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PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY INTENSIVE READING TEACHERS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLORIDA'S READING POLICY

By

REBEKAH RUTH SHIVELY

A dissertation submitted to the College of Education and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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DEDICATION

I wish to thank God above all for giving me the ability, the strength, and the support of many people in this undertaking.

Psalm 27

- The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.
- Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.
- One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.
- For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.
- And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.
- Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
- When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
- Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
- When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.
- Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.
- Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.
- I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

There are many people who have supported me in this endeavor. First, I wish to acknowledge my family: some of whom are living, and some of whom have passed on—each member has had a profound impact on the person I am today. To my mother and father, Ruth S. and Frederick C. Shively, who have sacrificed throughout their lives to support me and have prayed for me from before I was born, thank you—I couldn't have done it without you. I love you both. To my maternal grandparents, Amos O. and Ora M. Sheaffer, and my paternal grandparents, Charles H. and Elizabeth S. Shively, thank you for passing your determination to succeed on to me.

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to explore the perceptions of secondary reading teachers regarding their experiences while they implemented Florida's secondary intensive reading policy. The purpose of this research was to obtain feedback on the policy implementation process for continuous improvement in future policy implementation. This research was qualitatively designed and conducted with three focus groups consisting of secondary intensive reading teachers from three Florida counties respectively, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns.

The bounding theoretical and conceptual frames of this study were founded in political systems theory and shared leadership. The data from this study were compiled from three focus groups consisting of secondary reading teachers who implemented Florida's secondary intensive reading policy. Data analysis was conducted using Boyatzis (1998) thematic approach as a means of analyzing the interview data. The data were coded using Sabatier's (1986) construct of empowerments and constraints. Themes were identified using Hatch's (2002) approach to inductive analysis. Eisner's (1998) concept of educational criticism and professional literature within the educational criticism process provided a guide to the selection of important and relevant ideas based on my connoisseurship of the secondary reading initiative and my experience as a reading coach and teacher during the initiative.

Three overarching themes were identified from the analysis of the teachers' experiences: (a) A sudden change of content is a challenge to implementing policy change; (b) Challenges from inside and outside of the classroom hindered policy implementation; (c) Policy implementation brings insights: changing trends in assessment formats and

instructional implications may call for new instructional strategies. This study found teachers were not adequately prepared in all areas to undertake the implementation of a new content area. In recounting their perceptions regarding their experiences of this policy implementation, teachers were exceptionally open about the areas in which they were not prepared to do the tasks they were given to do. This study also found teachers were valuable resources of information about the policy implementation process.

Participant responses reinforced the need for communication and dialogue between secondary reading teachers and district level administration with particular emphasis on incorporating teacher feedback on student scheduling issues, instructional technology issues, and curriculum resources and development. Participants strongly reinforced the need for intra-district and inter-district collaborative professional development. Participants in this study speculated on the implications of online literacy as opposed to its more traditional form. They noted that reading online is a different experience from reading a book or a test in paper format, and they perceived a gap in their instructional methods and knowledge regarding how to instruct students in online literacy.

Based on the discussion of this research, recommendations for further research and educational leadership were developed.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study was concerned with the experiences of classroom teachers in secondary schools who implemented Florida's secondary intensive reading policy from 2004 until 2011. These classroom teachers were tasked with teaching remedial reading to secondary students. In Florida, remedial reading courses are known as "intensive reading" classes. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the teachers of these "intensive reading" classes were called secondary intensive reading teachers.

Education as a Political and Social System

Education is a highly contested cultural institution because it is highly politicized; the existence of a system to transmit knowledge and culture engenders a conflict for control of which knowledge and which cultural values can and should be transmitted to subsequent generations. However, many of the stakeholders of educational policy, such as classroom teachers, have had a limited role in the policy-making process. By understanding the experiences of these teachers, it is possible to evaluate and refine, at both local and state levels, the policy implementation process for continuous improvement of adolescent literacy.

In reviewing literature for this study, I did not find a "de-briefing" of the secondary intensive reading teachers who were responsible for implementing Florida's 2004 secondary reading initiative. In order to achieve a more efficient approach to systemic instructional and organizational change, a system must be concerned not only

with its teachers' instructional outcomes, but also with the assimilation of the experiential knowledge of these teachers about the practical realties of classroom implementation to refine the policy implementation processes.

The American K-12 educational system is inherently a social system. This system is comprised of people, has a hierarchical structure, receives inputs, releases outputs, contains subsystems, and interacts with other systems within the environment. As such, it is subject to policy. Although there is no consensus on the definition of public policy and, by extension, educational policy, various definitions of policy were useful in the course of this study.

Cochran, Mayer, Carr, and Cayer (1999) termed policy as the actions of government as well as the intent of the actions of government. Dye (1992) defined policy simply as the actions or inactions of government. Peters (1999) described policy as direct or indirect government activity that has influence on the lives of citizens.

Given these definitions, governments set and regulate boundaries on their citizens.

Moreover, given that governments are concerned both with their citizens and with the stability of government, it is logical to conclude that the intention of policy is for the public good. Differing individual values will influence the perception of a policy as beneficial or detrimental. Policy, for the purposes of this study, was defined as directives enacted to guide decision-making and achieve rational outcomes. Such policies originate internally and externally to the system they affect. These policies illustrate the interaction of subsystems within the educational system as well as interactions with other systems external to the educational system. For school systems, interactions with the government and legislative systems at local, state, and federal levels are the most visible because these interactions are made public through news outlets and legislated mandates such as The No Child Left Behind

Act. Policy is intrinsically political both in etymology and in practical functioning.

Educational policies, the collection of rules and laws that govern the operation of the K-12 educational system, are formulated by government officials, representatives, and agents at various levels.

Educational Policy Implementation in the Classroom

Bhola (1975) suggested that the intent of policy is "to direct and harness social power for social outcomes" (p. 1). Policies also express the authoritative allocation of values by a decision-making body (Ball, 1990). Classroom teachers have *de facto* social power due to their placement within the educational system. The institutional studies of the public educational experience that took place in the 1970s are filled with the notion of decoupled classrooms (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978). That is the argument that schools respond to institutional pressures for change by decoupling or disconnecting structural change from instructional methods inside the classroom. Researchers have argued that schools respond to pressures in the institutional environment (i.e., district or state mandates) by making symbolic or superficial changes in structure and procedures such as open versus block scheduling. Examples of such symbolic and superficial changes have been illustrated by mandates requiring classroom teachers to create and maintain standards-based bulletin boards, adopt specific routines, and teach state standards descriptions to students verbatim by rote.

By decoupling these changes from classroom practice, researchers have argued that the teacher and the students are buffered from environmental pressures (Deal & Celotti, 1980; Driscoll, 1995; Firestone, 1985; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978). That is, if policy mandates—such as teaching state standards to students verbatim—are not monitored or strictly enforced, then they are not implemented, and the

mandate has no practical effect on the classroom procedure. The decoupling argument suggests that the institutional environment (school, district, state, and federal mandates) has little influence on teachers in the classroom. This image of the decoupled classroom is potent because it has provided an explanation for the numerous studies that have recounted the failure of school reform efforts to reach classroom practice (Cohen, 1988; Cuban, 1993; Elmore, 1996; Sarason, 1990). The image of the decoupled classroom also provides validity to past research on the occupational norm of autonomy in teachers' work (Goodlad, 1984; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Additionally, it perpetuates the long-held public misperception that teachers simply close their classroom doors to unwanted pressures and priorities and teach with impunity (Goodlad, 1984; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975).

Although teachers continue to be the point of contact for policy implementation, their ability to "decouple" by closing their door has been severely limited. Both federal and state legislation have forced open the classroom door. The trend of accountability in the wake of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) seems to assess teacher performance by student outcomes as well as by dictating curriculum requirements and removing due process protections, thereby allowing teachers to be removed from the classroom if their students do not meet minimum criteria on standardized tests. All educational mandates and reforms must be implemented through the classroom teacher; whether teachers cooperate freely or are coerced through threats and fear to implement public policy will have significant impact on the systemic health and well-being of public education.

Rationale for the Study of Secondary Intensive Reading Teachers' Experiences

In constructing a rationale for understanding the value of listening to the stories of secondary intensive reading teachers, I relied on political systems theory (Easton, 1957) and

the concepts of shared leadership. Political systems theory offers a means to understand the way policies are created and the way they are implemented; it also demonstrates that the policy process is not linear but is recursive through a feedback loop. This feedback loop allows for input back into the policy process for adjustment, refinement, and continuous improvement (Easton, 1957).

I also drew from the concepts of shared leadership—that is, the idea that leadership can be a social process, something that happens between people (Gastil, 1994; Heifetz, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). The concept of shared leadership recognizes (a) that in situations, either in a formal organization for example, the education system or in an informal organization, like a family, there are goals, tasks, expectations, and decision making; (b) that goals, tasks, expectations, and decision making involve influence; (c) that problems and issues are the responsibility of all people in the organization; (d) that all people within the organization need to participate and share in the process of owning problems and issues; (e) that learning and development within the organization is necessary so that people can share, understand, and contribute to what is happening within the organization; and (f) that informed, respectful, and open conversation is central to this process.

Within educational organizations, the professional experiences of teachers can be seen as integral pieces of information to connect the implementers of policy to the policy agenda through their feedback. Also, teachers' knowledge and experiences can serve in forming and reforming policy agenda issues. I selected these theoretical and conceptual frames because they incorporate the input of all affected stakeholders and therefore value the "voices" within the group of stakeholders as input for leadership.

Historical Background on Educational Reform in Relation to Literacy Policy

Reports of deficiencies in American schools are certainly nothing new, and each report of deficiency spawns a reactionary tide of reform. Only the target of the reform seems to change. As early as 1910, reformers bemoaned the number of children and youth who were not in the American public education system or any other education system. Today, those reformers might feel they had accomplished their goal with the compulsory attendance laws now in place. They might also have been delighted with the increased role and specialization of the public schools, the varied curriculum, and the increased number of educational specialists and educators with advanced degrees in the field. The reformers of the 1950s who, after Sputnik, felt that America's curriculum in science and math was inferior to that of the Soviet Union, might take comfort in the fact that curriculum is now planned around benchmarks and standards and that learning is measured by a standardized means of assessment. The social-justice reformers of the 1960s might take comfort from the fact that there are differing standards and subsidies for those of low economic status to assist them in their quest for social equalization and status. The tide of reform is anything but new; only the laments of the leaders of the reform seem to change (Tyack, 1974).

At the start of the 21st century, a wave of reform was felt because the American public had been bombarded with reports of a deficient public educational system since the National Commission on Excellence in Education wrote its report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983. This report depicted a decline of student performance in American education as compared to its global counterparts and urged immediate reform. The Commission emphasized the importance of higher-order critical thinking skills: being able to comprehend, evaluate, and interpret written materials and produce well-organized and effective papers, and being able to

listen effectively and to discuss topics intelligently with particular emphasis on honing these skills in the secondary grades.

Although the National Commission on Excellence in Education and its findings concerning the state of education in 1983 are points of political contention, proponents on both sides of the issue of the quality of American education accept that these outcomes are desirable in the education of America's youth. In 1999, William Bennett published a list of statistical facts, which he compiled from the Digest of Education Statistics and various policy institutes, entitled 20 Troubling Facts about American Education. Some of the statistics cited on this list indicated that the United States lagged woefully behind other nations in student performance in math and science. Bennett said that 10 million illiterate students had reached their senior year between 1983 and 1999, that 20 million students had reached their senior year without basic math abilities, that almost 25 million had reached their senior year without adequate knowledge in social studies, and that the academic skills and abilities of an average 17-year-old Black or Hispanic student were roughly equivalent to the academic skills of an average 13-year-old White student.

Other statistics from Bennett's list related to teacher quality. Only 38% of U.S. public school teachers majored in an academic subject in college. A full 40% of public high-school science teachers had neither an undergraduate major nor minor in their main teaching field, and 34% of public high-school math teachers did not major or minor in mathematical or related fields. Only one in five teachers felt well prepared to teach to high academic standards.

With such statistics in the minds of the public, the necessity for education reform had become a foregone conclusion. The debate over the best ways to construct the necessary

reforms has been on-going. The primary reason behind a reform should logically be to improve the quality of the academic preparation of students with knowledge, skills, and dispositions for success in life—the students' well-being and proclivity to become active and responsible members of society.

Extensive accountability measures have been implemented in U.S. public education at federal, state, and district levels in response to low student performance on high-stakes standardized assessments of academic competence. One particular area of concern, adolescent literacy, became a prime area of focus as national data reports, such as Kamil's *Adolescents and Literacy: Reading in the 21st Century* (2003), Biancarosa and Snow's *Reading Next: A Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York* (2004), and The Alliance for Excellent Education's *High-school Teaching for the Twenty-First Century* (2007), indicated a decrease in graduation rates and in the subsequent pursuit of post-secondary education. This area became a priority because poor literacy skills and lack of higher or continuing post-secondary education had subsequently imposed limitations on the employability of students exiting the public K-12 education system (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Instructional mandates such as the law now known as No Child Left Behind (2002) gave individual states the ability to formulate and implement programs to remedy declining student performance and graduation rates.

Florida's Response for Intervention

Florida, in 2004 governed by Jeb Bush, took a leading position among the states in its tactics to improve literacy. Florida's groundbreaking initiative was to extend intensive remedial reading classes to the secondary curriculum and to make these courses mandatory for students not demonstrating reading proficiency on the Florida Comprehensive

Assessment Test (FCAT). Before this initiative, reading instruction and teacher preparation for reading instruction had been restricted to elementary education. Secondary education had been concerned with matters of specific content in the four core areas of science, social studies, mathematics, and English (language arts), and students' ability to read proficiently had been assumed with their passage from elementary to secondary school. The introduction of intensive remedial reading at the secondary level meant, most practically, that secondary teachers—many of whom did not have an elementary background nor education or experience in teaching reading—needed to become pioneers in the unfamiliar territory of reading instruction, assessment, understanding the deficits of various reading disabilities, and remediation.

Evan Lefsky, a reading specialist and the director of Just Read, Florida!, cited the research and recommendations of Biancarosa and Snow (2004) as well as Guthrie (2002) as justification for the design of Florida's mandated secondary intensive reading plan in the publication, *Reading at Risk: The State Response to the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy* (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2006). Under this plan, any student who scored below Level 3 out of a possible five levels on the reading portion of the FCAT was mandated by state law to be enrolled in an intensive reading class. This class, depending on the students' Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test results, ranged from 50 to 100 minutes in duration. This block of time took the place in a students' schedule of an elective or an elective plus physical education. The courses were to be taught by teachers who were designated highly-qualified (according to the Department of Education) secondary intensive reading teacher. However, the designation of *secondary intensive reading teacher* did not exist prior to this implementation; therefore, few teachers met the highly-qualified

classification. Because of this, the designation for highly-qualified was modified concerning secondary intensive reading teachers. That is, they were to be certified in reading, hold the state reading endorsement, or be enrolled in courses and making progress toward obtaining the endorsement in order to be deemed highly-qualified.

