely that all states will have dyslexia-specific legislation in the near future.

As with accommodations and modifications to instruction, the nature and scope of laws that have been enacted differ greatly between states. For example, some legislation only clarifies what dyslexia is in the state's educational codes while other pieces of legislation provide a comprehensive guide for stakeholders about all aspects of teaching students with dyslexia. However, they can be categorized the primary focus of recent legislation into five areas:

1. Dyslexia awareness.
2. Pilot programs for screening and intervention.
3. Teacher training.
4. Provision of interventions and accommodations
5. The overall rights of individuals with dyslexia (Youman & Mather, 2018).

### **Kansas' Dyslexia Initiatives**

In 2018, a Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia was created through 2018 Substitute for House Bill 2602 to advise and make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Board of Education regarding the use of evidence-based practices for students with dyslexia. The task force was created with 19 members of diverse backgrounds. They reported their findings and recommendations to the Legislature in January 2019.

The Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia had four charges: research and recommend evidence-based reading practices, identify components of high-quality pre-service and in-service professional development activities to address reading difficulties, study and examine current state and federal laws and rules and regulations, and to identify valid and reliable screening and



evaluation assessments that can be used to identify children with reading difficulties.

Conclusions and recommendations included:

- Modification of the Educator Preparation and Program Standards to include the International Dyslexia Associations Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.
- Require candidates for teaching licenses to pass an examination of their knowledge of the science of reading.
- Require school systems to provide professional development on dyslexia, interventions, and screening procedures.
- Encourage colleges of education in Kansas to develop a course of study with a specialization in dyslexia and dyslexia-like characteristics.
- Require accredited school districts to screen and identify students at risk of dyslexia.
- Amend the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation model to require school districts to implement tiered system of supports.
- Develop and provide school districts criteria for vetting and approving tools and materials for screening and assessing students for dyslexia.
- Require accredited school districts to utilize structured literacy.
- Create a dyslexia handbook.
- Identify a dyslexia coordinator within the Kansas State Department of Education (Kansas Legislative Research Department, 2018).

The recommendations and conclusions of the 2018 Legislature Task Force on Dyslexia set in motion modifications and requirements of instructional practices addressed in the Kansas

Dyslexia Initiatives. The requirements placed on school systems can be originated, through KSDE, in the report to the Legislature by the task force. This resource not only offers recommendations but gives the rationale behind them.

The *Kansas Dyslexia Handbook* (2021) was adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education in response to the Kansas Legislature's 2018 Dyslexia Task Force charge. The handbook was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders including teachers, parents, higher education representatives, and administrators. The intended purpose of the handbook was to provide guidance and information on dyslexia, foster an understanding of dyslexia and the related challenges, and to highlight practices that support learning for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties.

The contents of the handbook are divided into five sections, Dyslexia Defined, Screening, Evidence-Based Reading Instruction, Structured Literacy Framework, and Reading Intervention Recommendations. The manual begins by outlining the definition of dyslexia and risk factors that are associated with dyslexia. The final three sections include ways to apply evidence-based reading instruction concepts and recommendations for use by educators.

A shared definition of dyslexia was adopted by the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors in November 2002 and KSBOE in November 2020 (KSDE, 2021). The following definition is included in the *Kansas Dyslexia Handbook* (2021):

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (p. 3).

A considerable amount of the handbook stresses the importance of screening a student's reading ability to identify reading struggles early. Of particular significance, criteria of adequate screeners are outlined and a stated requirement for all accredited school systems in Kansas to provide dyslexia screening to all students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Depending on their grade level, students will be screened for letter naming fluency, letter word sounds fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, and oral reading fluency (KSDE 2020).

Though included in the *Kansas Dyslexia Handbook* (2021), this resource provides an in-depth examination into evidence-based reading instruction practices. Components of evidence-based reading instruction include explicit instruction, systematic instruction, multisensory instruction, and automaticity. The resource highlights the need of early identification of reading difficulties and the importance of providing support for struggling students early to ensure that the students progress adequately.

To achieve the components of evidence-based reading instruction, the structured literacy framework is examined. This framework is explicit, systematic, cumulative, and multisensory. It delivers instruction to develop foundational reading skills by incorporating decoding, encoding, and sight vocabulary. Components of structured literacy include phonological awareness, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction orthography, morphology, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. A checklist is included to assist education in evaluating curricular resources.

Structured literacy and balanced literacy are two popular approaches to literacy instruction but differ in focus on different aspects of the reading acquisition. According to Lorimor-Easley and Reed (2019), the argument between the two approaches is should sound (phonemes) or letters (graphemes) be the focus of instruction. Balanced literacy focuses on teaching graphemes while structured literacy is deeply rooted in the phonemes of spoken language. Opponents of

structured literacy believe that this approach hinders the development of fluency and prosody. Critics of balanced literacy believe that students do not develop strong decoding strategies which will hinder the student's reading comprehension (Lorimor-Easley & Reed, 2019).

Like the *Kansas Dyslexia Handbook* (2021), this resource serves as a guide for educators who are examining their teaching methods and instructional methods that are incorporated into their schools and classrooms. This resource offers a specific framework to address the dyslexia requirements set forth by the Kansas State Department of Education. Notably, it states that “Some popularly used reading approaches, such as guided reading or balanced literacy, are not in and of themselves, sufficient for students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia (KSDE, 2021 p. 19).” This presents a change from practices that are employed in schools and classrooms.

## Chapter 3 - Methodology

### Introduction

This qualitative study was designed to gain information from participants about their perceptions of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Specifically, information was sought from district and building-level administrators. Participants were prompted to share their assessment of the implementation of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives since the approval by the Kansas State Board of Education in 2018 to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

**RQ2:** How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

**Overarching Question:** What are administrators understanding of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

The qualitative study collected data from artifacts, interviews, and a survey. The survey was included to gain insight into the background of the research participants in the profession of education and to learn about their experience with reading instruction. Interviews were conducted in the later part of this study to focus on their perceptions of the various approaches to reading and the dyslexia initiatives. Artifacts were collected to gain insight into current district policies and programs.

### Rationale for Qualitative Research

Because the intent of the inquiry is to understand the effect of the dyslexia initiatives from the perspective of an administrator, a qualitative approach to research was used through the course of this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that “Qualitative researchers are

interested in understanding the meaning that people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and experiences they have in the world” (p. 15). I aimed to understand the meaning that administrators have constructed in relation to the dyslexia initiatives.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary source for data collection and analysis. Because of this, the researcher must spend significant amounts of time in the environment of those being studied (Hancock et al., 2021). Additionally, qualitative research is used to understand viewpoints and perspectives. Because I am employed in the school district where this study occurred, I spent ample time with the participants in the environment that was being studied.

Merriam (1998) suggested that case studies allow for insights into a particular issue to influence policy, procedures, and future research. The Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives are a directive from the Kansas State Department of Education. An outcome of this study may be that this qualitative study may impact future policy and procedures.

A qualitative study was the most appropriate research methodology for this study as it allows for exploration of multiple factors that may influence a situation (Hancock et al., 2021). In this particular study, research participants shared their own thoughts, perceptions, and understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. A quantitative study was considered but rejected, as qualitative studies are better suited for research on feelings and perceptions (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

## **Research Design**

Case study research closely examines a person, people issues, and place within a research study (Bhattacharya, 2017). Generalizations are not the goal of case studies as they are more focused on the unique characteristics of each case (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017). DeMarrais and

Lapan (2017) notes, “Case study researchers examine each case expecting to uncover new and unusual interaction, events, explanations, interpretations, and cause-and-effect connections” (p. 218-219). Case studies include the characteristics of qualitative research as they search for meaning and understanding, use the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, employ an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product is greatly descriptive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Specifically, this inquiry enlisted Merriam’s (1998) perspective of case study research. Merriam defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon, such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii). Defining characteristics include the following:

- Particularistic: Focusing on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon,
- Descriptive: Yielding a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study,
- Heuristic: Illuminating the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study.

A case is a bounded system, in this instance the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Research participants included individuals in Kansas serving in district and building administrative roles. Examples of district administrators that would be appropriate for this inquiry would include superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum directors, and Title I directors. Moreover, building-level principals would be idyllic participants, although assistant principals may be acceptable depending on their role and responsibilities assigned to them. Ideally, four to five administrators would participate with an individual from each group/role and responsibility.

Although this inquiry explored the dyslexia initiatives from an administrator's point of view, it is important to note the differences between district and building administrators. The roles and responsibilities of the two types differ greatly in scope. For example, building administrators are responsible for the individual building while district administrators may have multiple buildings to oversee. Additionally, the experience of district administrators may differ by the experience/education and time in the profession. For this reason, the research questions are separated.

### **Research Site**

The setting for the study was Unified School District (USD) 899 Smick Community, located in central Kansas. USD 899 Smick Community is a rural school district encompassing 489 square miles. Of the approximately 800 students, 84% are labeled as White/Caucasian, 8% Other, 7% Hispanic, and 1% African American. Based on parent/guardian self-reporting of income, 55% of students are considered economically disadvantaged, while 45% of students come from non-economically disadvantaged homes.

USD 899 Smick Community operates four attendance centers: Oak Elementary School (Preschool-1<sup>st</sup> grade), Grants Villa Elementary School (2<sup>nd</sup> grade-5<sup>th</sup> grade), Decatur Middle School (6<sup>th</sup> grade-8<sup>th</sup> grade) and Smick High School (9<sup>th</sup> grade-12<sup>th</sup> grade). The district also operates its own special education department in contrast to many school districts in the state of Kansas. Rather, most school districts in Kansas are a part of a cooperative or interlocal agreement with other school districts to provide special education services. The district offers a comprehensive curriculum that is aligned to the Kansas College Career Readiness Standards. Oak and Grants Villa Elementary schools are considered Title I schools by the United States Department of Education.



The school district provided an appropriate setting for a study on the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives in a K-12 setting. Beginning in 2018, USD 899 Smick Community began exploring a K-12 reading curriculum to aid in the implementation of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, while at the same time, began to complete the requirements directed to the school district by the Kansas State Board of Education. Student achievement in English Language Arts, as measured by the Kansas Assessment Program, saw a decline between 2017 and 2021. Additionally, student achievement was below the state average in English Language Arts in 2021.

Unaware of impending state directives for reading instruction, USD 899 Smick Community adopted a K-12, balanced literacy English Language Arts curriculum in 2019 named Wonders® for elementary students and Study Sync® for secondary students. Full implementation of the new curriculum occurred in the 2019-2020 school year. Then in 2020, professional development began to address the requirements of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. The district is currently compliant and up to date with the requirements of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

## **Participants**

There were a total of five participants for this study. Table 3.1 indicates the individuals' demographics that represent the minimum requirements sought. All participants were either a district or building administrator employed by USD 899 Smick Community (pseudonym) at the time of the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the administrator participants' anonymities.

Four participants (80%) of the sample size had fewer than nine years of experience as an administrator, and two, or 40%, had been an administrator for less than three years. Only one participant had been an administrator for more than fifteen years. Additionally, all building administrators began their administrative career at USD 899 Smick Community and did not have

any administrative experience at another school district. All participants, however, had been employed as a teacher in another school district.

Only one participant, Richard, had both elementary and secondary experience.

Participants who served as a secondary administrator only had teaching experience within the secondary level. Likewise, participants who were elementary administrators solely had elementary school teaching experience.

**Table 3.1 Demographics of Participants**

	Gender	Number of Years in Education	Number of Years in Administration	Degree Achievement	Level of Teaching Experience	Level of Administrative Experience
Sarah	F	27	21	MS	Secondary	Secondary
Bailey	F	37	5	MS	Secondary	Secondary
Richard	M	12	3	MS	Elementary	Elementary and Secondary
Nicole	F	13	1	MS	Elementary	Elementary
Andrew (Researcher)	M	10	4	MS	Elementary	Elementary

### **Sarah**

At the time of the study, Sarah, a 53-year-old female, was completing her sixteenth year as an administrator, with the last six as a district superintendent. Before becoming superintendent of USD 899 Smick Community, she served as superintendent of a small, rural Western Kansas school district. She currently holds a prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade district and a prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade building-level endorsements on her license issued by the Kansas Department of Education.

The role of superintendent of USD 899 Smick Community includes many responsibilities including the supervision of all staff, fiscal management, and public relations with all stakeholders in the school district. A master’s degree in educational administration, valid Kansas license in district level school administration, and at least three years of experience in public

school administration and supervision are qualifications for this position. In all, the superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school district as she oversees and administers the use of all facilities, property, funds in the best interests of students and the school system.

Her experience as a building administrator and teacher were solely in the secondary, or 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade, level. She taught social studies for four years before becoming a building administrator in another state. In total, she has twenty-one years of experience as an administrator.

### **Bailey**

Bailey is a 64-year-old female serving USD 899 Smick Community as the district's special education director. At the time of the study, she was completing her first year in this role.

Bailey's educational journey was extensive and storied. In 1985, she graduated from Emporia State University with a bachelor's of secondary education with an emphasis in English. She has or currently possesses multiple licenses and endorsements issued by the Kansas Department of Education including French (7<sup>th</sup>-12 grade), English for Speakers of Other Languages (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade), English (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade), Adaptive Special Education (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade), Building Leadership (prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade), and District Leadership (prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade).

She entered and exited administration before becoming the special education director for USD 899 Smick Community. To begin her educational career, she taught English and French in the secondary level for twenty-nine years. Then, she accepted a position of a secondary administrator in a rural, northeastern Kansas school district. After three years, she returned to the classroom in a large, urban high school as a special education teacher. She was the lead special

education teacher and department chair for nine years of a high school with approximately 2,100 students.

The director of special education is a district-level position as the district operates its own special education department in contrast to many school districts in the state of Kansas. The job goal for this position is to provide leadership to coordinate and supervise the effective delivery of Special Education services. Qualifications for this position include a master's degree, a valid Kansas license in district level school administration, and at least four years of relevant experience serving students with disabilities.

### **Nicole**

Nicole, a 34-year-old female, was finishing her first year as a building administrator at the time of the study. She was assigned to Oak Elementary School that served students in Preschool-1<sup>st</sup> grade. Oak Elementary School also included a Head Start program that was under her supervision. In addition to her building-level responsibilities, Nicole served as the Title director for USD 899 Smick Community.

Before her move to administration, she was a reading interventionist for four years and a 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher for nine years. She is licensed by the Kansas Department of Education in elementary education (Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade) and building administration (prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade).

As with the other description of jobs, the role of principal in USD 899 Smick Community includes a wide variety of responsibilities and expectations. The stated job goal is “to make the school facility an attractive, pleasant, and productive place in which to work and learn.” The building principal reports to the superintendent. Qualifications for this position are a master's degree or higher in educational administration, a valid state license to practice as a school

principal, and at least five years of successful experience in public education as a teacher and/or administrator.

### **Richard**

In his third year in administration, Richard, a 38-year-old male, had completed his first year as the building principal at Decatur Middle School. In the two years prior, he was the principal at Oak Elementary School (Preschool-1<sup>st</sup> grade) in USD 899 Smick Community. He has three total years in administration, all of which were in USD 899 Smick Community. Decatur Middle School houses all 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the community.

Unlike the other participants, most of Richard's experience in education has been in an urban setting as he spent the entirety of his teaching career in a city with a population of approximately 55,000. He was a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher for nine years where he was responsible for math instruction as the grade level was departmentalized. However, the school utilized multi-tiered system of supports in reading to address learning deficiencies. He also taught 4<sup>th</sup> grade for one year.

The responsibilities and qualifications of the principal are the same for Richard as they are for Nicole. Richard is licensed by the Kansas Department of Education in elementary education (Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade) and building administration (prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade). In addition, he is currently completing coursework to obtain his license in District Leadership (Prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Andrew (Researcher and Author of the Study)**

At the time of study, I am 32 years old, and am currently in my fifth year of being a building administrator in USD 899 Smick Community. My entire administrative career has been within this district, though in different roles. For the first year of being an administrator, I was

the building principal at both Oak Elementary School and Grants Villa Elementary School. I divided time between the buildings that were in the same community. Then, I was assigned solely to Grants Villa Elementary School in my second year in administration as the district saw the need for an additional building principal in the district. At the same time, I became USD 899 Smick Community's district curriculum director.

After graduating from Fort Hays State University, I spent four years teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in South Dakota. I completed my master's of science in educational administration from Fort Hays State University during this time. I then moved to Kansas and taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics for USD 899 Smick Community at Grants Villa Elementary School. I currently hold a professional license from the Kansas State Department of Education in adaptive special education (prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade), building leadership (prekindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade), and early-late childhood generalist (kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade).

The responsibilities and qualifications for principal are the same as those of Nicole and Richard. The curriculum director reports to the superintendent of school with the goal to provide leadership and coordination to deliver an aligned and articulated instructional program in all core subject areas. A valid Kansas teaching license, master's degree in educational leadership, and three years of experience as a school administrative staff member are required for this position.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher in this study, I obtained IRB approval (Appendix A) prior to collecting data for the ten-week study and analyzed and interpreted the data at the latter stage of study. I requested USD 899 Smick Community approval and professional development plan (Appendices B and C) and analyzed them to collect system-based information that could affect the participants' responses. A letter (Appendix D) was mailed to each potential research participant

to garner interest in participating in the study. Attached to the letter was the Kansas State University informed consent document (Appendix E) that was signed by the research participants. I then administered a paper and pencil survey (Appendix F) to gather each participants' background in education. One-on-one, in-person interviews will then be conducted with research participants using semi-structured questions (Appendix G). After a review of data from the first interviews, a second follow-up interview will be conducted if necessary. At the conclusion of the study, a debriefing letter (Appendix H) was mailed to participants thanking them for their participation in the study and the results of the findings.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to conducting the study, permission was received from Kansas State University's IRB (Appendix A) and USD 899 Smick Community (Appendix B). USD 899 Smick Community's board of education was informed, and I received written approval from the school district's superintendent (Appendix C). All data was collected after approval of Kansas State University's IRB and USD 899 Smick Community.

### **Survey**

At the beginning of the data collection process, research participants will receive a survey (Appendix F). The survey will collect the demographic information of the participants, including gender, race, years of experience in education, role in the school system, and years of experience in school/district leadership. This information will be used to create possible probes to the interview questions prepared in advance.

### **Interviews**

Data was collected through interviews with research participants. Interviews can provide rich and fruitful information in a case study (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017). To provide constancy

across interviews, formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. Semi-structured interviews include prepared questions from myself in advance and possible probes while allowing for discussion if it occurs and is relevant to the study (Bhattacharya, 2017). Descriptive questions will request the research participant to speak about a particular time or experience. Evaluative questions will seek an assessment on how the participant feels about a particular topic (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017).

Before the start of the survey, questions were pilot tested with an administrator from a neighboring school district (Creswell, 2014). The feedback received from the administrators during the pilot allowed for adjustments and enhanced the questions before interviews were conducted with research participants. The purpose of the pilot was to aid in the development of questions that will be fruitful in producing rich, qualitative data.

I utilized interview protocols put forth by Creswell (2014) to ensure that if a recording malfunction occurs, documentation of the interview will still be available. Interviews were recorded using an iPhone and factory-installed voice recorder. Using Microsoft Word Speech to Text Software, participant responses were transcribed. A copy of the transcription was given to the interviewee to ensure the accuracy of the interview.

I conducted interviews and completed the required IRB training. To strengthen interview protocols, a pilot interview was conducted to adjust questions and identify limitations of the questions with an individual independent to the study. After refining the instrument, interviews with the research participants proceeded. Participants were prompted to reflect on the current instructional methods for reading instruction in their respective schools and district. After preliminary data analysis, a follow-up interview was held with two research participants to probe for more information or to clarify a response.



## **Artifacts**

Although interviewing and observing are two main data collection methods in case study research as they specifically relate to research questions, artifacts or documents can serve a purpose (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2014) believed that documents may be less relevant to case study research, but they can be important to the overall study. A strength of reviewing documents as a means of data collection is that they can be readily available and are not dependent on human beings (Merriam, 1998). DeMarrais & Lapan (2017) believed that data from documents and records may be valuable in setting a direction for subsequent interviews.

Artifacts that may be useful to this study were requested in writing from the USD 899 Smick Community superintendent. Relevant documents included the district's professional development plan for administrators and teachers, professional development resources, or any district policies related to dyslexia and/or the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

Agendas of the professional development days when curriculum alignment was a focus were provided by the school district. Content areas, including ELA/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies, met separately with representatives from each of the four buildings. Though an administrator was assigned to each of the content areas, they did not lead the meeting as a teacher was appointed by the group to do this. Their role was to summarize and communicate the discussion to other administrators. The format of curriculum alignment included:

- Purpose and goal of the meeting,
- Discussion,
- Action steps and planning,
- Follow-up steps and potential future topics.

## Timeline of Data Collection

The study occurred during the summer of 2022 while school in USD 899 Smick Community was not in session. This was intentional as I hoped that responses would be more fruitful because although administrators are still contracted to be present during the summer, they will not have the demands on their attention and effort like they would during the school year. Table 3.2 illustrates the action that was taken, a description or result of the action, and the tentative date that it will occur.