Implementation issues focused on qualification

Under the mandate of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all teachers must be "highly qualified." The NCLB emphasized the importance of teacher quality in improving student achievement and required each state educational agency (SEA) to develop and implement a plan to help local educational agencies (LEAs) within the state to ensure that public school teachers were highly qualified. NCLB required LEAs to ensure that public elementary school teachers were highly qualified to teach the basic elementary school curricula and that junior high, middle, and secondary school teachers were highly qualified to teach the core academic subject they were assigned to teach. The core academic subjects were defined as English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, history, geography, and the fine arts.

According to the Florida Department of Education website, in order to be highly qualified in Florida, teachers in core academic subjects must be fully certificated by the state, hold a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited or approved institution, and demonstrate through observations subject matter competency for the core academic subject assigned. Teachers must major in the subject area, take subject content courses as required by the Florida Department of Education, and have passing scores on Florida subject-area examinations or hold advanced certificates. Teachers of multiple subjects must be highly qualified in each of their core subject teaching areas. However, in Florida, as in other states,

there are shortages of highly qualified teachers, especially in areas of critical need such as reading.

Critics of NCLB have constantly pointed out that the schools with the highest number of students with low socioeconomic status (SES) typically have teachers who have not been deemed highly qualified or have little teaching experience (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Darling-Hammond (2003, 2004) has repeatedly called for a federal teacher policy to focus on the recruitment of teachers for areas of critical academic need and teachers to serve within impoverished locations. She has advocated the use of scholarship incentives and forgivable loans, stronger teacher preparation programs, and improvement to teacher retention and effectiveness by increasing mentor support during the beginning years of teaching when attrition is most likely to occur.

Demands of the Mandate

Florida's implementation of secondary reading was immediate upon passage of the law; therefore, teachers were being trained concurrently with the demand that they deliver high quality instruction—with the yearly FCAT score as the measure of their success.

Failure to perform to the standards set by the state carried significant negative repercussions for the students, teachers, schools, and districts. Each year since 2004, the performance requirements have increased significantly and, in the minds of some teachers, unreasonably; yet, the mandates of implementation remain the same. However, the teachers' commitment to positive educational outcomes for students who struggle with literacy has been evident based on their investment of time, energy, and personal expense to fulfill the requirements for endorsement. The teachers hired for secondary reading instruction have been required to complete extensive additional professional development in addition to their certification

requirements. They acquired this specialized knowledge and training during non-contractual hours and in many cases bore significant personal costs to attain Florida's reading endorsement.

An ever-increasing volume of research has been accumulating on the problem of lowlevel adolescent literacy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Carter & Klotz, 1991; Frey, 2002; Graham & Herbert 2010; Graham & Perin, 2006; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007 Hock & Deshler, 2003; Kamil, 2003;). Florida's model of secondary reading instruction has been heralded by many in the world of literacy education as a solid foundation for improving literacy instruction nationwide. In an article, written by Ron Matus, from the June 19, 2008, St. Petersburg Times, "Florida's Education System Being Used as a Model for other States?" Kathy Christie, chief of staff for the non-partisan Education Commission of the States, which assists policymakers nationwide, was quoted as follows: "Florida's system has been held in pretty high regard. I can't tell you how many times I've highlighted policies in Florida." Florida's successful efforts have inspired similar policy changes in many states to improve adolescent literacy. Florida's policy implementation is acclaimed by the federal government and has been provided to many states as a model for state legislators (Torgesen et al., 2007). It has been over five years since this policy began to be implemented in Florida; thorough evaluation and assessment of the policy implementation will be needed for continuous improvement of literacy instruction.

Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of the experiences of teachers who had taught secondary intensive reading in three Florida counties—Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns—as a result of Florida's reading policy

experienced the policy implementation, these teachers were qualified to provide valuable feedback to inform future policy implementation procedures within the context of their instructional frame of experience. They may provide information on general implementation issues as well. That is, although the teachers' experiences are limited to the reading policy implementation, their experiences may provide informational feedback to other policy implementations in education. Because the issues surrounding the teaching of secondary intensive reading are complex, and the teachers' interactions with the issues are complex, this study was qualitative in nature. Focus groups consisting of secondary intensive reading teachers were conducted in various secondary schools throughout all three counties. This investigation was done using qualitative inquiry through focus groups.

Significance of the Study

The creation of secondary intensive reading in the State of Florida in 2004 had a major impact on teacher qualifications, teacher preparation, course scheduling, and curriculum. Much information had been collected by researchers, such as the Florida Center for Reading Research, on student achievement and districts' responses to the state's intervention. However, relatively little information existed about the experiences of teaching within a new content area inside the developing field of low level adolescent literacy. An exploratory study of the experiences and perceptions of secondary intensive reading teachers provided a means to expand to the body of professional knowledge in the area of low-level adolescent literacy.

Research Question

What were the perceptions of secondary intensive reading teachers regarding their experiences as they undertook the implementation of the secondary intensive reading classes in response to policy?

Definition of Terms

To foster clarity in the reading of this study, it was important to define key terms utilized in the study. The following list of definitions provides clarity in the use of terms relevant to the present study. Terms that are specific to a pertinent idea or concept within a specific section of this dissertation are identified and discussed within that context.

Secondary Intensive Reading: For the purpose of this study, secondary intensive reading was defined as remedial reading courses situated within the context of the secondary classroom, i.e., grades 6-12.

Secondary Intensive Reading Teacher: A secondary intensive reading teacher was defined as a teacher who was assigned to teach remedial reading courses in grades 6-12.

Building or School Administrator: A building or school administrator referred to an administrative official, such as a principal, a vice-principal or an assistant principal located at a particular school site.

District Administrators or Administration: District administrators or administration referred to professional educators at the county or district level who make decisions on the operations of school sites within their purview.

Reading Coach: Reading coaches were defined in the study as specially trained master teachers who provide leadership for a school's literacy program and offer on-site and ongoing support for teachers so they can improve the literacy skills of their students.

Professional Development: Professional development was defined as continued education designed to advance knowledge and teaching skills.

Reading Endorsement: This term referred to a series of professional development courses, totaling 300 hours of contact time, required by the Florida Department of Education for teachers without a degree or certification in reading to be eligible to teach reading.

Reading Endorsed: This term referred to teachers who successfully completed the 300-hour professional development known as the reading endorsement and were eligible to teach reading in field.

High Stakes Testing: This term referred to standardized testing, the data from which was used to make placement decisions for students.

Benchmark Testing: This term referred to testing done at various times throughout the year that mimicked high stakes testing.

Progress Monitoring: This term referred to testing of various format with the intent of measuring student progress.

Limitations of the Study

A study attempting to collect data on the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers on a national or state level was beyond the scope of this research. This study was limited because it attempted to investigate and amass data solely within a sample of secondary intensive reading teachers in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties in Florida. These counties were chosen because their demographics are representative of urban, rural, and suburban populations.

A second limitation was that this study related only to secondary intensive reading teachers within the implementation of the 2004 Florida literacy initiative. That is, each state

has its own requirements and procedures; therefore, the conclusions of the study may not directly generalizable to teachers, other policy implementers, or policy-makers in other locations. However, as Donmoyer (1990) has explained, generalizability in qualitative research does not mean than the research is directly applicable to individuals, but rather that individuals may incorporate the findings of the research into their knowledge and integrate such with their own experience. This study aimed solely to add to the existing body of empirical knowledge regarding the policy implementation process and the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers.

A third limitation involved the evolving body of knowledge on secondary intensive reading instruction and teachers who elect to enter this subject area. As of 2009, there existed almost no research regarding this particular population of teachers. Therefore, this study forged connections to more general and known areas of research in its pedagogical, philosophical, and theoretical underlying assumptions.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the problem under investigation. In this study, I sought to explore and understand the perceptions of secondary intensive reading teachers regarding their experiences with Florida's secondary reading policy implementation. This study was conducted with a sample population of secondary intensive reading teachers in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties in Florida. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of this group of instructional policy implementers is necessary to improve future policy implementation. This understanding is crucial to improving the process of policy implementation within the educational system and, by extension, providing a positive impact on teaching and learning. Chapter 2 contains a literature review within the context of

Easton's (1957) political systems theory and the concepts of shared leadership. Chapter 3 describes the procedures that were used in the study: the data collection process and the means of analysis. Chapter 4 contains the data and the data analysis. Chapter 5 provides the discussion of the findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Easton's (1957) political systems theory, and the conceptual frame is related to the concepts of shared leadership. The theoretical and conceptual frames support the rationale for investigating the experiences and perceptions of secondary intensive reading teachers. Political systems theory encompasses the policy-making process, and this touches all individuals affected by policy. All individuals affected by a policy implementation are stakeholders of that policy. A critical component to political systems theory is feedback on the results of policy.

The concept of shared leadership interacts with political systems theory in that it values the voices of many, not just those in traditional leadership positions. The value that shared leadership gives to the knowledge and skills of a group highlights the unique experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers. That is, the concept of shared leadership gives weight to their experiences and makes their particularistic knowledge "worth knowing" in the world of research.

This chapter presents Easton's political systems theory as it relates to the policy-making process and feedback for continuous improvement. A review of literature on shared leadership is included to illustrate the importance of the addition of secondary intensive reading teachers' voices to the body of knowledge in empirical research. The last part of this chapter contains an examination of literature with regard to peer support and on-going professional development.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Easton's Political Systems Theory

Merriam Webster's dictionary (2010) defines "politics" as political actions, practices, or policies, and as the total complex of relations between people living in society. Politics, by etymological deconstruction, refers to the way a society or collective group within a society makes decisions. In his model of systems theory in political science, Easton (1957) took a behavioral approach to decision making. According to David Easton, behavioralism is "analytic, not substantive, general rather than particular, and explanatory rather than ethical." In this, the theory seeks to evaluate political behavior without "introducing any ethical evaluations" (Reimer, 1997). Within his model, the political system has precise boundaries and a fluid systematic approach to decision making.

As stated in Chapter 1, the educational system is highly political. Decisions are made through government actions at various levels to guide and control social power for social outcomes. Easton's (1957) model clearly shows the flow of inputs and outputs in the policy making process. In the following diagram, Figure 1, Easton's (1957) model of political systems theory depicts from the upper left environmental factors give rise to inputs into the political system in terms of demands and support. The sector labeled "A political system" denotes the process within a society or sector of society by which decisions are made. These decisions or policies are then released to the environment as outputs. They are then implemented, and feedback is issued as a system input. This is a cyclical process.

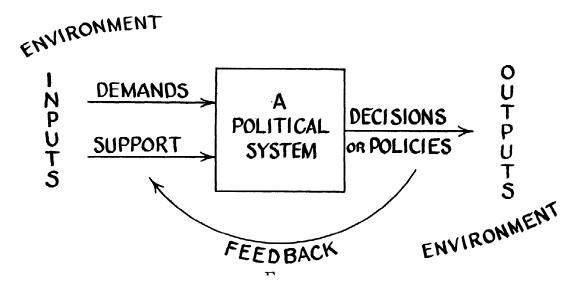


Figure 1. Easton's (1957) model of political systems theory.

Easton's conception of the policy-making process has five definite phases:

- Phase 1. Changes in the social or physical environment surrounding a political system produce "demands" and "supports" for action or the status quo directed as "inputs" towards the political system, through political behavior.
- Phase 2. These demands and the groups supporting them stimulate
 competition in a political system, leading to decisions or "outputs" directed at some
 aspect of the surrounding social or physical environment.
- Phase 3. After a decision or output is made (e.g., a specific policy), it interacts with its environment; if it produces change in the environment, there are "outcomes."
- Phase 4. When a new policy interacts with its environment, outcomes may generate new demands or supports and groups in support or against the policy ("feedback") or a new policy on some related matter.
- Phase 5. A feedback loop leads back to Phase 1, and the process is cyclic.

Easton's model is a behavioral approach to "politics," which is herein defined to mean anything having relevance to policies and systems. Easton proposed that, like any system, the political system has precise boundaries and a fluid process of decision-making. It is a superior, if simplistic, model for understanding the policy process within a democratic political system and is the most widely accepted model within the pluralist theory of politics—i.e., the theory that power is distributed widely among a number of social groups rather than exclusively held by the electorate or an elite group (Dahl, 1961).

The model begins with changes in the physical or social environment, which create dissonance. The result of these changes is a demand or support for either a change in policy or the status quo. These demands and supports act as "inputs" into the political system via political behaviors—for example, vocal media inputs, taxpayers' redress through their elected officials, and grassroots movements. These inputs stimulate the political system as it begins the process of negotiation for a solution; there are always competing agendas and values systems in play. When these negotiations are completed, the political system sends its decision into the environment as an output. This decision, or output, is a policy—i.e., it is the embodiment of the collective will of the political system. It interacts with the surrounding environmental systems and produces some kind of change in the environment. This interaction is the implementation of the policy. In response to the policy implementation, some sort of change should occur. These changes are the outcomes of the policy and become the germ of environmental dissonance; thus, the process begins again. So long as the system continues to operate as described, it is deemed a stable system; a breakdown at any point in the process renders the system unstable and dysfunctional.

The policy-making process lies in the sector of Easton's model labeled as the "Political System." The policy process is a sequence of events that occurs as the system contemplates various solutions to public problems, espouses a solution, implements the solution, and then evaluates the impact of the solution on the environment. For the educational system, the policy process occurs within boundaries of federal and state legislation. The policies created by the legislation are outputs to districts, schools, and teachers. The district gives directive to the school's administration, the school's administration gives directive to the teachers, and the teachers are to implement the policy. Given that the teacher is the last to implement the policy, the teacher should then be one of the first to give feedback to the policy implementation process, as an "eye-witness" to the implementation outcomes.

The Iterative Nature of Policy

This process is issue-driven, and all policy issues are intrinsically controversial (Fowler, 2008). Although it is depicted as a linear sequence for theoretical understanding, the practical reality is often a non-linear process (Cibulka, 1995; Lindblom, 1968). The following, Figure 2, illustrates the policy process.

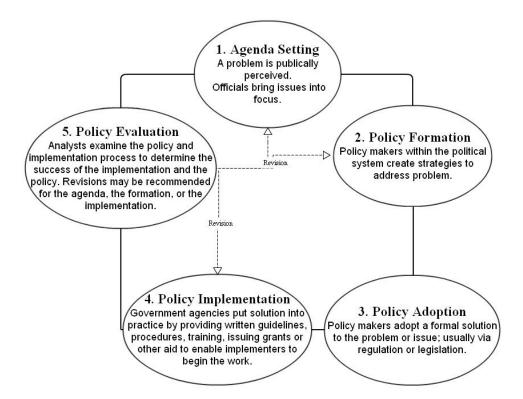


Figure 2. A cyclical model of policy and possible revision loops based on the writings of Cibulka (1995), Fowler (2008), and Lindbloom (1968).

The Agenda Setting stage, sometimes called the "issue definition" stage is the formation of the perceived problem and a vague idea of what the desired solution should be as the result of the implementation of a policy. An example of this might be a busy intersection in town where there are many accidents. At some point, the public's limit of the "acceptable" number of accidents at the intersection will be reached. When this happens, someone will say something like, "There ought to be a stop light at this intersection." Other people will agree or disagree. The issue will be brought before the county board of supervisors to be framed as a public issue.