## Data Analysis

The analysis of data took place during the months of June, July, and August in 2022. First, probing questions were developed for the first interview based on research participant’s responses on the survey. After the completion and transcription of the first round of interviews,

**Table 3.2: Timeline of Data Collection**

Action	Description	Date
IRB approval from Kansas State University	I received approval (Appendix A) from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board.	May 2022
Approval from USD 899 Board of Education	The USD 899 Board of Education was informed of the potential research study. Written approval will be sought from the district superintendent (Appendix B).	May 2022
Artifacts	Relevant documents were requested from the USD 899 superintendent (Appendix C).	May 2022
Informed Consent	A letter (Appendix D) was mailed to each potential research participant to garner interest in participating in the study. Attached to this letter was the Kansas State University informed consent document (Appendix E) that was signed by the research participants.	May 2022
Survey	A survey (Appendix F) was mailed or sent electronically to each participant based on participant preference.	June 2022
Interview #1	Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in-person. To provide constancy across interviews, formal semi-structured interview	June 2022

	questions (Appendix G) were developed in advance and conducted with the participants. Responses were transcribed.	
Transcribe	I transcribed the interview with research participants.	July 2022
Preliminary Data Analysis	I reviewed information and data collected to determine if more information is needed.	July 2022
Follow-up Interview	I conducted a follow-up interview with research participants if needed.	July 2022
Debrief	At the conclusion of the study, a debriefing letter (Appendix H) was mailed to participants thanking them for their participation in the study and the results of the findings.	October 2022

responses were analyzed to determine if more information is needed. Two follow-up interviews occurred. After the follow-up interviews, data were analyzed and coded to identify commonalities and themes between research participants (Table 3.3).

Data from the survey was illustrated in frequency tables and graphs. In all, data from the survey provided insight into the background and experience of the research participants.

Participant responses were used to generate probing questions for the subsequent interviews.

I incorporated Tesch’s (1990) eight steps in the coding process. First, I read all transcripts carefully and wrote key elements as I read. Next, I selected the most interesting interview and examined it carefully. After completing this task for all participants, a list of topics was compiled and clustered together based on similarities in topics. The list was then coded using abbreviations next to relevant segments of the interview, which lead to identification of new categories and codes. I then analyzed the codes and categories to identify relationships between separate categories. Then, categories were alphabetized and organized to allow for preliminary data analysis.

Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded to generate themes between participants. Bhattacharya (2017) states that an “inductive analysis was conducted in that the

researcher is not starting the data analysis with any kind of pre-established testable hypothesis about the data” (p.150). As noted by Merriam (1998), the constant comparative method compares one segment of data with another to identify similarities and differences (p.18). Data was then grouped together by dimension and given a similar name to create a category. Data was sorted to determine if it is relevant to the research questions, as the intention of a case study is to answer the research questions, not to understand everything about a subject (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017). Table 3.3 illustrates the research questions, data collection method, and the method of analysis.

**Table 3.3: Research Questions and Corresponding Data Collection and Analysis Methods**

Question	Data Collection	Method of Analysis
“What are administrators understanding of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coding and comparing responses gathered from survey responses.</li> <li>• Coding and comparing responses gathered during interviews on different reading approaches.</li> </ul>
What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coding and comparing responses gathered during interviews on barriers and influences of implementation.</li> </ul>
How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artifacts</li> <li>• Interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coding and comparing documents submitted relating to professional development.</li> <li>• Coding and comparing responses gathered during interviews.</li> </ul>

### **Ethical Considerations**

At the time of the proposed study, I was employed by USD 899 Smick Community as an elementary principal. In addition, I serve as the curriculum director, a stipend part-time position,

for the district. Because of this, personal and professional relationships with the research participants exist. As a principal and curriculum director in the district, I was a member of the administration leadership team and had previously participated in curricular decisions for the district.

### **Summary**

This study is designed to understand the perceptions of district and building-level administrators of various reading approaches and the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. A pilot interview was conducted independently from the study to refine the instrument. All administrators in USD 899 Smick Community were invited to participate in an anonymous survey where they shared their background in education and experience in reading instruction. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to gain insight into their experience of various reading approaches and the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Data was analyzed in an inductive analysis, coded, and, finally, organized using the Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis

# Chapter 4 - Findings

## Introduction

This study was conducted to explore building administrators' and district administrators' experiences in the implementation of the recommendations of the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force. By examining the perceptions of building and district administrators, I was able to investigate the experiences and insights of the research participants on how the recommendations of the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force have impacted the dyslexia program in their building and school district. The investigation is important because these experiences may influence how administrators understand, plan for, and align the current approach for reading instruction within their building/district in relation to the dyslexia standards. The study investigated three questions.

**RQ1:** What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

**RQ2:** How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

**Overarching Question:** What are administrators understanding of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives?

## Data Collection

This study was conducted in the summer of 2022. Conducting this study during the summer was intentional as school was not in session at the time in USD 899 Smick Community, and participant's schedules allowed for more time to conduct the interviews. In this study, I explored building administrators' and district administrators' experiences in the implementation of the recommendations of the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force. Through a review of artifacts, a

survey, and interviews, the collection of data allowed me to begin to answer the research questions of this study.

A request for artifacts from USD 899 Smick Community was sent to the district superintendent on June 8, 2022. Documents, including curriculum adoption schedule, curriculum rubrics, employment statistics, and professional development plan were received on June 10, 2022.

Additionally, an electronic survey was sent to participants on June 8, 2022. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the background of the research participants in the profession of education and to learn about their experience with reading instruction. I used Google Forms® to create and distribute the electronic survey to their school e-mail account.

Interviews with participants occurred between June 15, 2022, and July 20, 2022. I ensured that the survey of participants was received before scheduling and completing the first interview. I led semi-structured interviews with the building and district administrators in-person. First, participants discussed and reviewed their responses to the completed survey. These responses explained their background, clarified their responses, and shared their experience with reading instruction.

The primary purpose of this interview was to inquire about the administrators' understanding of, knowledge of, and experience with the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives and how they impacted the instructional strategies in their schools or district. They also were asked about their current systems of belief, knowledge, and attitude about reading and reading approaches. A follow-up interview was conducted with Nicole and Sarah to explore their responses in more depth and to clarify responses.

## **RQ. 1 What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives?**

Participants responded about factors that impact the extent to which they implement the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives. Factors could either help advance the implementation of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives or could be challenges that hinder or delay the administrators' ability in the implementation stage. Three themes of professional development, time, and resources were identified through data collection methods.

### **Professional Development**

The Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives required professional learning to include the science of reading and structured literacy with the purpose of changing reading instruction practices in the general education setting. The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) created training modules and support materials to satisfy this requirement (Kansas State Department of Education, 2021).

According to the USD 899 Smick Community professional development plan, the district requires six hours of dyslexia training for educators who possess a license in elementary education, early childhood unified, high incidence special education, English Language Arts in 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade, reading specialist, and school psychologists. The school district utilized KSDE videos and training modules to satisfy the requirement. Provided videos are recordings of live sessions that took place in July 2022. KSDE are divided into the following parts:

1. Simulation, Pre-Assessment, Definition of Dyslexia, Characteristics of Dyslexia, and What Dyslexia is Not,
2. Evidence vs. Research Based and Building a Reading Brain,
3. Science of Reading and Structured Literacy (Phonology and Phonics),



4. Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics,
5. Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) Screening Components and Intervention Flow Chart.

During the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year, required staff members completed the training modules in small groups with other educators in a similar role. A pre-assessment and a post-assessment were administered at the start and conclusion of the training modules. A certificate of completion was required to demonstrate that each staff member completed the training modules.

Sarah spoke about the ineffectiveness of the district's current efforts to implement the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Sarah stated that in the on-set of the roll-out of the initiatives, she struggled finding quality professional development for dyslexia. Because of this, the district had to use the modules provided by KSDE.

The training modules satisfied the requirement for yearly professional learning. As in previous years, Sarah described them as part of the yearly required trainings that teachers will complete before school begins. However, a goal for the district is to find or develop a full-day training with an outside individual who is knowledgeable about the nature of dyslexia, intervention strategies, and procedures to identify students who have dyslexia.

How to identify students with dyslexia was a concern that Bailey spoke about in her role as the special education director. She described how she works with school psychologists to learn new requirements and methods of testing. Bailey also explained that there are typically more referrals for a specific disability when parents and the public have more awareness of what to look for. She said:

I think that dyslexia is out there more in the public, so parents are much more aware.

There have been times where a parent has requested special education testing for dyslexia specifically. One of the things that our school psychologists have worked on over the past year is to learn how to identify a student with dyslexia. They have shared with me that there are certain sub tests on the reading assessment to look at specifically if there is a concern that the student may be dyslexic. This is one example of something that we didn't know before but have learned through professional development. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

When asked about how effective the district's current training requirements are, two participants responded that the training modules were a start on the path to becoming adequately trained in dyslexia. Richard, a building principal, shared his building's progress:

The training on dyslexia is wonderful. I think it is great. I still think there needs to be a lot more so that people understand. I think that we're doing the right initiatives to try to catch the students with dyslexia. It sets a structure so that you have things in place, so students aren't sliding through the cracks. Constant screeners, looking at the data, and identifying those students' needs are important so they do not get to the fifth grade, and you realize that we have a really big problem. (Personal communication, July 6, 2022)

A challenge identified by Richard is the lack of continued professional development. All participants, regardless of their role or level, spoke about this challenge. Richard said:

I grow frustrated because it seems like the resources given were a one-time approach, and there's not good quality follow through with the professional development. I would like to see more trainings offered, and there may be some out there, but I don't have the resources or knowledge of them. (Personal communication, July 6, 2022)

Nicole, another building principal, reflected on her own professional development and the staff under her supervision. Notably, Nicole's elementary school building has had reading intervention structures in place for over fifteen years. The school also has a reading interventionist and support personnel to address reading deficiencies in their students.

I have attended some great professional development opportunities in the past. For instance, in my previous role as a Title I teacher in another district, I attended the yearly MTSS symposium hosted by KSDE. There were many sessions that spoke about what dyslexia is and what it is not. What we do now is good, but I think it needs to go deeper. For example, we (Oak Elementary School) struggle with what are the next steps and how do we get the student instruction that they need. There just needs to be more. (Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

As a building principal, I have participated with staff members to complete the dyslexia training, and I have also completed it on my own. In my experience, online modules lose their effectiveness because they are not as interactive as having an in-person training. I see this with the dyslexia training modules based on my observations. After the first year, it has turned into "another thing to do." I think that this is unfortunate because it's an important topic for school staff.

Part of the required training is to learn about structured literacy as an instructional method. Because many of our teachers still use balanced literacy principles, I would like to see more in this area. I think we know we need to change but changes from one approach to another are difficult.

## **Time**

As Tracey and Morrow (2017) noted, the demands and requirements of an educational administrator have increased in recent years. Time to effectively implement the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives was a common theme among participants when speaking about the initiatives. Demands and pressure from other areas to improve school culture, student achievement and learning, and other initiatives can conflict with devoting adequate time and focus to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Sarah spoke about these demands that impact her decision-making when prioritizing what to focus on.

Schools and districts simply do not have time to focus and overwhelm our staff with continued requirements like dyslexia training. There are several requirements that are placed upon us that take a great deal of time to complete. For example, becoming accredited should be a high priority for any educational system. There are so many parts to it (accreditation), and, in my opinion, could take all the professional learning time that we have. (Personal communication, July 7, 2022)

USD 899 Smick Community began the process of adhering the initiatives during the 2019-2020 school year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in the Spring of 2020. Sarah stated that “Although I believe the initiatives have great potential for staff and students, it was a painstaking task to do this during COVID-19. They are sadly lost in a pile of social-emotional stress and a list of stuff that we have to do because of COVID-19” (Personal communication, July 7, 2022).

Although in a separate interview, Bailey echoed points that Sarah made, but from a special education perspective.