When public officials give credence to the observations that there are too many accidents, and that a stop light might prevent them, then the issue of the busy intersection is now on the public agenda. The agenda is another way of naming the political "radar," or, as

Kingdon (2003) stated, "the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time" (p. 3). Powerful actors – policy think tanks, legislators, and chief executives at the state and federal levels – set this agenda. The resulting policy is the written expression of the decision of the actors within the political system. This policy is then adopted or enacted by statute. This statute is subsequently infused into the environment for other systems to implement. This process cannot be accomplished successfully if the policy is issued merely as a chain of command order; it must be enacted at the most basic levels within its targeted systems in order for change to occur (Rand Corporation, 1974; Fowler, 2008). That is, the implementers of the policy must espouse and own the policy in order for real and lasting change to occur. After a reasonable amount of time, responsible policy-makers evaluate the policy outcomes as well as the implementation processes in order to determine if the policy is effective and implemented appropriately and to monitor for iatrogenic—negative, unintended—results.

The Purpose of Policy Evaluation

A policy evaluation serves two general purposes. First by conducting a thorough evaluation, all stakeholders gain information about what has been accomplished. This information can help those who have provided funding—for example, governmental agencies and private grant foundations, if applicable—to refine their strategies for policy change. Secondly, the policy evaluation process documents the impact and value of the people who have advocated for the policy change, those who have engaged in the policy-making process, and those who have implemented the policy. This documentation allows everyone in the process to celebrate successes, but it also gives valuable information to everyone in the

process to allow for adjustment and refinement for further success (Fowler, 2001, 2008). In an ideal world, a policy implementation would solve whatever problem it was intended to solve immediately. However, the reality is that because policy-making and policy-implementing are all carried out by human beings, there is a high probability that errors will occur. It is not that anyone is deliberately making a mistake—but the policy filters through many individuals' understandings before its final implementation.

The Value of Feedback

Mistakes, or failures, will occur. This is not necessarily bad. Innovators in all fields of endeavor have learned that failure is just part of the process; however, it is the most beneficial to the process when it is a fast and "forward" failure; that is, a mistake that gives valuable feedback in a timely manner. An illustration of this concept: A rifle's purpose is to direct ammunition fire over a long distance with accuracy. It is designed with a helical groove inside the barrel that makes contact with the bullet and puts a spin on it as it leaves the weapon. The spin of the bullet gives the projectile a gyroscopic stability, which guides the bullet through the air without tumbling. This reduces resistance and improves the rate of accuracy in striking the desired target. However, the rifle does not operate on its own. There is a human element involved.

The person firing the rifle, if he or she hopes to hit the desired target, must first face in the target's general direction. Then he or she must use the sight or the scope of the rifle to refine his or her aim. Using the scope or the sight reduces the margin of error; however, it does not eliminate it entirely because in the manufacturing and assembly process of the rifle there is yet another human element involved. There is no guarantee that the sight or scope is perfectly calibrated. The only way to assess the accuracy of this calibration is to take aim as

carefully as possible, fire the weapon, and measure how far the bullet strike was from the intended target. Although the shooting sequence is commonly described as "ready, aim, fire," the reality is "aim, fire, adjust." It is only by calculating how far off the mark the bullet fell that one can adequately adjust the aim to ensure better target accuracy.

If one thinks of the policy-making process as the rifle, the policy as the bullet, and the intersection of the bullet and the target as the final implementation, the persons who are the closest to the target have valuable information to share with the person who took aim and pulled the trigger. Similarly, the rifle's designer, the manufacturer, everyone involved with the experience, including the neighbor who objects to the noise, has an insight on the experience. However, only the person who is closest to the target will be able to share the information most needed to assess the accuracy of the shot.

By including perspectives of multiple stakeholders, the policy process works to refine policies for continuous improvement; but particularly including classroom teachers allows educational policy-makers to assess the accuracy of their aim. Classroom teachers are among the stakeholders within the educational system. They receive inputs to their teaching from the system in the form of policy directives, which they then implement. However, the flow of the input cannot stop with the teacher. The classroom teacher must provide an output that interacts with other parts of the educational system. The classroom teacher's experience and feedback are significant inputs to the educational system as a whole. These inputs contribute to the system's viability by giving information for adaptation to change and continuous improvement.

The Evolution of Leadership Roles

As the outcome of a policy depends on its successful implementation at the most basic levels within systems, the implementers of the policy shape and frame the policy as they define, develop, and implement it within the context of their understandings and everyday life and work. Educators are widely accepted as implementers and followers of policy; their role as influencers and makers of policy has been downplayed with the paradigm of and "us and them" relationship between classroom educators and administrators. The classic paradigm of leadership within the educational system as a whole and the organization in particular has been that influence and decision-making inputs are the domain of management and administration (Palestini, 2011).

A positivistic view of organizational theory designates a chosen leader who dictates unquestionable orders to the followers (Follett, 1918). A post-positivistic view of organizational theory sees the viability of the organization as dependent on the ability of the leader to empower followers to transform themselves into leaders within their roles with a common vision and purpose. Alternatives to the positivistic view of leadership began to appear in the writings of McGregor (1960), Vroom and Yetton (1973), Greenleaf (1977), Burns (1978), and Bass (1985).

McGregor (1960), with his description of Theory Y, posited that most workers are inherently honest and intrinsically motivated to do right things for the organization.

Therefore, workers can be trusted to handle responsibilities that might otherwise be the exclusive domain of top management. Vroom and Yetton (1973) built on the work of McGregor (1960) to develop a model describing the ways and appropriate situations in which leaders should involve their followers in decision-making processes.

Greenleaf (1977) described the importance of "servant leadership," which first involves understanding followers' needs and aspirations, subsequently helping them to fulfill these needs and achieve these aspirations in socially responsible and ethical ways. Most importantly, Greenleaf suggested that "servant leaders" could arise from any level within an organization. He also noted that these leaders are often not formally recognized as leaders and that their true value to the group may not be realized until they are gone—and when the direction of the group has become increasingly uncertain. Out of this observation, Greenleaf generated the idea that leaders could have great impact without being formally assigned, recognized, or labeled as such.

The transactional style of leadership was first described by Weber (1947) and again by Bass (1981). This kind of leadership focuses on the basic management process of controlling, organizing, and short-term planning. Transactional leadership involves motivating and directing the follower primarily through appealing to his or her own self-interest. The power of transactional leaders comes from their formal authority and responsibility in the organization. The main goal of the follower is to obey the instructions of the leader in order to obtain some reward. The leader believes in motivating through a system of rewards and punishment. The exchange between leader and follower takes place to achieve routine performance goals.

Burns (1978) was the first to express the idea of transformational leadership. He defined transformational leadership as the process through which leaders appeal to the ideals and morals of their followers to inspire them to attain their highest levels of achievement and to take personal ownership in the goals of the group. His work further stressed the

importance for the involvement of followers in shaping group goals, thereby becoming enriched in the course of their work.

Bass (1985) expanded the work of Burns, further developed the concept of transformational leadership, and gave it an increased importance in an organizational context. This evolution in leadership theory has led to the recognition that high performing groups do not always have formal traditional leadership structures (Manz & Sims, 1984).

In place of the traditional formal leadership structure, leadership may be distributed so that persons with relevant knowledge, skills, or abilities offer their views within specific situations; views are then digested and incorporated into the actions of the group or organization. Kiefer and Senge (1999) described organizations that operate this way as "metanoic" organizations because the deep visceral transformation from the positivistic to the post-positivistic paradigm could be likened to a "conversion experience." In organizations that have undergone such "conversions," individuals possessing titles of designated leadership didn't dominate the conversations. Instead, conversations naturally default to those possessing the most relevant knowledge regarding the problem or opportunity of the moment. This expanding view of leadership has led to the practice known as *shared leadership* (Pearce & Conger, 2003) or *distributed* leadership (Gronn, 2005).

These terms have sometimes been used interchangeably in the literature.

Defining the Construct of Shared Leadership

Many definitions of leadership exist in the literature. However, the various definitions tend to integrate on an underlying conceptualization of leadership as a process of influencing others. Yukl (2002) defined leadership, in general, as "the process of influencing

others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 7). This definition treats leadership as both a role and a social influence process and makes no assumptions about the direction of influence or the number of people who can perform the role (Yukl, 2002). As previously discussed in the evolution of the concept of shared leadership, traditional leadership theories have focused on vertical leadership. Vertical leadership refers to the paradigm in which a person who has been appointed to a position of authority exerts downward influence on subordinates.

However, appointed leaders are not the only ones who can demonstrate leadership behaviors. In team situations, team members can exert influence on each other and share the leadership process. Shared leadership, also sometimes referred to as distributed leadership, has been defined as a process of mutual influence, in which team members fully share in the leadership tasks of the team (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Pearce & Sims, 2000; Perry, Pearce, & Sims, 1999). It is a "team interaction process that involves behaviors in the domain of leadership" (Perry et al., 1999, p. 38). Shared leadership can be conceptualized as a serial emergence of multiple leaders over the life of a team (Pearce & Sims, 2002), or as the simultaneous sharing of leadership responsibilities among team members (Houghton, Neck, & Manz, 2003), or as the transference of the leadership role from team member to team member, in order to match the needs of the team to team members' knowledge, skills, and abilities (Burke, Fiore, & Salas, 2003).

The key concept to the construct is the understanding that the team as a whole participates in the leadership process. An illustration of this is a flock of geese flying in V formation. The V formation significantly increases the efficiency and range of flying birds,

particularly over long migratory routes. All of the birds except the leader fly in the upwash, or the upward flow of air, directed from the wingtip vortices, or the tubes of circulating air that occur with each wing flap, of the bird ahead. The upwash assists each bird in supporting its own weight in flight, in the same way a glider or a kite can climb or maintain height indefinitely in rising air. In a V formation of 25 members, each bird can achieve a reduction of induced drag, or air friction, by up to 65% and as a result increase their range by 71% (Clancy, 1975). The birds flying at the tips and at the front are rotated on and off these positions in a timely cyclical fashion to spread flight fatigue equally among the flock members. At any point in the journey, all of the geese will be both leaders and followers.

Shared leadership possesses some basic commonality with a variety of leadership and team process concepts. This is because multiple lines of research have served as historical bases for the shared leadership concept (Pearce & Sims, 2000). Because of the similarity of shared leadership to its antecedents, it is important to understand the nature of shared leadership. It is also important to distinguish it from other related constructs, such as leader emergence, leader substitutes, empowerment and self-leadership, and teamwork.

First, it is important to understand that shared leadership is often a process of "rising to the occasion." Shared leadership involves serial or simultaneous leader emergence, in which multiple team members emerge as leaders at different times or for different functions (Pearce & Sims, 2000). By contrast, the traditional concept of leader emergence is concerned with the ultimate "appointment" of a single leader by the team. Second, the literature on leadership substitutes has proposed that conditions such as routinization of work can substitute for formal leadership. Although this framework has been used as an historical foundation for understanding shared leadership, shared leadership is not just a substitute for

leadership; it is leadership in its own right (Pearce & Sims, 2000). It is an alternative source of leadership, not intended to replace the traditionally studied source, vertical leadership.

There is a place for both sources of leadership. However, the relationship between these two leadership sources is an important empirical question that has yet to be answered by research. Third, although decentralization of power is a major issue in the concepts of both empowerment and shared leadership, the two concepts are not synonymous (Pearce & Sims, 2000).

The difference between empowerment and shared leadership is that just because members of a team are empowered does not necessarily mean they will become actively engaged in the leadership process. Similarly, putting a group of self-leading team members together does not ensure the degree of collaboration and cooperation that is necessary for shared leadership (Cox, Pearce, & Sims, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2000, 2002). Admittedly, it is difficult to differentiate between shared leadership and teamwork because of the broad allencompassing definitions of teamwork. Day, Gronn, and Salas (2004) defined teamwork as "a set of interrelated and flexible cognitions, behaviors, and attitudes that are used to achieve desired mutual goals" (p. 863). However, Day et al. (2004) argued that shared leadership is an outcome of teamwork but also serves as an input for subsequent team process episodes (Day et al., 2004). That is, the collaboration, monitoring, and other behaviors that make up teamwork are necessary for team members to achieve the level of cooperation and common understanding of the team situation that is required for shared leadership to emerge. Additionally, shared leadership consequently serves to facilitate the same teamwork processes that helped lead to its development. Therefore, although they are distinct concepts, shared leadership and teamwork are intricately and developmentally intertwined.

Teacher Leadership and Responsibility

As the concept of leadership has expanded beyond an individual holding a position of authority, the responsibilities of leadership have also expanded. The accountability measures of the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) and the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) have brought the issues of student progress to public awareness. On March 24, 2011, Governor Rick Scott signed legislation that significantly changed the evaluation process for Florida instructional personnel and school-based administrators. Most parts of Senate Bill 736, The Student Success Act, were implemented as of July 1, 2011. Teacher evaluations have become increasingly dependent upon (a) teachers' skills in planning and presenting material, (b) teachers' professional development of themselves, (c) teachers' use of data to evaluation student performance to guide remedial instruction, and most recently (d) the percentage of teachers' students who score a level 3 or higher on the FCAT. Teachers are being encouraged to take part in the data evaluation process of their students to guide decision-making about classroom instruction.

Teachers are also being encouraged to engage in professional development to improve their use of data. These leadership responsibilities belong to the classroom teacher because they are the closest ones to the students and the instructional process. Privilege and responsibility are intertwined, like two sides of the same coin. If the teacher is to take the responsibility for the implementation of the policy and be evaluated by the measures previously described, then it is only reasonable and logical that their feedback on the process be collected and taken into account.

Although teachers are not policy-makers in the sense that they are not the creators or shapers of policy within the engine of the policy-making process, they must implement the

policy. Their insights on ways to improve the implementation process may assist in the shaping and refinement of policy for continuous improvement. This continuous improvement of instruction is the goal of the policy and, therefore, every teacher's responsibility. Thus, the shaping and influencing of policy are not the sole privilege of administration but also the responsibility of every classroom teacher. This responsibility is most practically performed in the evaluation and/or refinement phase of the policy implementation process—as teachers possess the relevant knowledge to answer the question of the moment. Their experiences and perceptions are valuable to understanding the implementation experience.

Policy Implementation and Evaluation

Policy implementation and evaluation might be viewed as a systematic professional process. The first step in the process is to determine the intended goals of the policy. The next step is to determine the indicators by which these goals are to be measured. After the indicators are determined, it is necessary to select or develop the data collection instruments and collect the data. These data are then analyzed and summarized in a written evaluation report. The evaluators then submit their recommendations to the policy actors for the policy process to begin again. It is important that any policy evaluation that is conducted meet the standards for evaluation. These criteria may be found in the 1994 *Program Evaluation Standards* (Joint Committee), and they are categorized into three main groups, which are as follows, usefulness, feasibility, and propriety. According to the standards of the Joint Committee, the evaluation team or individual conducting the evaluation should be well qualified for the undertaking. These people may include consultants, college professors, school district workers, or state department of education employees; the credentials of any

evaluator should be carefully scrutinized. In order to meet the standard for usefulness, it is very important that stakeholders be identified and that the collected data be meaningful:

Early in the study, a good evaluator identifies all the stakeholders, the people and groups involved in the program under study or those who might be affected by the outcome of the evaluation. Representative stakeholders should be interviewed so that their needs can be identified at the outset and addressed through the evaluation process. Moreover, data sources that are relevant to their needs should be selected. (Fowler, 2008, p. 315)

The purposes of the evaluation may vary. They may be summative if the policy has been in effect for a long period of time, but a formative evaluation enables policy actors to make necessary changes during the of the life of the policy for continuous improvement.

Communication for Continuous Improvement

In any organization, it is important that leaders communicate the vision and facilitate communication for effective organizational functioning (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Heifetz & Linksy, 2002; Senge et al., 1999). Within the policy-making process, communication with all the stakeholders is necessary for relevance and continuous improvement (Fowler, 2008). Communication has various meanings. Merriam Webster (2012) defined communication not just as the transmittal of information in a singular direction, but also as a "process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior." The exchange of information necessitates that this process be reciprocal. The communication of policy cannot be a reciprocal process unless and until information has been transmitted back to the policy-makers regarding the implementation process as feedback from the implementers—the classroom teacher.

The Value of Conversation

The methods of data collection, as well as the value of the kinds of data they are designed to gather, have a large role in meeting the standards of feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The positivistic paradigm, which values quantifiable data as the primary basis for testing truth, has yielded to a post-positivistic paradigm in many systems and organizations. However, there is a faction within the educational system that still values quantitative methods of evaluation above all others. This is, perhaps, because Americans want data that are easily depicted in visual form; they trust the "numbers" and the "bottom line." Statistical study has a mythical appeal as being "objective" and clean. However, this is not always the best means to discover the effectiveness of a policy (Brainard, 1996; Stufflebeam & Webster, 1983). This assertion is not to imply that qualitative data are superior; on the contrary, qualitative data are subjective and therefore deemed less useful in some people's thinking because they cannot be generalized to larger populations in the same way as quantitative data.

When obtaining feedback on a policy implementation, it is important to look at the way the policy affects the environment as a whole. In matters of policy implementation evaluation, as in research, the question asked must drive the methodology. However, policies are usually multi-faceted, and methodology is not bi-modally limited. Quantitative methods should be employed for matters quantifiable; however, matters that are particular and complex, such as the human experience, should be addressed via qualitative means (Brainard, 1996; Joint Committee, 1994; Wolf, 1990). A measurement of high-school graduation rates over time can be calculated mathematically; however, insights into the human processes of policy implementation must be gathered through deep and thorough

investigation of the human experiences of the policy implementers actively involved in the implementation process. A metaphor to illustrate: An architect designs a house using all the latest available data on structural integrity, efficient energy use, and the current trends in housing styles. This plan is then given to the construction company, and the house is built according to specifications. However, the implementation of the architect's vision is not complete until the homeowners move into the house. There are many things in the house that are good, and the homeowners are pleased until they try to plug in the lamp that needs to be beside the chair, and find there is not an electrical outlet within six feet, or they have to cross the entire length of the kitchen in the dark to turn on the light switch at the other end of the room. It is only by actually living in the house that insights develop on things to improve the experience. Likewise, with education policy, the teachers who have implemented the policy in their own classrooms have lived with both its attributes and detriments. They have the insight for improvement that could not occur to the policy's architects.

Professional Development and Peer Support

Within the context of traditional education and the traditional pathways to becoming an educator, much emphasis has been placed on pre-service teacher preparation due to concern for student achievement, advancement, and educational well-being. In the past, however, once the teacher obtained full certification, there was little support or guidance offered; teachers learned the greatest lessons in teaching by trial and error and by observing the successes of other teachers. The practice of leaving teachers to learn by trial and error has been largely discontinued.

A Teacher Induction Program (TIP) has been instituted at the state level (Fideler, 2000) and increased over the past 20 years to provide, among other supports, a mentor or

support teacher (Gottesman, 2000) to work with a beginning teacher in a less-threatening, "more collegial" environment (Huling-Austin, 1990; White & Mason, 2001). These programs have found a measure of success if implemented correctly. For correct implementation, the role of the mentor should be very clearly defined, and the purview of responsibilities of both the new teacher and the mentor should be clearly delineated (Brooks, 1999; ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, 1986 Greenberg & Erly, 1989; Johnston & Kay, 1987; Martin & Robbins, 1999; Waters & Bernhardt, 1989;). The choice of a peer teacher or mentor from among a faculty should not be based on seniority or on content knowledge or skills alone.

Dispositions are of equal importance in order to ensure a positive experience (Carter & Francis, 2001; Goleman, 1995; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 1997; Wood, 2001). Practices that are monitored continuously improve, and research has provided evidence that this improvement is also found with teacher mentors, whose success is evaluated by performance of the students in the mentees' classes (American Federation of Teachers, 2001; Angelle, 2002; Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002; Etheridge, 1989; Huling-Austin, 1990; Ishler & Kester, 1987; Portner, 2001; Scott, 2001; Varah, Theune & Parker, 1998; Villani, 2002). Having a mentor and peer support adds to the teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; this improves their knowledge and their leadership ability.

There is evidence that teachers receiving the support of a peer or mentor find it beneficial and are more likely to stay in the field (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fideler, 2000; Whitaker, 2000; Wood, 2001). In light of this, some educators see the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) as a logical and foregone conclusion in the continuum of requirements to enter the profession. They recommend further

participation in development programs for continued professional growth and efficacy (Huling-Austin, 1990; Wood, 2001) and even advocate bringing district supervisory personnel and faculty from local institutions of teacher preparation together to provide these programs (Carnegie Corporation, 2001). However, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) posited that the need for self-actualization is the final need that manifests after lower level needs have been satisfied; the same applies to teachers within their field. Whereas the basic details of knowledge, management, and skills may provide teachers with support to remain within the profession, the central question becomes, "what does the current and available professional development do to 'grow' them as competitive professionals?" Induction programs as well as professional development (PD) programs must be flexible enough to be tailored to teachers' individual and diverse needs,—one of those needs being the opportunity to further their own education in a meaningful way—and the choices of content and delivery options should be elastic with appropriate support systems and linked to a master's degree program (Varah et al., 1998).

Learning communities, in real time or in virtual settings, are a helpful means of constructing knowledge. Their purpose is to engage teachers in meaningful dialogues to share ideas, values, and practices in order to enhance pupil learning (Achinstein, 2002; Birchak et al., 1998; Bowman, 1989; Bush, 2003), with the end result being not only increased teacher quality and student performance, but also teachers' understanding of their own identities as lifelong learners (Grimmett, Mackinnon, Erickson, & Riecken, 1990; Hart & Marshall, 1992; Wildman, Niles, Magliaro & McLaughlin, 1990), enabling and empowering them to understand and appreciate their roles not only as transmitters but transformers of culture (Cuthell, 2002; Hamstra, 1996; Johnston & Kay, 1987; Louis, Marks

& Kruse, 1996). In understanding their roles as transmitters and transformers of culture, teachers' responsibilities toward their students are greatly increased. The task is not merely assuring that a student successfully passes an assessment test; it is much greater than that—it is to prepare students to function and contribute to their culture in a positive manner, so that when they have attained maturity they are well equipped to engage in the process of shaping their culture for positive ends. Therefore, the concern of the teachers is always for continuous improvement of their skills, knowledge, and dispositions in order to serve better the students they teach and the instructional system in which the teaching and learning processes occur. Effective professional development (PD) may be a means of achieving this continuous improvement.

A literature review by Kennedy (1998) mounted evidence that professional development could be effective and tried to identify key factors needed for efficacy.

Kennedy categorized studies according to the PD being studied and concluded the relevance of the content of the PD was particularly important. "Programs whose content focused mainly on teachers' behaviors demonstrated smaller influences on student learning than did programs whose content focused on teachers' knowledge of the subject, on the curriculum, or on how students learn the subject" (p. 18). Other researchers tested Kennedy's hypothesis in their subsequent studies (cf. Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Yoon, Garet, Birman, & Jacobson, 2006). In another study, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) could not make a claim for conclusive evidence about the most efficacious features of professional development to increase teacher efficacy and, by extension, student achievement. Teacher educators, however, have drawn heavily on pedagogical methods from an autonomous professional

stance. Their consensus of "best practices" (Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Kennedy, 1998; Little, 1993; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987; Wilson & Berne, 1999) has been grounded in various theoretical constructs and evidence posited by correlational and case studies. Although this consensus on "best practices" has been enduring, it does not address some key foundational principles that might be revolutionary to the area of professional development. Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) found that there is evidence to suggest the consensus that ongoing sustained professional development is more likely to be effective than isolated and occasional sessions. The efficacy of on-going sustained professional development is an area in which there has been consensus by teacher educators for quite some time; this has been evidenced by the model for student achievement through staff development, introduced over twenty years ago by Showers et al. (1987). This model for continuous improvement has served foundationally as the basis of the coaching paradigm in education. Figure 3 illustrates a loop of implementation, feedback, and evaluation for continuous improvement.

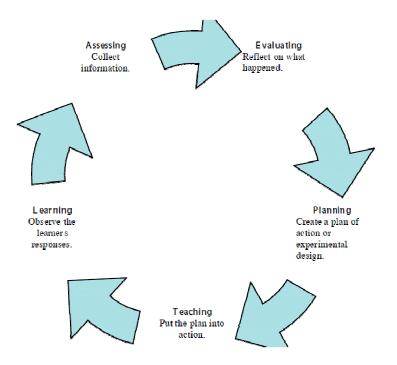


Figure 3. Feedback provides continuous improvement for staff development. Reprinted with permission from Synthesis of research on staff development: A framework for future study and a state-of-the-art analysis (Showers & Bennett, 1987, p.77).

The continuous improvement model, which has been employed for over two decades, has brought about an evolution in the ways teachers teach and in the ways they learn. Professional development is shifting from a spotlight presentation of a particular sage to a more collaborative model. Working with peer support and mentor support increases the capacity for leadership and performance. In a collaborative culture, members of the school community work together effectively and are guided by a common purpose. All members of the community—teachers, administrators, students, and their families—share a common vision of the way a school should be. Together they set goals that lead them toward this vision. In a collaborative, or collegial, culture, members of the school community work together effectively and are guided by a common purpose. Glickman (1993) addressed the evolution to a collaborative and collegial format for teacher learning and professional communities.

Being collegial means being willing to move beyond the social façade of communication, to discuss conflicting ideas and issues with candor, sensitivity, and respect. For many schools, the first job is to move from being conventional to being congenial, but the big job for public education is to become collegial, so that social satisfaction is derived mainly from the benefits derived from efforts on behalf of students. (pp. 21-22)

All members of the community share a common vision of the way the school should be. Together they set goals that lead them toward this vision. In doing so, they create a culture of discourse in which the most important educational matters facing the school are openly and honestly discussed. Members respect each other, value their differences, and are open to each other's ideas. Even when there is disagreement, people listen to each other because they deeply believe that their differences are vital in moving their school forward. The many different voices, experiences, and styles of the school community add to its strength and vitality. Collegial schools and collaborative teacher groups are characterized by purposeful, adult-level interactions focused on the teaching and learning of students. People do not necessarily socialize with one another, but they respect their differences of opinion about education. Mutual professional respect comes from the belief that everyone has the students' interest in mind.

Summary

This chapter presented Easton's political systems theory as it relates to the policy-making process and feedback for continuous improvement. A review of literature on shared leadership was included to illustrate the importance of teacher's voices into the body of

knowledge of empirical research. The last part of this chapter presented an examination of literature with regard to peer support and on-going professional development.

These three elements of the literature review worked together in the study of the perceptions of the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers and were selected purposefully. In order to rationalize and accept the notion of classroom teachers functioning within the policy process as not only implementers of policy, but as a source for feedback on the implementation of policy, it was necessary to connect the classroom teacher as a stakeholder to the policy making process using political systems theory. Because most traditional models of leadership posit that leadership is positional, it was necessary to examine the evolution of modern thought on leadership that ties leadership to expertise and function rather than a sole adherence to position. Teachers have not been historically deemed as leaders. That designation has been reserved for administration. In looking to concepts of shared leadership, the relative positions of administrators and the teachers do not hinder the process of actual leadership in areas in which specialized knowledge for the improvement of the implementation process is held by a particular group. That is, if the knowledge for improvement of the implementation process is held by the teachers, then the teachers function as a voice of leadership to convey that knowledge for continuous improvement of both the implementation process and student instruction. The final segment of this literature review concerned professional development and peer support. These topics seemed particularly relevant because of the induction process each secondary intensive reading teacher completed. As the content area of reading was new to the secondary schools, teachers were required to undergo extensive professional development. The state of Florida advocated this professional development within the context of a coaching model for peer

support. Therefore, I deemed it necessary to look at the literature on professional development and peer support. By connecting these topics together in a literature review, it was my purpose to create a foundation on which to begin an examination of the perceptions of secondary reading teachers' experiences.

Chapter 3 contains the research design of the study, the sample, and the survey instruments. Chapter 4 contains the data and the data analysis. Chapter 5 provides the discussion of findings, and recommendations.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter 3 focuses on the research design and methodology of the study. This chapter discusses the qualitative strategies chosen, the role of the researcher, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, strategies for validating findings, narrative structure, and ethical issues faced.

Approach and Rationale

Qualitative research was essential to this study because it provided a way to look at a complex and unaddressed issue to attain an understanding of the perceptions of experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers who implemented Florida's secondary reading policy from 2004 to 2011. Qualitative research is based on three major principles: (a) Reality is based on the perceptions of individuals; (b) because individuals may perceive reality differently, there is no single reality; and (c) human experiences have meaning within a context (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Qualitative inquiry is based on the assumption that the individual experiences and perceptions of people in social environments can be recorded and interpreted as valuable data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand individuals within their social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2003). Further, qualitative research seeks to understand the world as it is and the perceptions of individual subjective experience (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Guba & Lincoln, 1994;). Examining the ways that others perceive reality and the subjective meaning they apply to

their reality requires an understanding that different individuals will attribute various meanings to different experiences. Accessing individuals' perceptions and the meanings they attach to them requires communication with the individuals in question. As such, this study was aided by conversation or communicative action (Brand, 1990).

Qualitative researchers develop their knowledge by collecting verbal, observational, and document studies data through intensive study of a given experience. These data are collected and organized into a narrative language that stimulates the readers and allows them to share in the experience of the participant (Patton, 2002). The data collection strategy for this study was the qualitative research focus group (King, 1994; Kvale & Brinkman, 2008; Patton, 2002). Focus group research is "a way of collecting qualitative data, which—essentially—involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), 'focused' around a particular topic or set of issues" (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 177). Focus groups fit the purpose of this study because they are less threatening than an individual in-depth interview, and the focus group context is helpful for participants to discuss perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The qualitative research focus group is by necessity a communicative action—it is a focused conversation. The onus of the researcher is to ensure that the message or the voice of the respondents retains its integrity as it is transmitted to the researcher's audience.