Roughly 20% of the students receive some sort of special education service, whether it's inclusion support, pull-out services, speech, occupational therapy, or gifted education. To get everyone on the same page and to follow the legal guidelines, our staff needs time to focus on their work. I know that the dyslexia initiatives are important and necessary, but at times, it seems like it is another thing to do. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

The lack of time to implement the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives is evident on the district's professional development plan. For the 2021-2022 school year, required staff members completed the modules before the school year began on a district professional development day. During the 2022-2023 school year, staff were compensated for a day of their time during the summer due to lack of time in the professional development schedule. Other topics, such as social-emotional learning, curriculum alignment, and student engagement methods were prevalent and revisited throughout the year. Building leaders spoke about where they and their staffs are in the process and what they need to go further.

At Decatur Middle School, Richard described how they addressed the lack of professional development time to allow teachers time to prepare and collaborate with each other. The school has a part-time instructional coach that assists classroom teachers in professional learning. Richard explained.

My instructional coach has really taken on an active role in professional development over the past year. Because it was my first year in the building also, I was pulled in several different directions. Our ELA team has used their weekly time to look at our curriculum, teaching methods, and standards. Dyslexia has been a recurring topic.

(Personal communication, July 6, 2022)

Nicole reflected on the struggle to find time to address the dyslexia initiatives. She listed several priorities that the district had before she became principal. Nicole continued:

I think it varies on what's going on in the building at that time. Sometimes we prioritize things over reading professional development because something different comes up. For example, COVID-19 has been a big focus in how we're having to respond and plan.

Unfortunately, some things, like dyslexia, get pushed to the back burner. (Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

At Grants Villa Elementary School, I have weekly meetings with each grade level. One of the objectives during this meeting is to be an instructional leader to the teachers in my building. However, other items including student behavior and upcoming obligations, frequently dominate my time with teachers. Due to this, there is little time to discuss and brainstorm about the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. The Kansas State Department of Education requires documentation of dyslexia screening results yearly and verification that all required school personnel have completed the yearly training.

To help address this, I have used 20 minutes of the teacher's contracted day to be able to address topics such as the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. The Title I teacher in the building and I are responsible for leading two groups through the various aspects of the initiatives. Although this time is beneficial, I have not been effective in leading wide-spread instructional change as outlined in the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

## **Resources**

A prominent theme of district and secondary administrators was resources available to address the lack of reading skills in students in the secondary level. The district adopted a K-12 balanced literacy English Language Arts curriculum in 2018 prior to the Kansas State Board of

Education’s approval of the recommendations of the Dyslexia Task Force in 2019. Sarah spoke about resources that are currently used, but also how to use the resources.

Adolescent literacy is my comfort level and the comfort level of many of our secondary teachers. I’ve thought several times ‘What are those elementary teachers doing? Why can’t this student read when they get to high school?’ I believe that this speaks to dyslexia and the overarching issues with literacy. I question if our current methods, programs, and resources are adequate for our students. If the state is telling us to do one thing, but we don’t have the right resources, we’re already behind the eight ball.

(Personal communication, July 7, 2022)

Bailey shared similar concerns from her role as a special education director and as a former English teacher.

I don’t think that there is such a thing as a high school reading intervention program. Every reading intervention that we currently use is one that we are using in middle school and the lower grades. I’ve had students tell me that this is ‘baby stuff’ and that they’ve already done it before. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

Additionally, Bailey shared that recently her special education teachers were asking for a phonics program to help students in all grades. She described it as “difficult” to find one program to help her teacher, especially at the secondary level. However, she found a program that wasn’t too juvenile that she believed would work called Sonday System Essentials ® .

At the time of this study, Decatur Middle School did not have a dedicated MTSS time. The school operated with a traditional seven-period school day that did not allow for intervention time. Because of this, Richard said that resources for reading interventions were not readily available for teachers and school staff to use. He shared:

In the first half of my first year as principal of Decatur Middle School, I needed to really see what was going on before I could really make any changes. I immediately saw the need for more resources to help students at my level. Since most of my experience has been at the elementary level, I didn't realize that as kids grow older, it seems that there are fewer resources for middle and high school students. It's my hope that we can use some of our COVID money to help with this. (Personal communication, July 6, 2022)

Unlike Richard's experience at the secondary level, Nicole believed that her elementary school had adequate resources and personnel to address the reading challenges of their students. Oak Elementary School has had an established MTSS program for over a decade.

Both elementary schools in our district are considered a schoolwide Title 1 school, which gives the district more money from the federal government to help our students. I've learned quite a bit since also becoming our district's Title 1 director. We have money that must be spent on staff and materials to help get our students on grade-level in reading and math. (Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

In 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade, I also believe that we have ample resources to address reading challenges. Like Oak Elementary School, Grants Villa Elementary School has a school-wide Title I program and an established MTSS program that occurs every day for 40 minutes. The school-wide Title I program allows our Title I teacher and four paraprofessionals to work with any student who needs extra assistance in reading or math.



## **RQ. 2 How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?**

### **Change**

Change is defined as a “movement from one state to another” (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 288). The amount and extent of a given change can be viewed differently by different individuals. The context surrounding the change may determine if it is a first- or second-order change (Goodwin, 2015). Through analysis of the data, it became evident that change is a theme between all participants as participants spoke about “how” to align current instructional methods to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

Three of the five participants reflected on the current instructional methods and beliefs that they and their staff hold. Largely their discussion centered on the fact that most of the teachers and staff in their buildings have been trained in balanced literacy principles and incorporate these principles into their teaching. They also reported that many of the teachers in the classroom have been teaching for fifteen years or less. As with their own experience in being trained in balanced literacy, the three participants believe that because the staff was also trained on the balanced literacy principles, they develop lessons in reading that incorporate them due to knowledge and comfort.

Leading changes in instructional method could be considered a first-order change as it requires individuals to make changes within the existing framework. Sarah shared that this can be frustrating for leaders and staff members as it is a new way of doing what they have done for years. She said:

We can get complacent in what we do because we’ve always done it this way. The dyslexia initiatives force us to change, and forced change is hard to swallow. Even

though I am not an expert in reading instruction, I'm really trying to learn and be a leader. It can be intimidating sitting in meetings with elementary school teachers who really are the experts. One of my core beliefs as a leader, though, is that we learn from each other and that I don't have to be the smartest person in the room. (Personal communication, July 7, 2022)

Bailey reflected on her extensive career in education that included different roles and content areas. She spoke about the different changes that she has experienced in her career and how they can be on different scales. Bailey said:

I'm toward the end of my career. By that, I'm saying I've been a part of a lot of new programs, initiatives, or tasks that we're focusing on. In special education, change seems to be a bit slower since it's tied to rules from the state and federal government. I do think that this is a big change, though, and will take time to complete. I mean it's not a small tweak for some of our teachers. This is going to require them to rethink how they teach an entire subject area. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

Providing time for change was addressed by all participants. All building principals spoke about using professional learning community (PLC) time to assist teachers with the change of instructional methods. Participants explained that every content area has thirty minutes weekly to meet within the building to discuss curriculum and alignment. Richard stated:

Last year was my first year in this building, and we prioritized tutoring during this time to address what our students needed. This year, I've shifted our focus to provide time for what my teachers need. I have time built into our school, and we're going into it with the attitude that this is important. Now we really need to fine tune what we're doing and look at what worked and what didn't work. Implementing screeners and analyzing the data

will be a huge focus for this next school year. Pacing of the curriculum throughout the school year will be our other focus. (Personal communication, July 6, 2022)

Nicole reflected on the newly created PLC time. Specifically for reading, the building's Title 1 teacher leads weekly lessons with both grade levels at Oak Elementary School. The Title 1 teacher was previously a kindergarten teacher for 29 years and a college instructor for four years. They focus mainly on phonemic awareness and phonics because of the developmental level of Oak Elementary School's students. During the past year, they completed attended virtual meetings with educators from across the state of Kansas to discuss structured literacy. These meetings were organized by an educational service center.

Because every teacher is at a different level of understanding about dyslexia, screening and identification procedures, and the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, I have found it difficult to lead Grants Villa Elementary School through this needed change. We have started to send our teachers to dyslexia training provided through educational service centers to help assist in this endeavor. Collectively, I believe that we have a firm understanding about what dyslexia is and what it is not but putting it into our instructional practices has been difficult.

### **Alignment**

Alignment is the practice in the development and implementation of the curriculum. It connects the curriculum between grade levels, assessments, instruction, and standards within a content area. The task of alignment within USD 899 Smick Community involves teachers and administrators and is completed both within and across the schools in the district. The professional development artifact received does not include alignment for the 2022-2023 school year but included it during the previous three school years.

The participants spoke about the effectiveness of curriculum alignment meetings and the need for curriculum alignment. Specifically, the need to implement consistent practices throughout the four buildings. Sarah expressed that these questions are not always easy, but they are important. She said that being consistent throughout the district would make it easier to implement the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. She continued, “It’s an old adage, but a boat’s not going forward if we’re all not rowing in the same direction.” The alignment meetings focused on aligning the curriculum to the current standards that were adopted by the Kansas State Department of Education. The Kansas Dyslexia Initiative requirements have also been discussed at alignment meetings as the district continues to adhere to the requirements.

From a district perspective, Bailey explained challenges that she experienced with different levels and forms of instruction. She said:

I think that our elementary schools are on the same page when it comes to teaching reading. They use the same curriculum, which I think helps, but I notice how they are teaching reading is very similar between the two buildings. Their systems (MTSS) flow together, which is helpful to special education. I have sat through IEP meetings and can see that the grade levels work well between the two buildings. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

When I asked her to describe teaching practices at the secondary level, she shared:

I think that at the secondary level, we work too much in silos. We need to make sure that what’s going on at the elementary level is being followed through by all at the secondary level. I see small groups or one-on-one interventions more at the elementary level. I think that these are helpful to our students no matter what grade they are in. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

Richard and Nicole's responses were similar to Bailey's. Both building principals explained that the district was partnering with the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) to align practices and priorities throughout the district. Because the district had just begun the process, they did not speak to its effectiveness. However, Nicole said that "the discussion around dyslexia and how we are teaching reading is front and center." She added, "We have so much data that tells us that what we are doing isn't working. But we're not going to get better until we all get on the same page."

As the curriculum director for USD 899, I led the teachers in aligning the curriculum to the state standards during the 2019-2020 school year as we were in the implementation phase of curriculum adoption. We met on a professional development day which was beneficial because curriculum alignment could be our focus. Unfortunately, we have not had another opportunity to do this since the 2019-2020 school year because of other demands on our professional development time. Nevertheless, this was a beneficial endeavor as teachers from different grade levels were able to discuss the successes and challenges in reading that they were experiencing. Additionally, teachers from the same grade level had an opportunity to collaborate to ensure that we were teaching reading with fidelity.

### **Overarching Question: What are administrators understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?**

The previous two research questions of this study addressed administrators' views and beliefs of different aspects of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. The participants' responses to these questions assist in addressing the overarching research question of this study: "What are administrators' understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?"