Role of Researcher: Researcher as Tool

The role of a focus group moderator, or facilitator, is essentially that of an interviewer. The focus group as a method of collecting data grew out of the concept of the focused interview (Merton, 1987). However, the role requires more than simply asking questions. The researcher must be truly interested in and have a deep appreciation for the

participants and the stories of their experiences (Fallon & Brown, 2002). Participants who sense that the facilitator is not interested in or does not value their experiences will be reticent to share them (Hennink, 2008). Therefore, the identity of the researcher in relation to the focus group is an important consideration.

As a focus group facilitator, I aimed to provide a forum for the participants to express their perceptions of their experiences as they undertook the task of implementing Florida's secondary intensive reading policy. I chose to concentrate on the experiences of these teachers because: (a) I, myself, was recruited into the secondary intensive reading policy implementation process; (b) from 2005 until 2010, I was a reading coach interacting with secondary intensive reading teachers in Clay County, Florida; and, (c) I have a strong link with the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers because, in 2010-2011, I was a secondary intensive reading teacher. This connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) led to empathy, which established a connection with the participants. Because I was seen as a fellow teacher in the field of secondary intensive reading, a connection was established. This connection was probably greater for me, having shared in the experience of the policy implementation, than for a researcher who had not because of the commonality of shared experience. This commonality allowed me more readily to gain the trust and understanding of the participants and thus allowed them to feel more at ease in sharing their experiences and perceptions.

Additionally, my personal beliefs and goals influenced the topic area of this study.

As an educator, I believe that education should be approached in a clinical manner. That is, it should be approached with the same demeanor with which a physician approaches a patient. The Hippocratic tenet of "do no harm" implies that the physician has the ability to

do harm, intentionally or unintentionally. Likewise, I believe that teachers and administrators at various levels should "do no harm" as they too have this implicit capacity. I believe that, as with the physician, our consciousness needs to be opened to the fact that as educators we are not only working with cumulative charts, achievement reports, and data points. Our work is with real people—students and fellow teachers—flesh and blood. The things we do or do not do, and the ways in which we act or do not act, affect the people with whom we interact. The ways we act are as much a part of the educational curriculum as a lesson plan, a textbook, or a scope and sequence chart; however, these are not generally visible, and therefore they often remain hidden behind the scenes (Posner, 2003). My personal goals, also influenced the topic of this study. I am interested in the policy implementation process of education and particularly in working toward a method of more equitable inclusion of all stakeholders in the total policy process.

Although my previous experiences and personal interests provided me with connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998), I was aware from the outset of the research that such previous experience and personal interest might also lead to issues with personal bias in the research. I attempted to control for bias in a number of ways. First, my experiences as a reading coach and subsequently a reading teacher were confined to Clay County, Florida, and to the middle-school level. Therefore, I sought my participants in other counties—Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties—and, at the high-school level. These differences in setting and level, along with safeguards in the analysis process, such as informal conversations with the participants during the analysis process to guide my thinking allowed an open perspective on the research.

Data Collection Methods

Conducting focus groups with secondary intensive reading teachers provided an approach for understanding their perceptions of their experiences during the time they implemented the secondary intensive reading policy. This study focused on exploring the stories of these teachers as they implemented this policy. As such, the method was a study of narratives.

The "narrative turn" in qualitative inquiry (Bochner, 2001) reveres people's narratives as data that are capable of standing on their own merit in the sense that they are pure description. Narrative analysis has now become a term that defines specific approaches to research. For the purposes of this study, I defined narrative analysis as the collection and thematic interpretation of stories related to the experiences and perceptions of secondary intensive reading teachers while they implemented Florida's secondary reading policy. To collect these "tales from the field" (Van Maanen, 1988), it was necessary to go into the schools to talk to secondary intensive reading teachers. In order to gain insight on non-observable data, it was necessary to conduct some type of interview. Non-observable data — thoughts, feelings, intentions, past experiences, and perceptions— can only be accessed by invitation into the mind and heart of the participant. The means of this access is talk, but the essential human quality necessary is empathy (Patton, 2002).

The interview style chosen for this study was a focus group. There were several reasons for this approach. Rather, this study was not about the individual experiences of teachers who taught secondary intensive reading. This study was about the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers as a particular group; therefore, it makes sense to talk to these teachers in units or groups.

Zeller (1986) observed that "when the goals of the research are general, call for qualitative data, require data that is [sic] not in the respondent's top-of-mind, and when there is minimal prior knowledge about a particular problem and the range of responses likely to emerge, the focus group may be the appropriate design" (p. 1). The nature of this study fit Zeller's criteria in that the goals of this research were general, and they did indeed require a qualitative approach. The teachers began implementation of the reading policy in 2004; therefore, not all of their experiences were "top-of-mind." Further, I had not found any evidence of anyone talking to these teachers prior to this research, so I did not know the likely range of their responses.

The focus group evolved out of the process that Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1956) termed a "focused interview." This term referred to a discussion group that concentrated on a specific topic or topics, and the discussion group was facilitated by a moderator with approximately 8 to 12 participants per group. The fundamental assumptions of this data collection method, suggested by Lederman (1990) are: (a) that people are valuable sources of information; (b) that people can report on and about themselves, and they are capable of articulating their thoughts, feelings and behaviors verbally; (c) that the facilitator who "focuses" the interview can assist participants in recalling forgotten information; (d) that the group dynamic can be used to generate genuine information as opposed to the group think phenomenon; and (e) that under certain conditions, interviewing a group is better than interviewing individuals because conversation may turn in such a directions as to trigger discussions that otherwise might not occur.

Regardless of the format of an interview, the purpose of an interview is to gain access to the mind of the participant. This access can only be accomplished by asking the kinds of

questions that give rise to open responses from the participant. Patton (2002) described various kinds of questions that might be asked during the interview process. These kinds of questions are designed to explore specific topics, such as feelings, knowledge, sensory impressions, and participants' backgrounds and demographics. Feeling questions target emotions connected to an experience. Knowledge questions aim to gather facts regarding an experience. Sensory questions target what the participant has seen or heard in relation to the experience. Background and demographic questions elicit the characteristics of the people involved with the experience. This framework guided the formation of the interview protocol and the demographic survey used for this study (see Appendix A for both). As an insider to the world of secondary intensive reading teachers, I structured my questions in a format designed to elicit the sharing of both common and unique experiences in such a way as to allow participants to create their own meaning about their experiences and to offer their meaning to the policy implementation process.

Three focus group sessions were conducted. Each of the three focus groups with the participants lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes because of the time limitations of the participants. I traveled to the school of each group of secondary intensive reading teachers in order to conduct the focus groups. The focus groups took place at locations within the school convenient for the participants, such as conference rooms, to minimize interruptions and distractions during the session while providing convenience to the participants. Prior to the focus groups, participants received information regarding the purpose of the study, possible use of the results of the study, the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and the means provided within the study for maintaining confidentiality, i.e., an informed consent document. Participants gave their informed consent to participate in the focus groups by

signing the form developed for the study that was approved by the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B for copy of consent form).

Participants did not receive stipends or cash incentives to participate.

The focus group sessions were digitally audio recorded, using two recording devices in case of technology failure. I personally transcribed all of the recordings verbatim. Merriam (1998) noted, "Verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis" (p. 88). Field notes and personal notes of the non-verbal reactions of the participants supplemented the database to support the verbal data provided by the participants. In order to attend to both the verbal data and the non-verbal data of each group and to attend more conscientiously to the facilitation of the focus group, I used an assistant. Dr. Marcia Lamkin, my dissertation chairperson, accompanied me to each of the focus group sessions and took field notes during the focus groups to document non-verbal data. It was also necessary to debrief myself of all pertinent information in the form of notes, digital recordings, transcripts, and observations as soon as possible after the focus groups to ensure that integrity of the data was preserved. These procedures allowed me to give my attention wholly to the participants during the focus group interaction, and to cultivate a "special sense of worth" (Freire, 1970, 1985). They also contributed to attaining critical subjectivity and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That is, they allowed me to reflect and refer back to my own thoughts, emotions and reactions in collecting the data as well as providing a means of reference to begin looking at the data. This was important because as the researcher I was the primary "tool" of the data collection and analysis process. As such, my reflexivity was essential (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Russell & Kelly, 2002; Stake, 1995). Reflexivity, that is, reflection upon the researcher's personal experience, helps the researcher to become

aware of what allows them to see—their connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) for example, as well as what factors may inhibit their seeing (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Acknowledging one's own subjectivity and reflecting about this as well as the information collected and the participants involved helps to make the research process more transparent and improves the skills of the researcher.

Site Selection, Participant Selection, and Access

The selection of specific participants was necessary because not all possible conditions of circumstance, people, and events relevant to the study could be intensely examined (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) held that the participant selection process at a specific site must be intentional and explicit to avoid bias. In this study, the selection of school sites and participants was a critical means to identify a purposeful sample.

For this study, three counties in Florida were considered as relevant and practical sites from which to recruit participants. Practical sites for a research study have: (a) probable entry; (b) a diverse group of people, situations, events, and interactions; (c) a possibility for the researcher to build trust relationships with the participants; and (d) a reasonable assurance of credibility and reliability with the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These counties, Nassau, Duval, and St. Johns counties, were selected because they are representative of rural, urban, and suburban districts in the State of Florida, and they were in close enough proximity to each other and to the researcher to make scheduling of and travel to the school sites feasible. Additional selection criteria, such as school principals that willingly responded to participate in the focus group study, guided the selection process.

A contact letter regarding the study was sent via email to the district administration of each county (see Appendix C). In the case of Duval County, a formal institutional review of the study was completed, and blanket permission to access school sites was obtained. However, access into the individual school in Duval was gained by the response of the building administrator to my request. Access to a school site in Nassau County was granted, and the school site was predetermined by a county administrator. Blanket access to school sites in St. Johns County was granted, and access to the school site was given by on-site school administrators after being requested by the reading coach who served the school. After having been given blanket access to the schools in Duval and St. Johns Counties, I subsequently emailed the administrators and reading departments of all the secondary schools within each district to elicit participation. One administrator in Duval and one administrator in St. Johns responded positively that access would be feasible. As a result, the three schools, each of which housed one group of secondary intensive reading teachers, were identified as a desired purposeful sample. The sample met the purpose of the study, the constraints of the study, and the available resources for the study.

Within each focus group, the participants were homogenous in gender—all were female. Although there was a male teacher in one of the counties, he was not available to participate in the focus group. The participants of all focus groups represented a wide range of teaching experience, content background, and age.

The participants in the Duval County focus group were diverse. The teaching experience within this group ranged from less than 5 years to more than 30 years. Areas of content in which these teachers had previously taught varied greatly and included language arts, elementary reading, health and physical education, exceptional student education

(ESE), and junior officer training corps (JROTC). One member of the group had no experience teaching or previous content experience prior to being hired as a secondary intensive reading teacher. The range of age of participants in this group was from 30 to 70 years. There were five participants in this group.

Table 1

Duval County Participant Demographics

-			
Participant	Teaching Experience	Age	Content
Female	1-10 years	30-40	Non Language Arts
Female	1-10 years	40-50	Language Arts
Female	10-20 years	30-40	Non Language Arts
Female	10-20 years	50-60	Non Language Arts
Female	20-30 years	60-70	Language arts

The participants of the Nassau County focus group were also homogenous in gender, but diverse in experience, age, and in areas of content previously taught. The teaching experience within this group ranged from less than 5 years to more than 20 years. Areas of content in which these teachers had previously taught included English, foreign languages, science, and language arts. The participants in this group ranged in age from 30 years to 50 years. There were five participants in this group.

Table 2

Nassau County Participant Demographics

	<i>y</i> 1 0 1		
Participant	Teaching Experience	Age	Content
Female	1-10 years	40-50	Language Arts
Female	10-20 years	40-50	Language Arts/Non Language Arts
Female	10-20 years	30-40	Language Arts
Female	10-20 years	40-50	Language Arts
Female	20-30 years	40-50	Language Arts/Non Language Arts

The participants of the St. Johns County focus group were again homogenous in gender but diverse in areas of teaching experience, age, and content areas previously taught. The teaching experience within this group ranged from 10 to 40 years. Areas of content in which these teachers had previously taught included English, social studies, journalism, language arts, ESE, and elementary education (all subjects). The participants in this group ranged in age from 30 years to 70 years. There were six participants in this group.

Table 3
St. Johns County Participant Demographics

Participant	Teaching Experience	Age	Content
Female Female Female Female	10-20 years 20-30 years 20-30 years 20-30 years 30-40 years	60-70 50-60 40-50	Language Arts Language Arts/Non Language Arts Language Arts/Non Language Arts Language Arts/Non Language Arts Language arts

The sixteen secondary intensive reading teachers who participated in the three focus groups expressed their interest and appreciation for being interviewed. Understanding their perceptions of their experiences in implementing a new policy can foster greater understanding of the policy implementation process.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Patton (2002) asserted that participant consent to the research does not exclude the researcher from the responsibility of protecting the participants from potential harm or unfavorable consequences. To the end of protecting these participants, I exercised due care and professional integrity to protect their well-being. Informed consent documents explained protection of privacy and confidentiality to the participants by presenting a description of the research procedures, a description of any foreseeable risks or discomforts, a description of

any benefits to the participants, and a statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of identifying records was maintained. Participants' names were not used, nor were the identities of their respective schools used. In transcripts and notes participants were referred to by number and position at the focus group table. Groups were collectively referred to by their district; that is, "DUV", "NAS" and "STJN."

As the teachers were interviewed as a group, I did not use any names throughout the data collection process, but referred to their comments by group. In order to protect the identity of the specific school location in which these teachers worked, I did not refer to their school names, but only by the county in which each school was located. Digital recording files were stored on the University of North Florida secure server. Once uploaded, the digital files were deleted from the recording devices and laptop used for the study. Supplemental notes were taken throughout the interview process and during reflection between interviews. These were stored in a locked cabinet and secured in my home.

Validity of Data

Validity of data in qualitative research has been defined as being that which is "defensible" (Johnson 1997, p. 282). A purposeful sampling of participants was a means to control bias and provide validity to the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that upholding the trustworthiness, known as reliability in the quantitative paradigm, of a research report is a measure of research quality and rigor—it is merely assessed by a different measure in qualitative research. In qualitative research, the idea of discovering truth through quantifiable measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness (Mishler, 2000). Qualitative data are "reliable" and "valid" when they are "trustworthy" and "defensible."

To enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the study, I recruited a sample of participants with diverse experiences. Participants' responses were checked during the interview process for understanding and clarify through the use of restatement and clarifying probes. Additionally, some participants provided written notes of their thoughts in response to the questions in the interview protocol after the focus group discussion had ended. The verbatim responses of the participants provided a database from which to create a rich, "thick" description of the data gathered in this study (Geertz, 1973). Although I acknowledged my interest and connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) in the subject matter, my goal was to offer the reader a view into the experiences of these teachers that is authentic. Additionally, to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the data analysis process, I took advantage of an opportunity to discuss data themes with participants of the focus groups subsequent to the analysis process. This was a serendipitous opportunity. After I had finished the data analysis, I was required by my district to attend a statewide conference regarding the switch from Sunshine State Standards to Common Core Standards. During my time at the conference, I encountered many of the secondary intensive reading teachers whom I had interviewed for the study. They were amenable to talking about the study and the analysis of the data; they deemed the analysis of the data to be accurate in light of their perceptions of their experiences.

Chapter Summary

The goal of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of secondary intensive reading teachers regarding their work while implementing Florida's secondary intensive reading policy from 2004 to 2011 and to add to the body of knowledge about teachers and policy implementation through using a qualitative research design. The

qualitative design allowed participants to voice their perceptions of their experiences. The focus group design was chosen for the following reasons: (a) to allow the participants to provide valuable sources of information in their own words; (b) to allow the interaction among the participants and between the facilitator and the participants to assist in recalling forgotten information, and (c) to generate genuine information. Because the object of inquiry was secondary intensive reading teachers as a group, and not the individual experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers, interviewing in a focus group was a better fit. Analysis of the data from these focus group interviews is presented in Chapter 4. The data, that is the narrative reports of the participants, were analyzed using Boyatzis' (1998) thematic approach, with input from Eisner's (1998) educational criticism, and Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis. The data analysis brought an understanding of perceptions of the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers regarding their implementation of Florida's secondary reading policy. Criteria for establishing domains, codes, and themes are presented at the opening of Chapter 4, along with the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 will present the discussion, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Chapter 4 of this study presents the analysis of focus group interview data collected from three separate focus groups in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties respectively. The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of the experiences of teachers who had taught secondary intensive reading in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties in Florida as a result of Florida's reading policy implementation and to obtain their perspectives of the process of policy implementation.

Approach and Rationale of Data Analysis

The analysis of data from the focus group interviews used four different data analysis strategies. Using these four strategies, two domain categories were used to organize the data and provide a way of describing themes elicited from the interview data. Figure 4, on the following page, illustrates the data analysis strategies used.

Prior Research Boyatzis, 1998 Looking to Previous Similar Research to Note How Others Have Compiled Data, Educational Constructed Domains, and Criticism Thematic Analysis Made Semantic Constructs Eisner, 1991 Boyatzis, 1998 Means of Qualitative Patterned Response Theme in the Data Set Analysis of Focus Using Connoisseurship Groups To Describe, Interpret Using the Raw Data to and Evaluate Data and Look for Patterned to Develop Thematics Responses and Themes in the Data Set Inductive Analysis Hatch, 2002

Figure 4. Four overlapping approaches to qualitative data analysis provided the means for data coding, categorization, and interpretation.

Early stages of my informal analysis began through reflection and journaling at the time of data collection. I made notes during the focus groups that I used to assist me with reflection after each focus group. I journaled my reflections after each focus group. This process enabled me to record initial impressions and reactions (Hatch, 2002) throughout the process of data collection. These impressions, together with the research question and the interview protocols, then contributed to determining the frames of my analysis (Hatch, 2002). Hatch suggested that the reading of the data be done with the search for analysis frames in mind. Analysis frames, according to Hatch, are specific levels at which data are examined. In order to identify the analysis frames, I followed Hatch's (2002) approach to inductive analysis. As stated earlier, immediately following each of the focus group sessions, I

journaled and wrote memoranda regarding participants' verbal and nonverbal responses within the sessions, and I also transcribed immediately each of the recordings of the focus groups verbatim. I read and re-read the transcripts of each focus group session in order grasp the larger picture of the participants' views. I then wrote memoranda on these views. I read each transcript again and, this time, I color-coded recurring ideas. I used Eisner's (1998) concept of connoisseurship to guide the selection of important and relevant ideas on the subject of the secondary reading initiative and experience. My knowledge of relevant literature influenced the recognition of important and relevant ideas in the data. The analysis frames are listed under the heading of terms in figures 5, 6, and 7.

There are various ways of showing, interpreting, and theorizing qualitative data. One way to show this process can be to list concepts and ideas using a thematic map. The next step in my analysis process was to create domains based on semantic relationships discovered in the frames of analysis (Hatch, 2002). The semantic relationships within the data can be classified as inclusion, "X is a type of Y," means-end, "X is a way to do Y," and attribution, "X is a characteristic of Y." I then began to reread the analysis frames and the semantic relationships and looked for exemplars of these frames and connections within the data. I constructed an illustration of domains for each focus group, because each group viewed their empowerments and constraints somewhat differently. See Figures 5, 6, and 7 for illustrations of the identifications of domains of Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties, respectively.

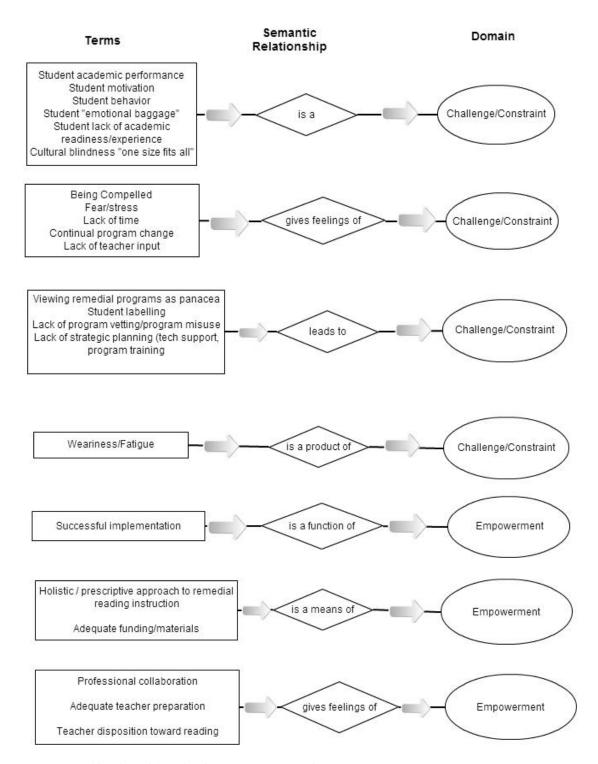


Figure 5. Identification of domains from Duval County focus group.

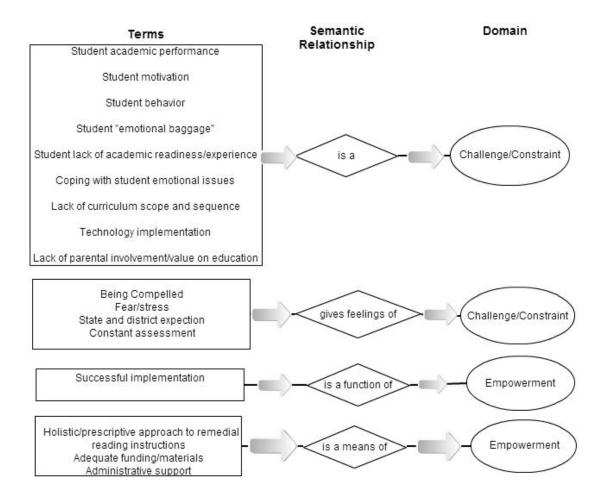


Figure 6. Identification of domains from Nassau County focus group.

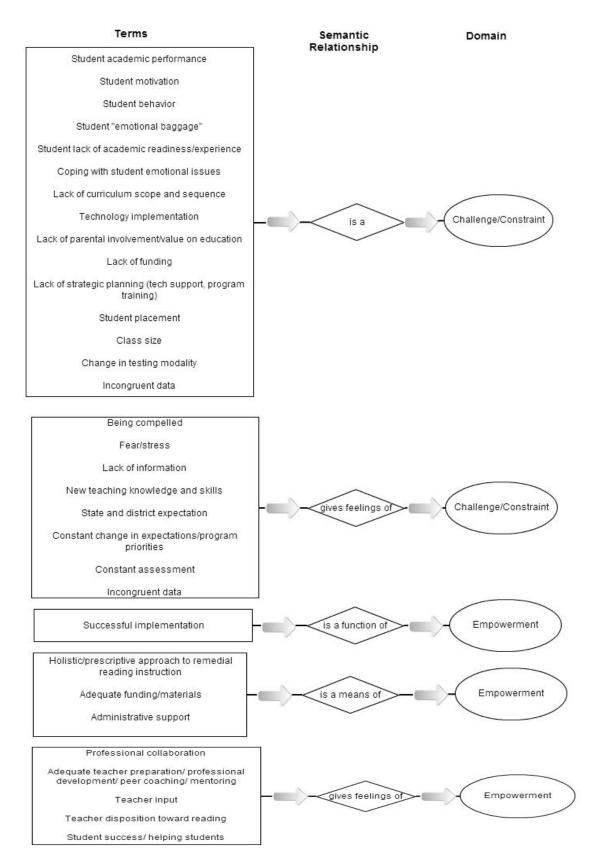


Figure 7. Identification of domains from St Johns County focus group.

Both Boyatzis (1998) and Eisner (1998) advocated the use of prior research in qualitative data analysis. With this in mind, I considered implementation research. Sabatier's (1986) work with policy analysis included implementation studies concerning target groups. That is, Sabatier examined policy implementation within the groups of individuals specifically targeted by the given policy. One of the ways that Sabatier analyzed policy implementation within target groups was in terms of empowerment and constraint. That is, the term *empowerment* refers to the degree to which the target groups were enabled, encouraged—empowered to comply with or implement the desired behavior. The term *constraint* refers to impediments that kept the target group from compliance or implementation.

As I examined the constructs of empowerment and constraint, it occurred to me that although reading teachers reported impediments encountered during the implementation process, the requirements and expectations of school accountability did not allow the teachers to "opt out" of the implementation. Therefore, the teachers continued in their attempts to implement the policy but were challenged as they did so. Because of this, I chose to replace the term *constraint* with the term *challenge*.

Having determined the domains of empowerment and challenge to be valid by checking the logic of the semantic relationships with the analysis frames, I concluded that the domains were valid. I then re-read the data with the domains of empowerment and challenge in mind. I made note of specific instances where the semantic relationships were found in the data. I then revisited the data to determine if the domains of empowerment and challenges were supported logically in the responses of the participants, and if there were examples and non-examples of the domains present. After examining the data, I concluded

that there was sufficient repetition of domains in the data to indicate the validity of these relationships expressed within the data.

The next step in the analysis process was to begin an analysis of the data within the domains of empowerment and challenge. I used Boyatzis' (1998) thematic analysis within the domains as it allowed me to look for patterns within the constructs of empowerment and challenge. Boyatzis (1998) referred to this as a "way of seeing." Secondly, thematic analysis allowed me a way of making sense of the various elements of challenge and empowerment; in doing so, I was looking for connections within each of the domains, as well as any connections between the domains. I coded these connections based on the source of the empowerment or the challenge—for example, student emotions, materials, school policy, funding, district policy, technology, data-driven instruction. In analyzing the sources of empowerment and challenge, I began to see patterns within the data. I then developed those patterns into themes in order to express them in such a way as to allow others to "see" and understand the perceptions of the experiences of the secondary reading teachers who participated in the study. Observing these similarities and differences allowed me to name these ideas as themes. When I observed redundancy in language and terms and when excerpts from the transcripts adequately illustrated each domain, I concluded thematic construction (Boyatzis, 1998; Padgett, 1998). The thematic relationships based on the domains of challenges/constraints and empowerment included (a) challenges from within the classroom setting, (b) challenges from outside the classroom setting, and (c) challenges yet to come. Because of the nature of the challenges and the diametric nature of the empowerments, I chose to highlight the empowerments in the context of the challenges and thereby subsume the empowerments under the challenge themes. That is, the empowerments

that were realized by some of the participants were the opposites of the challenges experienced. For example, having no input into scheduling issues was considered a challenge or constraint, but having input into the scheduling process was considered an empowerment. The participants voiced primarily the challenges they encountered with the implementation process. Although some participants were more empowered than others, the theme of challenge prevailed in the content of their talk. Therefore, although empowerment appears within the data to provide means of contrast in some instances, the participants' expressions of being empowered did not occur so strongly as to generate a theme.

After the themes were developed, I reviewed them conceptually in order to gain increased perspective on the validity of the themes. I also checked with members of the focus groups in person via the serendipitous encounter I had with them at a state conference. This was done to ensure that the themes reflected accurately their experiences and perceptions.

A diagram of the qualitative inquiry and analysis process followed during the course of the study is illustrated in Figure 8.

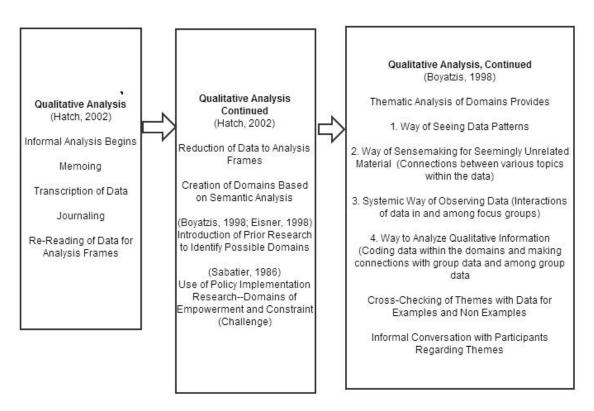


Figure 8. Approaches to qualitative data analysis throughout stages of data analysis provided a means of data coding, categorization, and interpretation.

Presentation of Data

The following sections of the chapter present the data of the participants' interviews and then organize the discussion of data analysis thematically. The data are presented in the order and context of the focus group interview protocol. However, participant responses within the data related to multiple themes. Participants' names, or the identities of their respective schools were not used in the presentation of data. Groups were collectively referred to by their district; that is, "DUV", "NAS" and "STJN."

Introduction to and First Impressions about the Program

Participant teachers were asked to recall their introduction to and first impressions of the Secondary Intensive Reading Program. Teacher responses fell into two categories for the introduction to the program: those who were directly informed of the initiative by their administrators, and those who learned of the initiative because of its being a requirement for a sought-after teaching position.

Initiative rollout. The most frequently voiced response to the question about recalling the introduction of the Secondary Intensive Reading Program was that it was introduced suddenly in the spring of the 2004-2005 school year. Several of the teachers recalled meetings that outlined the program as being mandatory for all students scoring below a level 3 on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Participants also recalled being told that all teachers, especially those holding certification in English or language arts, were required to obtain the reading endorsement consisting of 300 hours of professional development. Teachers also recalled resistance on the part of some of their colleagues to become reading- endorsed. The reasons for this resistance varied. Factors mentioned by teachers included the considerable time commitment of 300 hours of professional development: lack of compensation; fear of being "pigeon-holed" as reading teachers and thereby not being placed to teach in their desired content areas; and being assigned to teach the lowest quartile of students continuously.