The participants each have a unique and diverse background in the educational profession. These experiences include knowledge of and understanding of different approaches to reading instruction. Because of their diverse backgrounds and experiences, responses from participants varied. Prior experience and training with various reading approaches influenced administrators' understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

Sarah and Bailey solely had background in the secondary level as both an educator and a building principal. Sarah said that she was not comfortable with reading instruction because she was a social science educator and lacked training in the content area. She said that she understood how the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives require a shift in teaching practices, but that she would not know how to personally apply them. She said, "If you asked me to teach a high school kid to read, I'm not sure I'd know what to do."

Nevertheless, Sarah described her understanding of the dyslexia initiatives "from a 40,000 feet view." She explained that the role of superintendent requires her to do so to ensure that requirements are being met and that buildings are working in concert with each other. She said:

I understand them. I think that the primary purpose of it is good because it gives us another opportunity to find and do something good in reading. Really, you could look at it from the MTSS viewpoint with different tiers of influence. Overall, we get to look at our reading curriculum and our reading instruction. Then, we can look at the interventions that we're using and ones that we need to focus more on for students with dyslexia. One positive that has come from this process is we've learned that, by looking at our instruction and interventions, we can help all of our students whether they have dyslexia or not. (Personal communication, July 7, 2022)

As Sarah reflected on the initiatives, she mentioned that “there’s always room for improvement.” She continued to explain that she, ideally, could have led the district through the training and requirements a bit better by giving it the attention that it required. However, as the district grappled with the school shutdown in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, dyslexia was not at the top of the district’s priorities. She concluded by saying, “the purpose or objective of them is good, if not great.”

Though she described a positive outcome of the dyslexia initiatives, Sarah gave a powerful rebuke of how they were placed upon districts. She spoke broadly about previously identified themes, but also included the topics of timing and unfunded mandates. Sarah said:

I value the outcome of the process, but I do not value the journey that it took us on. These were placed upon us when, as an instructional leader, all we could do is throw our hands in the air because none of us had the capacity to complete these tasks well. It was also another unfunded mandate that we were expected to fix without additional resources. To do these well, more research, different resources, and hours of training are needed. No additional money was given from the state to schools to do this successfully. (Personal communication, July 7, 2022)

Bailey stated that “great grasp” about the specifics of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. She identified the need for professional development for teachers and screening for students who may be dyslexic. As a special education director, she equated it to what the district would do and provide if there were a suspected disability. Bailey explained:

From a special education standpoint, our process is very similar to what we’d do if we thought a student had a learning disability or developmental delay. We look at what’s happening in the general education classroom and see if it’s effective or not. We’d try

different interventions and give them time to see if we saw any positive changes. If they weren't, we'd move into testing for special education in a specific area. However, in this case, we'd look at the subtests that may be red flags for dyslexia. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

Reflecting on her prior experience teaching, she illustrated how her understanding of reading instruction has evolved throughout her career. In the beginning, she felt it was assumed that she was a reading teacher because she was an English major. She described herself as a “good reader,” but that she specialized in secondary English concepts. It wasn't until she became involved with an English as a Second Language (ESL) grant that she realized how she needed to be further breaking information down to not only help ESL and special education students, but to help any low reader.

Richard described himself as “confident” in his understanding of the dyslexia initiatives. Although Richard is in his third year of being a building leader, he is also completing his district level certification and will graduate within the next year. He said that KSDE requires districts to report yearly if they have met the initiatives. When speaking of how districts report the information to the KSDE, he said they are asked if staff have completed the yearly training; if students have been screened, what tool was used to screen students, and if students fall below grade-level in reading. Richard said his confidence stems from shadowing Sarah during an internship for his superintendent endorsement.

Richard's beliefs of reading instruction were developed through his undergraduate education as balanced literacy was highlighted in his courses. Richard's teaching career was at the elementary level. Before becoming a teacher, he was employed as a paraprofessional in the building where he'd eventually become a teacher. Richard said, “This was a great experience



because not only did I get my foot in the door, I also was able to see several different teaching styles by observing different teachers.” He then became a second grade teacher for nine years before moving to a fourth-grade teacher. However, Richard shared that a mentor teacher had the biggest impact on how he taught reading skills to his students.

As a new teacher, I was paired with a mentor teacher who was absolutely outstanding. I think she had been at the school for 25 or 30 years. Things just flowed in her room, students were always busy, and there were high expectations. As we spoke about reading, I kept thinking that I wanted to do what she was doing because it obviously worked. I wouldn't say it was strictly guided reading because she had a part of her day that they just focused on phonics and phonemic awareness skills. (Personal communication, July 6, 2022)

However, Richard expressed interest in learning about the future for the dyslexia initiatives. He explained that because they have been embedded into the accreditation process for each district, he would be “surprised” to see them disappear. He said, “I don't think they are going away, and rightly so.”

Nicole stated that she believed that she had a strong background in reading instruction. Instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness were staples of her reading instruction, especially in first grade. In her role as a Title 1 teacher, it continued to be critical; however, the focus shifted to comprehension skills as students progressed into higher grade levels.

Before becoming an administrator, Nicole was a first-grade teacher for seven years and a Title 1 reading interventionist. As a first-grade teacher, she was in a self-contained classroom and was responsible for instruction in all subjects. Additional emphasis was given to reading intervention as the school had a school-wide multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for students.

As the title 1 teacher, she was responsible for small group instruction of students who were significantly lacking reading skills. In addition to small group instruction, she oversaw the MTSS program at her school and worked in partnership with building administration by reviewing building-wide data, scheduling of intervention personnel, and goal setting.

On the survey that was administered before interviews were held, Nicole said that “I have not studied them well, but I know some of the impacts the initiatives have.” She continued that she understood the requirements, including professional development and screeners. During the interview, she clarified her response on the survey that she was comfortable in her understanding. She indicated that she would like more training to guarantee that she was doing her part in the implementation. Nicole said:

It’s fair to say that, as an administrator, I need professional development on the initiatives and my role in their implementations. I would like to learn more about their development, the why behind them, as well as how we are being held accountable for carrying them out. (Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

Personally, I believe that I have a solid foundation of the goals and objectives of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. This was achieved through various professional development opportunities that were provided by educational service centers in the state of Kansas. I also have experience with MTSS both as a teacher and an administrator. This has improved my understanding of how to address reading challenges and creating a system where students can find success. I would like to learn more about what the next steps are to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

Frequent personnel turnover can disrupt or hinder the large-scale change that the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives requires. The onboarding process becomes cumbersome unless staff who are

new to the district have a solid foundation of dyslexia and an understanding of the initiatives. Additionally, there will be greater buy-in if the purpose and benefit of the proposed change are understood (Kempf, 2015). Frequent staff turnover exasperates this challenge because it creates a situation where staff are at different points in their professional development.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore building and district administrators' understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. The participants were building and district administrators employed by USD 899 Smick Community during the summer of 2022. The data informing this study were collected through an analysis of artifacts provided by USD 899 Smick Community, a survey completed by participants, and individual interviews with administrators. Data was analyzed in an inductive analysis, coded, and, finally, organized using the Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis. This chapter provided a reporting of the case study data from the sources.

Themes for each research question were provided. Five themes were discovered during this study: (a) need for quality and effective professional development, (b) time constraints to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, (c) availability of resources to intervene for students with dyslexia, (d) alignment of curriculum to satisfy necessary instructional changes, and (e) difficulty of change.

## Chapter 5 - Discussion

In 2018, the Kansas Legislature created a Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia to advise and make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) regarding the use of evidence-based practices for students with dyslexia. The purpose of this study was to examine building and district administrators' awareness and views of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiative.

The three research questions used to guide this inquiry were:

1. **RQ1:** What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?
2. **RQ2:** How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?
3. **Overarching Question:** What are administrators understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?

Qualitative data was collected through a survey, artifact review, and interviews with building and district administrators in a rural Kansas school district. Participants were asked to reflect upon their role in implementing the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, how they align instructional approaches to reading, and their overall understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

Chapter 4 presented and analyzed data collected from artifact review, surveys, and interviews with participants based on the research questions of the study. This chapter will present and discuss five sections: 1). conclusions of each research question, 2). alignment to the theoretical framework, 3). implications, 4). recommendations for future research, and 5). epilogue.

## **Research Conclusions**

### **Discussion of RQ 1: What factors impact the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?**

During the interview process of this study, participants were asked to identify factors that impact the extent to which they implement the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Factors identified either helped advance the implementation of the reading initiatives or hindered the administrator's ability to implement the change. Professional development, time, and resources were identified as themes through data collection methods.

Efforts to satisfy the Kansas State Department of Education's professional development requirement were discussed with mixed opinions from participants as to the effort's effectiveness. Online training modules that do not change from one school year to the next are used. Participants separately concluded that additional professional development is needed to advance the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives and enhance the understanding of dyslexia.

The shortage of time to devote to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives was a theme in the administrators' ability to implement and understand them. During the 2021-2022 school year, USD 899 Smick Community included seven and a half days of professional development time into the school calendar. Administrators spoke about other demands for this time including district accreditation, curriculum alignment, social-emotional learning, and student engagement methods. Furthermore, participants referenced the unfortunate timing of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives as they launched during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lastly, the lack of adequate resources for educators and students, particularly at the secondary level, was identified. District and secondary administrators discussed the struggle to locate age-appropriate resources that would assist students with dyslexia or reading deficiencies.

Richard, who notably was the sole participant with both elementary and secondary experience, explained that he believes that resources were much easier to find for elementary teachers and students than at the secondary level.

The elementary schools utilize multiple resources to intervene with reading difficulties for their students. Resources include the 95 percent group ®, Heggerty Phonological and Phonemic Awareness ®, and Souday System Essentials ® to address deficiencies in phonic awareness and phonics. These materials are in addition to the balanced literacy curriculum, Wonders ® and Study Sync ® that is used during the core reading instruction. Though these materials could be utilized at the secondary level, their primary focus is for early intervention in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Administrators and staff have attended professional development to implement these programs effectively and with fidelity.

The themes of RQ I; professional development, time, and resources suggest that factors are present in the school system that make achieving the intended purpose of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives difficult. All schools must prioritize which topics to focus on as professional development time is limited. USD 899 Smick Community's professional development plan (Appendix C) included a wide range of topics that were tied to the district's Kansas Education Systems Accreditation goals of relationships and relevance. Although they were not tied to the district's accreditation goals, dyslexia training was included due to the requirements of the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives.

In concurrence with the need to prioritize professional development on dyslexia, participants spoke heavily about the need for quality training that is impactful in the classroom and schools. One participant, Sarah, stated that dyslexia training became "another thing to do"

after the first year because they were grouped together with other yearly training that is completed before the school year begins.

## **Discussion of RQ. 2: How do administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?**

Participants reflected on their previously held beliefs regarding reading instruction in relation to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Two themes, change and alignment, were identified.

Three of the five participants identified balanced literacy principles as a prevalent method of teaching reading in their own experience as educators and the current practices of the teachers in their buildings. Because the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives require districts to “utilize structured literacy as the explicit and evidence-based approach to teaching literacy skills to all students,” this represents a change from past practices.