Other teachers within the group had been teaching in other content areas but found themselves seeking reading positions because their subject area positions had been eliminated due to allocation issues at various schools. These teachers found out about the program as a requirement to fulfill their "out-of-field" status if they chose to accept the proffered reading position.

First impressions. Teachers' recollections of their first impressions of the program were connected to feelings of being compelled. All groups voiced that this mandate was presented to them in such a way that becoming reading-endorsed was mandatory for their

current position or mandatory for them as a condition of employment. They also recalled this mandate being specifically targeted to English/language arts teachers; they further recalled a much later and less compulsory invitation to all other content area teachers to view themselves as "reading teachers" within the context of their content areas.

I remember all the English teachers. . . were told we were each going to have an intensive reading. . . class the following school year. The county immediately put us—started intensive training that summer (NAS).

Well, when it first started, there was no choice. . . every teacher [would teach reading] and that went over about like a ton of bricks (NAS).

Nobody wanted to [teach reading] (STJN).

I was surplussed. . . They [the county] sent me here. It was a reading position that was open, and it was in the ESE department. I learned I still had to get my endorsement, though (DUV).

I didn't know anything about it until I got into Duval County in 2008. That's when I found out about the reading endorsement (DUV).

Teachers agreed that their introduction to the program was sudden and that the information about the policy was presented in terms of a requirement in connection with their teaching positions. They knew little more about the policy than it was being put into place as a means of instructing those students who had not achieved a passing score of 3 on the FCAT. Most of the teachers did not have a reading background and were from the content area of English or language arts.

Decision to choose reading. Although English and language arts teachers were mandated to become reading-endorsed, not all teachers embraced the policy and complied with the mandate. Those who did comply immediately and begin the endorsement process were assigned to teach the lower quartile of students as secondary intensive reading teachers. In some cases, this assignment meant having only one block of lower quartile students a day

in their teaching rotations. For others, it meant having only the lowest quartile students in their teaching schedules. Eventually, secondary intensive reading was viewed as its own content area, and the teachers who were teaching secondary intensive reading to the lowest quartile of students were scheduled to teach primarily, with few exceptions, within that content area and with that population.

During the focus group sessions, teachers were asked about their decisions to become reading teachers. Their responses varied. Some chose to view the position as a challenge to imbue their struggling secondary intensive reading students with a love of reading. Others did not choose to become secondary intensive reading teachers, but completed the requirements for the position because it was the only position available at the time. Some teachers embraced the program more than others did.

We'll do whatever—what they tell us to do (NAS).

It was "Oh my gosh, are we going to have to do this?" [The administrative decision] went back and forth for a while. Then I said, "I'm going to do it." I went ahead and jumped in and embraced it, so I've kind of been "the reading teacher" since then (NAS).

I came here in 2006 from Pennsylvania...when they saw I had a master's in reading, they said, "She's great for secondary intensive reading." I said, "What is that?" I had no idea. So I was told... and then it was sort of like "learn as you go" (STJN).

Teachers chose to complete the reading endorsement competencies due to the perceived mandate of the secondary intensive reading policy. In many cases this meant a departure from their content area of English or language arts, in which the focus is primarily on literature and literary analysis. It also meant a refocusing of priority on the mechanics of reading skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Additionally, it brought a sense of increased responsibility and urgency to their teaching as their students were being continuously monitored to assess their progress toward passing the

FCAT or obtaining a concordant score on the ACT. Teachers acknowledged that this intensive focus was a stress factor for them in their lives and work. When asked the reason they choose to remain in the content area, the majority of them cited the students' needs and a strong pedagogical relationship with their students as their motivating factors. Those planning to leave the content area described themselves as being exhausted emotionally from attempting to meet the many student needs and feeling the need to accomplish more for themselves in another venue.

I liked it. I enjoyed reading. I love to read. I think it's really important. I think that made me stick with it (DUV).

I love it...especially when you see that light bulb come on...and when you see that student who has been struggling finally being able to do something...to read maybe the first book all the way through for the first time in their life. It feels really great (DUV).

I love to read, and I guess because I grew up with people counting me out. . . saying I couldn't be successful because of my baggage. I've proved them wrong. . . I'm kind of like a light to my kids, you know—you can do this. It's possible. . . . That's what made me stay (DUV).

I'm at the point where I'm bursting out the seams. You know—when it's time for you to take flight [thrashes air with hands—punching and flying]. And some people, this is what they want to do. I don't... there's something else that has to be going on with reading not necessarily in the classroom (DUV).

I could name a dozen kids for you that might not have graduated high-school if not for the reading classes and the support they got (NAS).

[We] have developed a relationship with all of the kids. . . We also feel for the kids. . . And you try to show them what you can do for them. . . . When you get that one child that succeeds— it's those kids who make you want to stay. . . I do love it, you know. I do love it (STJN).

All it takes is one positive to keep you going for another 10 years (STJN).

I love it. I love this kind of kid. I've always been one for the underdog. . . I grew up without parents. . . And I think every kid has a story. And these kids especially. . . I like to tell my story to them. I think that connection is strong (STJN).

Teachers reported that their intrinsic reward in helping their students was their strongest motivating factor for staying within the content area. However they also noted that this intrinsic reward in helping a student achieve success helped to counterbalance, but did not mitigate entirely, the stress encountered from the challenges of the content area. In all of the focus groups, teachers vocalized the difficulties and the challenges peculiar to working with students placed in secondary intensive reading courses.

Challenges from Inside and Outside

The teachers voiced the challenges they encountered in teaching Secondary Intensive Reading. These challenges fell into two categories—student challenges and program implementation challenges—and were characterized by the teachers as stress factors.

Student challenges. Many of the teachers observed that the students placed within the Secondary Intensive Reading Program came from environmentally and educationally challenged backgrounds and that these factors made their tasks very stressful.

Nobody told me that I would be dealing with this—emotionally—if the child has been abused, or if there has been a dysfunctional family. . . domestic violence. . . even not to have experienced that but come from a well put together home but lack emotional nurturing. . . I have to deal with all of those—call them outside forces (DUV).

I agree. I wasn't quite ready to handle some of the emotional issues that came with the job (DUV).

I was very unprepared for it [emotional issues]. I didn't realize how intense it was going to be (DUV).

I didn't realize how intense the problems were until I called the parents. . . I thought that teachers and parents would [be united] in this—and no. I was blown away by the lack of importance placed on education coming from the home (NAS).

There are some behavior things that go on. . . some of [the students] have been either kicked out by other schools or other counties or whatever, and they come and they have no interest in learning whatsoever. That's a hard a thing for me. . . [they] never plan to graduate, never was in their plan. . . I think that's just one of my rough spots (NAS).

[I]f they're surrounded by people who know they don't care; they've got to keep up that attitude in order to save face with their peers. Home is no support. They've got much bigger things to worry about at home than coming in here (STJN).

If you can't read, you are put in intensive reading, and kids know it, and it's a stigma (STJN).

Many times when they are labeled "One," they come in with this defeated attitude. They are already gone. . . the first few weeks of school, you're working on getting beyond that concept and, unfortunately, labeling does not help (DUV).

Teachers in the secondary intensive reading content area voiced that they contended with much more than weak literacy skills. They observed that the majority of students who were placed within secondary intensive reading classes had issues with low self-esteem, low socioeconomic status, low or non-existent home support, and in some cases abuse of various types. These external forces were brought into the secondary intensive reading teacher's classroom. The teachers were expected to mitigate these external forces through instructional practice; however, many felt unprepared and unequipped to do so. Teachers relied on trying to become mentors and motivators but were frustrated that they found partial success. Teachers acknowledged that they actively sought out ways to improve themselves and their craft in order to be of more assistance in dealing with particular student challenges. Teachers also vocalized that student challenges were, in many cases, compounded by program implementation challenges.

Program implementation challenges. The program implementation challenges that teachers talked about fell into the categories of curriculum—here used to denote intensive reading teaching programs, instructional technology support, and administrative policy.

Curriculum. Teachers in one district (i.e., Duval) noted the wide array of corrective reading programs and their use, and sometimes misuse, with struggling readers.

They [district administrators] never seem to leave any program in place...long enough to see if it's going to be effective for the kids. I mean I've only been in reading for a few years, but just look at all the different programs that you've had: Fast For Word... Read 180, Janet Allen's Plugged In to Reading. And even just before that—America's Choice— and there was another before that that we had. They've had so many different programs in the course of five years that you don't know what works, really (DUV).

Fast For Word is not a reading program, okay? And they've misused that; they've misused Read 180; they've misused a lot of programs. I'm not sure that when they decide that this is the program to go with whether they have actually done any research into what the program is all about and who. . . the program is designed to help before they go whole hog in implementing (DUV).

Another district (i.e., Nassau) had implemented only a couple of reading programs, but had done so without specifically defining their use for middle or high-school. As a result, there was some redundancy in their use with students moving from middle to high-school.

One of the problems that I've seen is that Jamestown Navigator Corrective Reading Program [has been in use in the middle-school within the district]... so, now we have these 10th graders who have been in Jamestown since the 6th grade; we need to have some separation... These kids have been doing the same thing for four or five years (NAS).

The third district (i.e., St. Johns) implemented only one program, designed to increase phonemic awareness and phonetic knowledge because of the research on the effectiveness of these skills on fluency. However, as the emphasis from the state changed from fluency to comprehension, they dropped this program due to funding concerns and have remained without a commercial reading program.

Our whole focus [was], that we're language arts teachers from the high-school level. We didn't know how to teach reading. . . We did implement a program called Let's Go Learn, which actually gave us a diagnostic, but we were using it for progress monitoring and everything because that was the only program that we had. And then our ESE reading specialist implemented Language! which did cause much angst, and I inherited her angst. . . Going back and teaching phonics and phonemic awareness to students on the high-school level was challenging. . . [The emphasis] used to be fluency, and now nobody cares about fluency (STJN).

St. Johns County has chosen instead to rely on their teachers' ability to teach the required reading benchmark skills within the context of student textbooks, articles, and fictional texts.

They've really kind of pulled back. We used to have TeenBiz which was a computer-based program but that cost too much money, so they cut that from us. So we really are just relying on what the State provides—Florida Achieves, and FCAT Explorer (STJN).

Florida Achieves!... seemed like a really good program because [of] having a pre test and post test, but when the students access the program to do the assignment, there's nothing there and you know you put something there (STJN).

The lack of adopted curriculum resources has caused some frustration among the teachers of this particular district, as they cannot draw from language arts resources for novel studies, and there is insufficient funding for dedicated secondary intensive reading materials.

There are plenty of workbooks, FCAT Prep workbooks. . . intensive reading very quickly was FCAT focused. . . but as the years progressed, we started noticing if we were adding more students to the program or the students were not passing the test and they're still in the intensive reading, if they'd already done a workbook what then was the next thing the teacher was going to do? . . . And so then we started borrowing a little bit from English, and so then it was, "well, no that's an English novel. You can't use that: that's an English novel" (STJN).

Nothing's funded. There's no funding for the books [that] we wanted – Book Jams had all kinds of interesting material for these kids to read and guides and actually some kind of format for us, and [there was] no money (STJN).

St. Johns teachers cited a lack of dedicated intensive reading materials that are of high student interest and a lack of ancillary instructional materials within an adopted curriculum resource as sources of frustration and a challenge to their instructional practice. Teachers perceived that the issues of being provided with sufficient teaching materials stemmed from a lack of allocated funding for such materials.

Instructional technology support. Although the teachers in all districts tried to implement either their commercial reading program or the state-provided tools such as

Florida Achieves! and FCAT Explorer, they encountered difficulty in this from technological and motivational aspects. Teachers reported that the technological infrastructure, support, and training necessary to use their commercial programs or the state-provided tools have not been well designed to facilitate technology in an efficient manner with secondary intensive reading instruction.

I have now missed a total of between six and seven weeks of my program being down since the beginning of school. This is [due] to the updating of the computers. At the beginning of the school year, it was [due to] updating the program. It took them four weeks to update the program. We received new computers in December, and we're just finding out [mid January] the backdoor [in order to access the program], okay. So how do you expect this program to work when I've lost six or seven weeks out of the year—how (DUV)?

The biggest thing was figuring out the new curriculum. It was the most stressful part. It was web-based. We've never used it before. We've [never had something like] this before, but it didn't work. . . The technology department [was struggling]. . . Just like us, they had to figure out how to make it work. So, it was every day. If those two computers don't work, don't mess with them. What had the kids done to these two computers? How can I make sure that this will not happen again? How am I going to fit all of this into the time I have? How am I going to take grades from this program? How do I know Johnny isn't cheating somehow? I mean, the vast majority of it was frustration with the technology of the new curriculum (NAS).

You have to see the testing environment. . . They're all like, right here, [indicating students hunched together] and then they put this [plastic carrel divider] between the students at the computer. Now before they did it with nothing; before there was nothing even here. Even before, they were all like this [crowded]. First there was nothing, and then they decide to put those carrels in, and they just talk, they're like "Oh, God." . . . Their attention level—their attention span is [short]. . . They're down in this room and there's . . . there's 50 kids [in the library crouched together testing] – I mean that's crazy and I'm like, "Aarrgh!" . . . And they say, "I don't try, I don't care." That's what they say (STJN).

Teachers were positive toward the conceptual use of technology as a tool for teaching secondary intensive reading; however, they recognized that they did not, in some cases, have sufficient technology, training, or infrastructure to use the technology effectively. They also felt that if the technology was not being used effectively, it had a significant detrimental

impact on their instruction because it became a distraction within the teaching environment. In many cases, teachers stated that technical support was lacking primarily in the areas of planning ways and times software and hardware updates should be conducted and ways to keep these from negatively impacting instructional time; they also noted a lack of product support with commercial reading programs. In addition, they noted a lack of logistical planning in the development and construction of computer lab facilities with the pedagogical needs of secondary intensive reading students in mind.

Administrative policy. Teachers identified administrative policy implementation at various levels—state, district, and school—that presented challenges in regard to teaching secondary intensive reading. Implementation problems most commonly cited were too many programs running concurrently or yearly program changes, failure to approach the issues of illiteracy and literacy weakness in a holistic manner, and failure to view education as a clinical practice.

[The decisions to continually] change. . . we just get into to trying to work with one program and then have another. . . I don't think you could really just take the program in one year and see if it works (DUV).

Teachers often vocalized that, although the stated purpose of the secondary intensive reading policy was to help students and in some cases, it has been successful, there are iatrogenic—unintended, and sometimes harmful—side effects on the students within secondary intensive reading programs.

There's not a conscious thought if this schedule suits them [students]. That is what I wanted to say about African-American males: they don't consciously schedule them appropriately. And so it just causes another issue or obstacle. "I'm going to put you in 'x' class" (DUV).

The teacher as a clinical educator with observational input has no role in how the students are scheduled into their reading classes. We don't play a role in it at all... there are places where [teachers] do... They [administration and guidance] are in

control of how this schedule goes. One size of reading instruction does not fit all (DUV).

Different teachers have different teaching styles. We may be teaching the same skills, and we may teach the same thing; however, we have a different method of how we go about doing it. If the student doesn't do well under one teacher, or does not have success—and it doesn't mean that teacher didn't teach—then where do you get off putting that same student back in the same class with the same teacher (DUV)?