Alignment of curriculum and teaching methods was discussed by participants. USD 899 Smick Community utilizes professional development time for teachers to meet and examine alignment within and across schools within the district. The district had purchased a K-12 reading curriculum prior to the Kansas State Department of Education’s adoption of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Due to this, much of this time is spent aligning curriculum to the reading initiatives instead of reading instruction practices.

Therein lies a challenge for USD 899 that is compounded as more time passes as valuable time is spent on aligning a curriculum that encourages instructional practices that are in contrast with the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. There is less time that can be spent learning and adapting to the recommended practices, whether during the school day, on a professional development day, or during the summer. As time goes on, the district falls further and further behind in adhering to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

Additionally, staff turnover also influenced administrators' ability to implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Through the review of artifacts including USD 899 Smick Community's district calendar and professional development plan, I discovered that USD 899 Smick Community has frequent staff turnover in all positions. In the past five years, the superintendent has changed three times, special education director three times, and the building principals at the four attendance centers have changed five times. Overall, staff turnover for teaching positions in the district averages 20 percent per year. Comparatively between 2018-2019, the state of Kansas average teaching staff turnover rate was 14.3 percent (Lam, 2021).

### **Discussion of the Overarching Question: What are administrators' understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?**

As Davis et al. (2005) noted, the demands of school administrators require their attention and effort to be divided in numerous different directions. The participants' perspective of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives varied based on the role that they held in the district. For example, Bailey, the district's special education director, was very knowledgeable about the special education aspect of dyslexia screening. However, she admitted that she did not thoroughly understand the impact to the general education classroom.

District administrators primarily spoke about their views from a system-wide perspective. Examples included processes in place for identifying a student with dyslexia and the impact that the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives had on the district. A system-wide approach to achieving the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiative is not present as building and district administrators could speak to specific aspects of the initiatives, but not to a collective effort. The district utilizes a Kansas State Department of Education approved dyslexia screener for all students, but different buildings utilize the student data in different ways. The elementary schools use the student data



to create reading intervention groups that meet every school day. The middle school includes a reading intervention time three times per week. The high school does not have a formal reading intervention system. The disparities between how the data is used and the interventions that follow do not address the requirements of the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives system-wide.

The differences in the intervention systems can be attributed to building schedules used at the middle and high schools, the expectations of school staff at USD 899 Smick Community, and the content expertise of teachers. Richard identified scheduling as an aspect of the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives that were challenging. The middle school operates a seven-hour school day where students rotate between core and elective classes throughout the day. Though the middle school has incorporated reading intervention time three times a week, Richard said this was “not enough to make the gains in reading that we would like to see” (Personal communication, July 6, 2022). He added that “this (the building schedule) is an area that we want to improve on this year. We really want to start honing in on our tiered support time” (Personal communication, July 6, 2022).

Although Sarah and Bailey serve in district leadership positions, their experience was solely at the secondary level as a teacher and a building principal. In both of their interviews, they addressed their personal expectations of reading instruction. As a high school English teacher, Bailey said that if students were still struggling to read at the end of their high school career, she switched her focus to helping students learn methods to be able to manage after graduation. Sarah, a former social science teacher and high school principal, said:

My philosophy on reading instruction is that it is the essential foundation of education. If students are not reading at least at a tenth-grade level, I feel like we are painting them into a corner of struggle. That does not mean they won't succeed in school and after

graduation, but I think it is definitely a struggle if they do not have the skill set to read at a tenth-grade level. (Personal communication, July 7, 2022)

The training and experience of teachers also are factors in developing a reading intervention system at the secondary level. Though Bailey was an English teacher, she stated she had a difficult time teaching students to learn how to read until she received more training. She attributed this to her lack of understanding because her content area focused on the mechanics of reading. Likewise, Sarah responded that she was not comfortable leading instruction because she lacked the knowledge and training to be a true reading instructor. This creates an environment where there are fewer teachers who are trained to effectively address the reading struggles of their students. Conversely at the elementary level, teachers are generalists and are trained in all core content areas, including reading, and have sufficient knowledge and training to focus on reading interventions.

Building administrators identified their past experiences with reading instruction and current efforts within their respective buildings to meet the KSDE requirements. The shift in instructional practices to science of reading principles is also required of the administrators as they are the instructional leaders of their buildings. In my role as principal, I have found it difficult to lead teachers in this change because I am not fluent enough in the science of reading principles to articulate the specifics of the approach. This makes it challenging to answer questions and coach teachers, especially those who were trained in and have experience with the balanced literacy principles.

All participants were aware and could explain the purpose of the dyslexia reading initiatives. The professional development of the initiatives has influenced the administrators' understanding of dyslexia and the reading instruction. Nicole, specifically, reflected on her past

understanding of dyslexia saying, “I used to think that having trouble with phonemes was normal for younger students, and now I question if it’s a specific learning disability like dyslexia now” (Personal communication, June 28, 2022). The staff’s response to a student who they suspect may be dyslexic has also changed. Now, a dyslexia screener is used, and the student is referred to a team of school staff to create an intervention plan (Personal communication, June 28, 2022).

Leading instructional change can be difficult as school staff are at varying levels of understanding and expertise on dyslexia. Sarah described the district’s approach to professional development as a “cookie cutter” because all teachers were treated the same way and received the same training. Moreover, she said years of experience were not considered:

You have teachers who are brand new to the profession who are trying to keep their heads above water. They are exploring their style of teaching, learning how to be a professional teacher, and are finding a system that is manageable to them. Then, on the other hand, you have a teacher who has taught for forty years and has already said that this is their last year. Whether they are brand new or nearing retirement, they are not focused on this legislative mandate. For the most part, they’re trying to enjoy time with their students. (Personal communication, July 20, 2022)

Furthermore, all participants spoke positively about their objectives and the district’s efforts to adhere to the requirements. Because the dyslexia requirements are tied to the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation process, they pointed to the longevity of the effort and the impact that they will have in the future. Richard stated, “This requires us to be more proactive, to look at our tiered intervention support time, and to utilize resources more than what we’ve done in the past” (Personal communication, July 6, 2022). Sarah concluded her interview by saying “The purpose behind it is good, if not great. Our focus has shifted to improving

instruction for all during the core instructional time. It is my hope that this helps all students, but especially those with dyslexia, so that they do not struggle and can be successful” (Personal communication, July 7, 2022).

### **Alignment to Theoretical Framework**

The study was aligned with the cognitive-processing framework and the instructional leadership theory. A recommendation of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives is that pre-service and current educators receive training on the science of reading. In addition, it is recommended that pre-service candidates pass an examination of their knowledge of the science of reading (KSDE, 2021). While the cognitive-processing framework is a model that includes disciplines other than linguistics and reading acquisition, it involves the study of mental processes that are similar to the science of reading.

Though not explicitly asked, the cognitive-processing framework influenced the development of the interview questions as instructional practices and techniques of administrators were investigated during this study. Participants were asked about instructional practices that they incorporated while they were educators in the classroom and approaches to reading that are currently being utilized in their respective buildings or district.

Because the role and the perception of the administrator was analyzed within this study, the instructional leadership theory influenced this study. An aspect of the instructional leadership theory is the role that administrators, or instructional leaders, play in the importance of data-driven decision making. Instructional leaders use data on student learning and achievement to inform their decision making and to identify areas where additional support of resources may be needed. Research participants’ responses included current and future systems of support to

address student learning needs. Grounded within these systems of support is the use of data to inform the decisions of teachers and administrators.

Next, managing the instructional program is a dimension of an instructional leader. During the interview process, the study, through research question #2, inquired how participants aligned instructional practices to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Participants discussed current instructional practices of teachers in their respective buildings and/or district and curriculum alignment efforts. Through artifact review, high staff turnover was identified as a concern. These topics affect the administrator's ability to manage the instructional program and be an instructional leader.

Lastly, instructional leadership theory addresses the need for leaders to provide ongoing support and professional development to teachers to help school personnel improve or change their practices. Participants spoke about the amount and quality of USD 899 Smick Community's professional development schedule in regard to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. In addition, participants reflected on their beliefs of various approaches to reading that they incorporated while they were educators and those that are being used in their buildings.

## **Implications**

The findings of the study offer the following recommendations for K-12 teachers, district administrators, and building administrators. The recommendations are divided into two categories: Implications for Teaching and Learning and Implications for Administrators.

### **Implication for Teaching and Learning**

- **Conduct a needs assessment of an educator's background in reading instruction for professional development objectives.**

Educators bring unique and varying experiences to their role within the school building. Like administrators, educators' pre-service education and/or classroom experience may influence their approach to reading instruction. For example, educators who have considerable classroom experience may already be knowledgeable about different approaches to reading instruction (Pearson, 2004). In addition, the participants' responses highlighted the lack of time during the school year for professional development. Therefore, it is critical that professional development be based on the needs of the educator regarding the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives to be fruitful in the acquisition of knowledge and to ensure that the limited professional development time is used effectively.

- **Educate teachers on the three main approaches to reading instruction.**

Castles, et al (2018) exemplified the movement from one reading instructional method to another as a pendulum swinging as a reading instructional method falls in and out of favor with professionals, policymakers, stakeholders. As illustrated in Chapter Four, administrators and educators commonly defer to their pre-service and/or mentor teacher regarding reading instructional methods. School staff should be aware and have a foundational knowledge of the three main approaches to reading instruction.

- **Engage in professional development on the Science of Reading**

The background and education of a teacher may have an impact on the approach to reading instruction that they incorporate in their classrooms. Because the shift from one instructional method to another as outlined in the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives may require the adoption of new beliefs and values, it should be considered a second-order change. Professional development would assist in learning about the background of the Science of Reading, the purpose for the change, and the benefits of altering their methods. Confidence and comfort in

the instructional method may result if the teacher had no or limited knowledge of the Science of Reading before.

### **Implications for Administrators**

- **Align curriculum, resources, and supplemental material purchases to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives and content standards.**

As district funds are finite, curriculum, resource, and supplemental material purchases should be aligned to state, district, and building goals and requirements to be fiscally responsible and beneficial for stakeholders. USD 899 purchased a K-12 reading curriculum prior to the adoption of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, which led to an inefficient use of school personnel time. Therefore, alignment and planning of curriculum and instructional resources with the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives and Kansas State Department of Education literacy content standards are essential.

Alignment of curriculum should also include between grade-levels and school buildings. USD 899 Smick Community operates four school buildings. This creates three transitions between school buildings during a student's K-12 educational career; including 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The continuation of efforts and strategies between school buildings is essential to the fidelity of the strategies implemented to achieve the goals of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

- **Prioritize dyslexia and Science of Reading professional development.**

A theme of this study discussed in Chapter Four was the quality and quantity of professional development on the topics of dyslexia and the Science of Reading. A lack of time within the school year was also highlighted by participants. A focus that differs from past objectives should be considered for school personnel to engage in quality training that goes beyond the

fundamentals of dyslexia/science of reading. A more in-depth and practical focus would be beneficial, especially for school personnel who have completed the online modules on multiple occasions. The USD 899 Smick Community Board of Education should consider adding additional professional development days to the school calendar to allow for the education of its staff.

As instructional leaders for the district or respective buildings, all administrators should attend and participate in professional development that focuses on dyslexia and the Science of Reading. Administrators should be knowledgeable and understand the professional development that is required of educators within their district to effectively lead the necessary change. In addition, the district should seek professional development solely for administrators in the realm of instructional leadership.

- **Create a district literacy team.**

District and building administrators should consider creating and frequently utilizing a district literacy team to monitor and advance the efforts of the district to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Objectives of the district literacy team could include 1). Review of current practices and initiatives, 2). Curriculum alignment, 3). Reading diagnostic and screening data analysis, and 4). District literacy needs assessment, and 5). Future professional development planning. The team should consist of educators and administrators from all attendance centers to achieve fidelity of initiatives and programs.

- **Ensure building and professional development schedules allow time for collaboration between teachers and alignment of curriculum.**

The lack of time was a prominent theme in this study as administrators spoke to the lack of time, whether during the school day or within the professional development schedule, to address



topics relating to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Mentoring, professional development communities, and reflection activities could be accomplished during this time. This would permit time for the professional growth of teachers as administrators serve as instructional leaders.

- **Communicate changes and/or expectations with stakeholders.**

Flores (2005) noted that the outcome of curricular decisions carries a noteworthy weight on the stakeholders involved. Understanding the purpose and benefit of proposed changes can lead to greater buy-in among stakeholders (Kempf, 2015). Stakeholders, including school staff, parents/guardians, and community members would benefit from effective communication about the requirements of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

### **Implications for the Kansas State Department of Education and/or universities in Kansas**

- **Unify the relationship between pre-service education and K-12 school systems.**

A recommendation of the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force was to encourage colleges of education in Kansas to develop a course of study with a specialization in dyslexia and struggling readers. This course of study should allow for sufficient experience that the person who achieves the endorsement can train other classroom teachers and reading specialists within their school district (KSDE, 2021). This endorsement would be beneficial to K-12 school systems.

- **Include a needs assessment of a preservice educator or aspiring administrator's background in reading instruction in preparation courses.**

As with educators in the field, a needs assessment would be beneficial to preservice educators and aspiring administrators because individuals and their experiences are unique. Unlike educators in the field, preservice educators or aspiring administrators may not have a

foundational knowledge of different approaches to reading as they new to the profession or do not have experience in reading instruction. This would allow university staff to tailor instruction to meet the needs of their students in the realm of reading instruction.

- **Educate aspiring administrators on the process of change.**

The amount and extent of a given change can be viewed differently by different individuals. The context surrounding the change may determine if it is a first- or second-order change (Goodwin, 2015). The role of an administrator in a school system continually has evolved in recent years as new requirements are placed upon schools to increase student success (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). It would be beneficial to future leaders to learn about the process of change and different methods of managing change. By doing so, new administrators may be better prepared to lead curricular changes within their buildings or school districts.

- **Promote additional professional development opportunities for school staff.**

The online modules are intended to be introductory and provide an overview of dyslexia and the Science of Reading. There is a need for more in-depth training for staff on the nature of dyslexia, procedures to identify students who are struggling in reading, intervention strategies and procedures, tiered intervention practices, and progress monitoring. Partnering with Kansas' seven interlocal educational service centers to provide this training would help achieve this recommendation and ensure that all school districts have the opportunity for more intensive learning.

Specialized professional development tailored to positions within the school would also be beneficial. Presently, a large number of school staff is required to obtain annual training including elementary education teachers, reading specialists, school psychologists, and special education teachers. The responsibilities and scope of these positions vary greatly. Specific

training based on the person's role within the school system would be valuable and more effective.

- **Continue efforts to educate all stakeholders on dyslexia**

The Kansas State Department of Education currently has a Program Manager for Early Literacy and Dyslexia through the Career, Standards, and Assessment Services Department. The program has made significant and constructive efforts to educate the populace on dyslexia and literacy practices through trainings, a monthly newsletter, and resources. Their website includes early literacy resources, dyslexia resources, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to resources. These efforts should continue as school staff learn more about dyslexia and what schools are doing to assist every child.

It is also recommended that there is a concerted effort to educate the greater public on dyslexia. There is a need to educate the public on what dyslexia is, what it is not, and resources that are available to help a student. The more parents and the community know about the characteristics of dyslexia, the more they will be able to support a child with dyslexia. Thus, the knowledge gained through this endeavor may empower parents to ask important questions about their child's educational programming.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The intent of this qualitative case study research was to explore building and district administrators' understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Due to the limitations of the study, additional research into this and related topics are necessary to grow the field of research. Recommendations for future research are suggested.

- **Conduct a qualitative case study of an educator's knowledge and perception of dyslexia.**

This qualitative study explored the knowledge and understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives from the viewpoint of a school or district administrator. The viewpoint of the classroom teacher should be considered in additional case study research. The teacher fulfills an essential role in identifying student deficiencies in reading and proposing interventions to address them. Because of their varying roles within a school system, it would be interesting to research the similarities and differences in results of the two groups.

- **Generalize the findings to administrators in different demographic areas.**

The study was conducted in a rural, central Kansas school district. Therefore, the participant sample size was small due to the fact that there were few administrative positions within the school district. The results and conclusions discussed apply only to the demographics of the study. Additional research could include more diversity in the participants in terms of social-economic status of the district, district size, and geographical area. Furthermore, multiple case studies could be conducted to determine similarities and differences between school districts.

- **Conduct a quantitative research study following reading achievement of students before and after the implementation of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.**

The Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives were developed to address reading deficiencies of students enrolled in Kansas public schools. A quantitative research study would be beneficial to identify the impact of the reading initiatives on student reading achievement. The student may explore differences or similarities of one instructional approach to another. In terms of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives, educators who have been trained on the Science of Reading should be included.

- **Conduct a quantitative research study to analyze the results of interventions in the general education classroom for students with dyslexia.**

Zirkel (2020) explained that the continuum of supports ranges from least intensive supports in general education interventions to a formalized individualized education plan (IEP). Between those two supports, multi-tiered system of support intervention or a Section 504 plan may be considered. A study on the results of intervention that occur within the general education classroom for students with dyslexia would be beneficial to determine which interventions students respond to academically. This information could be used by school staff in the field to quickly intervene with a student who is struggling with reading and/or a student that they suspect may have dyslexia.

- **Conduct a qualitative case study exploring teacher beliefs of effective professional development for students who struggle with reading.**

An expectation of an administrator is to be an instructional leader for their building or district. A part of this is leading effective professional development of school staff. Knowing what elements of professional learning that teachers value and find effective would assist administrators in this endeavor -- specifically on the topic of students who struggle with reading, what professional development is influential in leading to changes in instructional methods, procedures, expectations, and systems within the classroom.

- **Explore the data through a socio-cultural lens.**

The Socio-Cultural Theory focuses on the roles of cultural, social, and historical factors in the human experience (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The data could be explored through this lens in a variety of ways including society's impact on administrator perceptions, the power dynamic within a school district, or how external pressures influence an individual's thinking.

## Epilogue

This qualitative study sought to explore building and district administrators' understanding of Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. In Chapter 5, the conclusions of each research question, the alignment to the theoretical framework, implications, and recommendations for future research were discussed. The participants in this study had different life experiences, educational training, and educational background that influence their beliefs and practices regarding reading instruction.

The first research question asked administrators what factors impact the extent to which they implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Themes that were identified through data collection methods were professional development, time, and resources. Next, the second research question investigated how administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Through reflection on their own experiences as educators and the current practices of educators in their buildings or district, change and alignment were identified as themes. Lastly, the overarching research question examined the participants' understanding of the requirements. Participants were aware and could explain the purpose of the reading initiatives, the longevity of the efforts, and the impact that they will have in the future.

In November of 2019, the Kansas State Board of Education adopted the recommendations of the Dyslexia Task Force that would require changes to the way schools assisted students with dyslexia, how educators taught students how to read, and the addition of precautionary measures such as mandatory screening and professional development on what dyslexia is. In March of 2020, the educational system was required to quickly adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic as schools closed for the year and students learned remotely.

Unfortunately, I believe that due to the demands of constant adjustments, the drive and enthusiasm for the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives was hampered as schools responded to the reality of the pandemic.

Additionally, it is reasonable for educators and school personnel to question the reasoning behind the change in preferred reading instructional method. After all, Castles, et al. (2018) described the debate from one reading approach to another as a pendulum swinging to and in between the approaches as they fall in and out of favor. Different approaches to reading instruction, including whole language and balanced literacy, have been considered common practice within the last fifty years only to be jilted by stakeholders for a new approach.

However, the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives are a worthy endeavor that Kansas schools should strive to achieve. Incorporating evidence-based practices, screening, and identification of reading deficiencies enhance what public schools do to assist every student. The professional development on the utilization of structured literacy teaching methods and implementation of a tiered instructional model help not only students who are dyslexic, but all students. School systems across the state of Kansas should continue to pursue the goals of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives to create a more effective educational system for Kansas' children.

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# Appendix A - IRB Approval

1/31/23, 7:39 PM

Protocol IRB-11177-Variou (IRB)



<b>Protocol:</b> IRB-11177		<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	
<b>Committee:</b> IRB		<b>Sponsor Id:</b>	
<b>College:</b> College of Education		<b>Grants:</b>	
<b>Department:</b> Curriculum and Instruction		<b>Agent Types:</b>	
<b>Title:</b> THE PERCEPTIONS OF BUILDING AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS IN REGARD TO READING APPROACHES FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA		<b>Year:</b> 2022	
<b>Exempt/Expedited Category:</b> Expedited Category 6		<b>Risk Determination:</b> No more than minimal risk to subjects	

<b>Site(s):</b> Various - SBR - IRB		<b>PI:</b> Lotta Larson	
<b>Status:</b> Approved		<b>Additional:</b> N	
<b>Approval:</b> June 22, 2022 for 36 months		<b>Expiration:</b> June 21, 2025	
<b>Initial Approval:</b> June 22, 2022		<b>Other Expirations:</b> Annual Renewal Date - 06/22/2023	

<b>Protocol-Site Contacts (1)</b>		<a href="#">collapse</a>
<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	
Andrew Dempewolf	Responsible Graduate Student	

<b>Reference xForms (1)</b>						<a href="#">collapse</a>
<b>Form</b>	<b>Identifier</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>As Of</b>	<b>Ref Active</b>	<b>Inactivated</b>	
IRB Application for Approval	Lotta Larson	Complete	06/23/2022 8:43 AM ET	06/23/2022 8:43 AM ET		

<b>Events (1)</b>					<a href="#">collapse</a>
<b>Event</b>	<b>Att</b>	<b>Instance/UDF</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Complete</b>	
IRB Initial Submission	9		04/25/2022	06/23/2022	

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# Appendix B - USD 899 Board of Education Approval

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June 27, 2022

Dear Andrew Dempewolf,

As the superintendent of schools for \_\_\_\_\_, I am aware of your research procedures for the study. I give permission for the study to take place within our district and for the researchers to have contact with district and building administrators. My permission is contingent upon following the proposed research procedures and abiding by district, state, and federal laws and policies.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent of Schools

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent of Schools

## Appendix C - USD 899 Professional Development Plan

2017-2023 Professional Development				
—	Topic/Presenter	Who Attended	Goals Addressed	SBOE Addressed
Nov 2017	Trauma Sensitive Schools	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Jan 2018	Suicide Prevention	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Mar 2018	Active Shooter Training	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2018	Boys Town Training	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Oct 2018	AimsWeb Assessment Training	BLT & Literacy Coaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Nov 2018	Vertical Alignment - content specific discussions	All Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Nov 2018	Mandatory Reporting Seminar	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Dec 2018	AimsWeb Assessment Training	Elementary Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS

				<input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
July 2019	Social-Emotional Learning Zones of Regulation Family Engagement	Summer Optional PD - open to all staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
July 2019	Wonders Reading Text Training	Elementary Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2019	Trauma Informed Schools & Poverty Simulation Rebecca Pankratz	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2019	Zones of Regulation	Elementary Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Sep 2019	Paper Tigers/Aces Rebecca Pankratz	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Dec 2019	CPI Training	BLTs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Feb 2020	Trauma Informed Strategies Katie Perez	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2020	Competency Based Learning	All Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary



Aug 2020	Mandt Training	All SPED & Title Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2020	<b>All Year:</b> Building Specific Topics (Covid safety, protocols, technology, schedules)	All staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Nov 2020	Learning Differences - The Why behind why kids are failing	All Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Jan 2021	Dyslexia Videos	Required staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2021	iReady Math and Assessment Training	K-8th	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug 2021	Vertical Curriculum Alignment	PK-12	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Sept. 2021	Curriculum Training, Data	PK-12	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Oct. 2021	Data, MTSS, Curriculum	All staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
January 2022	Autism Team, Trauma Informed	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS

				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
March 2022	Trauma Informed	All Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
July 2022	CPI	SPED and Admin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug. 2022	Behavior, Lindsey McKenna (Project Stay)	All licensed staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Aug. 2022	Dyslexia Training	All staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Sept. 2022	Curriculum Alignment/MTSS	All licensed staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Oct. 2022	Trauma Informed Training with Noalee McDonald	All licensed staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Nov. 2022	Kegan Engagement Training	All licensed staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
Dec. 2022	Data and MTSS	All licensed staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad  <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary

January 2023	Data, MTSS, Curriculum	All staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
March 2023	EdCamp with Noalee McDonald	All licensed staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary
April 2023	SEL Curriculum Training	All staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Kdg Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> IPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> HS Grad <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Secondary

## **Appendix D - Letter**

Dear School and District Administrators,

My name is Andrew Dempewolf, and I am a Ph.D. candidate from Kansas State University. I am currently conducting my dissertation study which seeks to explore the perceptions of the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives of building and district level administrators.

As I previously mentioned during a recent administrative meeting in your district, I am asking all building and district administrators employed in your district to participate in this study. Your participation would add to the current body of research in educational leadership and literacy education.

If you are willing to participate, please contact me at [adempewolf@ksu.edu](mailto:adempewolf@ksu.edu) or (785) 483-6066. I will then send you the informed consent form. I will then schedule a time to meet to review the informed consent form with you and, if you chose to participate, collect a signed copy.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you in advance for your consideration and your time!

Andrew Dempewolf  
[adempewolf@ksu.edu](mailto:adempewolf@ksu.edu)

# Appendix E - Informed Consent



University Research  
Compliance Office

## Institutional Review Board (IRB) Informed Consent Template Form

comply@k-state.edu | 785-532-3224

If you are performing research involving human subjects, it is your responsibility to address the issue of informed consent. This template is intended to provide guidance for crafting an informed consent document. The Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) strongly recommends that you model your consent form on this template. However, if you choose a different approach, it must contain at a minimum the same elements as this standard version. Language and terminology used in the consent form must be written at no more than the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, so that the potential participant can clearly understand the project, how it is going to be conducted, and all issues that may affect his or her participation. In addition, please write the consent form in a manner that addresses your subjects directly instead of writing it in a manner that addresses the University Research Compliance Office directly. *Information on the important issue of informed consent can be found in 45 CFR 46 at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116>.* Federal law mandates that all signed and dated informed consent forms be retained by the P.I. for at least three years following completion of the study.

**WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT:** *There are limited instances where the requirement for a formal informed consent document may be waived or altered by the IRB.*

45 CFR 46 states that "An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it

- finds either:*
- 1) *That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or*
  - 2) *That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context."*

If a study employs only questionnaires and surveys as the source of their data, it may generally be assumed that to answer and return the questionnaire is an appropriate and sufficient expression of free consent. However, there are circumstances that might call this assumption into question - e.g., teacher-student relationship between the investigator and the subject, etc. However, a statement should be included on the questionnaire or survey form indicating that participation of the subject is strictly voluntary, the length of time reasonably expected to complete the questionnaire or survey form, and that questions that make the participant uncomfortable may be skipped.

### Form Content

**PROJECT TITLE:** Full title of project. If possible, the title should be identical to that used in any funding/contract proposal.

**PROJECT APPROVAL DATE/ EXPIRATION DATE:** provided in the approval letter, must be in place before distributing to subjects.

**LENGTH OF STUDY:** Estimate the length of time the subject will be expected to participate.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):** Must be a regular member of the faculty.

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:** Name, phone number and/or email address of the P.I.

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:** *For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are:* Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

**PROJECT SPONSOR:** Funding/contract entity.

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:** Explain in lay terms that this is a research project, and why the research is being done.

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:** Explain in lay terms and in language understandable at the 8th grade level how the study is going to be conducted and what will be expected of participants. Tell participants if they will be audio or videotaped, if they will be paid, etc.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:**

Explain any alternative procedures or treatments if applicable.

**RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:** Describe any foreseeable risks or discomforts from the study. If there are no known risks, make a statement to that effect.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:** Describe any *reasonably expected* benefits from the research to the participant or others from the research.

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** Explain how you plan to protect confidentiality.

**IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS:** *In cases where more than minimal risk is involved.*

**PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:** If minors or those who require the approval of a parent or guardian are participants, you should include a space for their consenting signature.

**PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNATURE:** Name of research participant and signature.

**WITNESS TO SIGNATURE (PROJECT STAFF):** Staff signature.

**If any of the following content sections do not apply to your research, feel free to delete from the consent form.**

**PROJECT TITLE:**

The Perceptions of Building and District Administrators in Regard to Reading Approaches for Students with Dyslexia

**PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:**

5/23/22

**PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:**

8/1/22

**LENGTH OF STUDY:**

10 weeks

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Lotta Larson, PhD.

**CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):** Andrew Dempewolf, Graduate Student

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:**

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785-532-5135

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224;  
Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

**PROJECT SPONSOR:**

N/A

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:**

The purpose of this study is to examine building and district administrators' awareness and views of the Kansas Dyslexia Reading Initiatives. The experience and understanding of the various approaches to reading may differ and similarities may arise. These experiences may influence how administrators understand, plan for, and align the current approach for reading instruction within their building/district in relation to the dyslexia standards.

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:**

Participants must be building or district level administrators in a K-12 Kansas public school district who hold a Kansas Administrator's License issued by the Kansas Department of Education. Before participation in the study, the researcher will review the Informed Consent Form with the participant. A survey that focuses on their educational background and demographic information will then be completed by participant. I will interview participants on two times. Interviews will be transcribed and coded to find similarities and themes between participants. In addition to the survey and interview, documents that are relevant to the student will be sought from the school district and analyzed.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:**

N/A

**RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:**

Examining for personal or sensitive information in surveys or interviews.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:**

The potential benefits for the participants for taking part in the study may include that they will help add to current research in the field of educational leadership and literacy instruction.

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Audio will be transferred from the recording device to a computer. It will be deleted from the recording device. Electronic information will be saved on a jump drive and stored in a locked cabinet in a locked office. Once interviews have been transcribed, the recording will be deleted. Paper documents, including the survey, will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office. The data will be stored for a period of three years. Documents will be shredded and disposed of at that time.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS?  Yes  No

**PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:**

PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:

DATE:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE:  
(PROJECT STAFF)

DATE:

## Appendix F - Survey

Project: Building and district administrator perceptions of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives

Participant Code: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  
2. What is your age?
  - a. 25-34
  - b. 35-44
  - c. 45-55
  - d. 55 or older
  
3. How many years did you teach before becoming an administrator?
  - a. 0-5
  - b. 6-10
  - c. 11-15
  - d. 16-20
  
4. At what level of the school system did you primarily teach at?
  - a. Elementary
  - b. Secondary
  
5. What content area did you specialize in?
  
6. What professional licenses do you currently hold?
  
7. How many years have you been an administrator?
  - a. 0-1
  - b. 2-4
  - c. 5-9
  - d. 10-15
  - e. 15 or more
  
8. At what level of the school system do you serve as an administrator?
  - a. Building
  - b. District
  
9. How comfortable are you leading reading instruction?



10. What approaches to reading are you familiar with? What approaches to reading did you use within a classroom or led within a school?
11. How familiar are you with the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?
12. In your opinion, what are the benefits to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?
13. In your opinion, what are the challenges to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?

## Appendix G - Interview #1 Protocol

Project: Building and district administrator perceptions of the Kansas dyslexia initiatives

Date:

Time:

Place:

Participant Code:

### **Introduction:**

Set up recorder

1. *Tell me about your educational background?*  
(Education, experience as a teacher and administrator and level)
2. *As an administrator, what tasks do you perform in your role?*
3. *Describe your campus demographics.*
4. *Describe your experience with reading education.*
5. *In your building or district, how prepared are your teachers to instruct literacy practices?*
6. *Describe your interactions with literacy practices in your building or district.*
7. *Describe your understanding of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.*
8. *Do you feel that the recommendations of the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives and the literacy practices in your building and district align? Why or why not?*
9. *How beneficial are building-wide or district-wide Kansas Dyslexia Initiative professional development opportunities?*
10. *Do you attend building-wide or district-wide literacy training when offered? Why or why not?*
11. *Outside of district offered training, have you attended professional development opportunities on the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives?*
12. *How do you lead instructional changes in regard to literacy education?*
13. *How comfortable are you giving teachers feedback on literacy instructional practices?*
14. *In your current role, what area(s) do you feel you need continued professional development to improve your building/district's alignment with KDRI practices?*

## Appendix H - Debriefing Letter

Dear Administrator,

Thank you for your participation in this study. The goal of this study sought to examine building administrators' and district administrators' experience in the implementation of the recommendations of the Kansas Dyslexia Task Force. This study addressed the gap in research as it pertained to administrators' perceptions.

By participating you have added to the current body of research in educational leadership and literacy education. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

The study findings indicated professional development, time, and resources were influences that impacted the extent to which administrators implement and understand the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives. Additionally, the process of change and alignment were factors in how administrators align instructional approaches to reading to adhere to the Kansas Dyslexia Initiatives.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

Andrew Dempewolf  
[adempewolf@ksu.edu](mailto:adempewolf@ksu.edu)