And [guidance] also places kids with no scores. If a child comes from another state and they don't have a score or some kind of comprehensive scoring on assessment, they're going to go right into intensive reading. There's not another thought. So we are working on if they have high enough lexile level on FAIR and if they are considered fluent then we have the possibility of being able to move them out. But sometimes it takes--It could take weeks or months. Sometimes they'll pull them out, depends on the guidance counselors (DUV).

Teachers did not think these harmful side effects—for example, a student being scheduled without regard for learning style or a student being placed into an intensive reading class because of not having an FCAT or concordant test scores—were an intrinsic inevitability of being in a reading program. They indicated that the side effects could possibly be mitigated or eliminated entirely with some program modifications. Teachers agreed that having some input could be beneficial to the students. In approaching their instructional practice holistically, teachers stated that giving their input into scheduling reading students according to their areas of need, their previous placements within the existing school programs, and the possibility of considering changes to the schedule in some situations in which progress is not being attained could be beneficial to the students. They felt that such collaboration between teachers and administration would improve the overall quality of instruction as well as reduce the perception of stress for both the teacher and the student in regard to being well prepared for high-stakes testing. When asked to elaborate on the issues of emotional stress during the implementation process, participants in Nassau County gave the following responses:

We were a D school. We weren't given a choice. This is what you're going to do, and by God you better make it work, because you are not going to be in D school in an "A" district. . . I mean, I can't tell you how many days there were where I sat and cried through lunch and then wiped my eyes off so no one could tell . . . and then went back in there. . . Whatever we've got to do, this can't happen again (NAS).

We had people from the District. We had people from the State in our rooms probably two or three days a week and that was fine. The biggest thing was figuring out the new curriculum. It was the most stressful part (NAS).

However, teachers in Nassau and St. Johns Counties spoke more frequently about positive implementation experiences than those in Duval County. They credited their building administrators and their reading coaches with providing them much-needed support and a voice in the implementation process within their school.

My whole day is reading. That's a choice, but I'm lucky that [the principal] lets me make each year whether I want to stay in that, and I do. That's without a question in my mind. . . This is my place and what I want to do (NAS).

The first year we had *Jamestown* . . . I went to my principal, I said, "I want eight computers in my room," and [the principal] gave them to me. The other teachers ran them [students] through the lab. I think putting them on for just 20 minutes and doing that three-group rotation every day, that's so much more powerfully effective than taking them down to the lab, having them log in, and everybody sits around waiting for computers. . . They are wasting class time. Like I said, 20 minutes is enough. If they go beyond 20 minutes, they are zoned out. So, we run it every day for 20 minutes (NAS).

The administration has been very supportive with this. Another benefit of having been a D that first year. We got decked out [with computers] (NAS).

Nassau County teachers credited their on-site administrator and their reading coach for helping them to have a voice in the structuring of their intensive reading instruction. With regard to administration, the teachers felt that they had been made a budgetary priority.

Teachers in St. Johns County had strong coaching support but lacked funding for dedicated labs, material, and equipment. As a result, several teachers described their instructional experience as having to "recreate the wheel." They compensated for the lack of

materials and equipment by becoming extremely collaborative and interdependent. They used the skills and knowledge of the various members of their group regarding ways and means to create learning opportunities and motivational techniques for their students.

We had started a reading cadre, which really wasn't—it was not a teaching-thing, but it was a sharing, and that was the most, I think that was the most wonderful part. Because then we met as a group, all of the reading teachers in the district, and we got to share, and we made things. We brought things that we had done in the classroom, and it was a wonderful thing (STJN).

The St. Johns focus group responded to the interview question regarding what they considered the greatest strength of the implementation. Unanimously, and in unison, they said, "each other." Having a strong sense of community within the content area of secondary intensive reading, was regarded by those within the community, as a key to success. Teachers in St. Johns, Nassau, and Duval Counties voiced a longing for more teacher-to-teacher collaboration, but they lamented that there was no time allocated for such collaboration.

Teacher training and professional development. Teachers were asked to evaluate the training and professional development they received to become reading endorsed a designation that allows them to be eligible to teach reading at all levels. This endorsement was required in order to be designated in field. The only exception to the endorsement process was a certification in the subject area of reading. Of the teachers who participated in the focus groups, only four were certified. The rest had completed, or were in the final stages of completing, the endorsement process.

Endorsement training. When asked the question, "How do you value the endorsement training you received?" the responses were homogeneous within each group, but different among the groups. The Duval County focus group did not perceive their

training to be valuable and voiced a feeling of disconnect between the teaching methods and strategies which they were taught and the teaching environment in which they found themselves.

It's still a disconnect (DUV).

I don't [value the training] (DUV).

Our kids are not—these cute little things and the little stuff—that's cute. It's really cute. . . Isn't it cute? This is as cute as it can be. You know, it looks really wonderful. . . To think that it's going to happen like that, that's absurd. . . Yes, having the theory, the knowledge [is good] but [we need] to make it applicable to the environment [where we are teaching]. That's the most important—because what Johnny does over here. . .Laquwon is not going to do that. And that's who I'm teaching. Laquwon—that's not being facetious, that's the truth. [The preparation has to have] real relevance and be authentic (DUV).

Teachers within the Duval County group felt that the training on methods and strategies overlooked important cultural, sociological, and academic issues that were relevant to the population they served.

I'm being a bit pessimistic when I say that, but it's true. Half of the time—and I don't want to make this out of anything other than what it is—but a lot of times, it is not geared toward an environment in which people—let's be real, we have to be real. It's not geared toward the environment in which you teach every day. It is not your environment. I would be lying to myself if it were (DUV).

It's a combination [of cultural and academic issues]. A lot of people are not trained to deal with cultural—they don't have cultural background, and that is what has hurt more than anything. We did things 30 years ago with people in various ethnic groups—can't do that now. And I think that we're still trying to fit 19th century in the 21st century. It's not working (DUV).

I felt like I was brainwashed when I went into reading training and needed to be debriefed when I came out. When I went into the reading training, all I saw was—I saw that the teacher worked a lot. I did a lot of work in the classroom, a lot of graphic organizers, a lot of all of that stuff, and I realized that I was doing too much, and kids were doing nothing. I don't think we're learning as teachers how to do that gradual release part. And so. . .we hold on to everything. We do it all the time—we do all the work. At the end of the day, I would go home tired—the kids weren't tired—they've got to learn that the graphic organizer is your brain (DUV).

Teachers within the Nassau County group valued their endorsement training differently.

They felt that their training was a valuable resource and provided them with excellent strategies and resources to use with the students in their intensive reading courses.

I thought it was great. Now, I did not come from an education background, but I learned a lot, and I downloaded everything that they said to print out for future reference. I printed everything. . .because the information was really helpful. I used it. I really have implemented a lot of that (NAS).

I latched on to it, too. I did the same thing. I printed everything out. A lot of teachers call me, and I still go back to those documents. If somebody calls me, "I need this," or "I need to try this," I'll go back to those documents and say, "Oh, hey, I've got an idea" (NAS).

There're things that you forget that they [regular English students] need, too, even though they are not struggling readers. There are [within the endorsement teaching strategies] just good practices for any reader, I found myself using them in regular English classes as well (NAS).

Overall, the feedback from the Nassau County group was positive in terms of their experience with the professional development aspect of the policy implementation. They valued the information and materials received and saw value in them as they sought to implement these strategies and resources with the populations they served. However, they did vocalize a need for further professional development of a collaborative nature.

The teachers in St. Johns County also valued their training; however, they noted that the strategies, as they were presented, needed to be fine-tuned for high-school students. They recalled tweaking certain strategies so that older students would not be embarrassed to participate in strategic instruction—particularly in the areas of phonics and phonemic awareness.

The materials we used came through FLaRE [Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence], and those materials were good. We supplemented. . .we had watched other teachers; we've gone to those workshops, and so we were always adding to, adding to, to make it trying to model practices that we thought would work on the high-school level. Because being high-school my whole life—that made a difference (STJN).

. . .they have toolboxes that are amazing. . .they modeled up what we wanted and towards the end we were videotaping them. . .we were always wanting to hear what's the latest for our kids (STJN).

Although the content of the reading endorsement was uniform, the presentation methods were not. FLaRE trainers taught endorsement courses through the districts.

Endorsement courses were also offered through professional development programs such as FDLRS (Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resource System). Some endorsement courses were offered completely online. Some teachers took a hybrid of online and face-to-face endorsement courses. Some teachers took concordant university courses in conjunction with their master's degrees. Regardless of the method of presentation, the course content for the endorsement process was the same. Although some teachers expressed dislike and disappointment with the endorsement and professional development training, others were of a sharply contrasting opinion. On one matter, however, all agreed: Secondary intensive reading teachers need more collaborative professional development opportunities.

Ongoing professional development. Teachers uniformly cited weaknesses in the program with regard to collaboration and ongoing professional development.

[O]ur professional development needs to be tighter. We need to collaborate with each other. . .we're out of time. . .there's so much stuff. . .too much stuff to do. . . so when it's time for us to collaborate and talk and figure out—"Hey, you've got the same student in English that I have in reading?" or "How did you do with that?"—we can't do that. . . We need more time (DUV).

I used to [be able to collaborate with other reading coaches], there were some cuts that the county office has made, and the reading coaches have not gotten together this year. I will tell you, at the time I call a reading coach about something, we're on the phone for an hour. "What are you doing? What do you do?" In fact, I'm going to visit a reading coach. . .next week. . .I'm going. . .there to collaborate. I wish we had more meetings countywide. It's just. . .we just don't (NAS).

[W]e had started a reading cadre...it was a sharing and that was the most, I think that was the most wonderful part. Because then we met as a group, all of the reading

teachers in the district and we got to share and we made things, we brought things that we had done in the classroom and it was a wonderful thing (STJN).

Regardless of whether the district had implemented a commercial reading program, all of the teachers in all of the districts felt that they gained immensely from collaborative professional development time with each other and with other teachers of secondary intensive reading.

One possible reason for this could be that in listening to other teachers of secondary intensive reading there are common challenges that all are striving to overcome in the classroom.

Teachers stated that strategies and lessons presented by other teachers of the secondary intensive reading population were more authentic and therefore more likely to succeed with their own student populations. Teachers also deemed their skills, knowledge and dispositions as a whole community greater than the sum of their individual knowledge.

Policy and Purpose. Teachers were questioned on their understanding of the purpose of the Secondary Intensive Reading Program in Florida. Uniformly, their first response was "Pass the FCAT." After reflection, their answers were somewhat varied and gave some insight into their perceptions of the stated and unstated purposes of this policy.

I think the purpose is supposedly to help students to be able to be successful in reading; but at high-school level is this really effective? I don't know that this is effective. I think the purpose is a good thing in theory—but, high-school—really? I just don't think it's effective (DUV).

[The purpose is]To become better readers. . . If we can get them and prepare them for the future world, because otherwise, they won't understand a lot of what's out there (NAS).

This is a tool used to give every student that chance to succeed in postgraduate. I see it as one of the final opportunities we have to create an opportunity for a child to access reading in their life, because these kids hate reading. I think it's our last chance to kind of open the door in reading and give them things that are content interest. . .the last chance to let them make a choice to like reading (NAS).

Punishment. If you can't read, you are put in intensive reading and kids know it and it's a stigma. That's the unstated [purpose] (STJN).

We're not supposed to be teaching to the test, you know. . .just to pass the FCAT. We're supposed to be teaching them to read for life—that's what I understand, for life. But the reality is that you have to pass that darn test to get out. You know, that's why they're in [here] (STJN).

To show the kids that they can read, they have background knowledge, they can visualize, they can learn vocabulary, they can comprehend—we have the opportunity to take children who hate reading and show them that they hate something that they don't do well—not reading (STJN)!

Teachers from every focus group stated that the overt purpose of the secondary intensive reading policy was to help students pass the FCAT test. Some felt that a secondary purpose of the policy was to facilitate the process of reading for their students in order to give them much-needed tools for life. Still others felt that purpose was to help their students move beyond a visceral hatred of reading. Because the reading policy required all students who did not pass the FCAT or obtain a concordant score on the ACT to be scheduled into a reading class, and having a reading class scheduled denied another elective, some teachers stated that an unstated purpose of the policy was to punish poor performance. Teachers thought this sense of punishment to be a heavy contributing factor to negative student emotional response.

Student Emotional Response.

Academic performance and motivation. With regard to student emotional response on being required to take an intensive reading course, teachers were asked to share their observations on students' academic performance, motivation, and behavior. For the students who had been placed into the intensive reading program, teachers in all counties noted poor academic performance, low motivation, and numerous behavioral issues.

Many times when they are labeled "One" they come in with this defeated attitude. . . "This is the way it is—I'm a 'One'." "My teacher last year told me I was stupid." Unfortunately, labeling does not help (DUV).

Sometimes I get the feeling that they think that in these classes they don't have to be as accountable—I mean WE hold them accountable, but it's not a like a core class that is needed for graduation (DUV).

[One student told me] "Until, I came to your class in 11th grade, I didn't know I could do anything other than fail. No one ever told me I could" (NAS).

These kids hate reading. They don't want to read. They've always been told they're failures. So therefore, reading is just off the chart for them. . . Most of these kids have never read for pleasure, ever. They don't see it. There's no connect, because they hate it so much (NAS).

They literally—everyone hates reading and they hate it because they don't do it well. If they did it well, they wouldn't hate it so much. And you can motivate them, preach to them. I mean, I always start the day with that kind of stuff. But it all falls back to they don't care, and if they're surrounded by people who know they don't care, they got to keep up that attitude in order to save face with their peers (STJN).

They've been in reading since 6th grade. . . They've never passed the test (STJN).

[When one teacher shared the new passing cut score with her students] One of my most outspoken girls said, "This is so unfair. This is so unfair. They make it to where they don't want us to pass. That's why I hate school." And then she was gone for a week (STJN).

Teachers observed low motivation and poor academic performance over an extended period of time for those students who had been placed in intensive reading programs. Some teachers noted that consistent failure seemed to have caused students to "shut down" when faced with the tasks that they had failed to accomplish. Teachers perceived that students were hesitant to risk believing that they could accomplish the tasks and pass the test.

Every single teacher has been that coach. "You can do it. Come on you can—you can make it this year. You're so close." And then they fail and they look at us like we broke their heart (STJN).

Behavior issues. Teachers voiced concerns about behavior issues with secondary intensive reading students in their classes; but they focused on ways to mitigate undesirable

behavior. Some teachers saw negative behavior as inevitable within secondary intensive reading classes. Others insisted that if the environment were structured appropriately, negative behaviors could be averted.

A student may be a behavior issue in one class and not in another. I've seen that. I've seen them be with a teacher that they just didn't get along with or maybe there was just some disconnect somewhere (DUV).

[Being in a Secondary Intensive Reading Class mitigates unwanted] behavior too, because our classes are so structured. . . There are very specific places where you do specific things. Those kids that are going through typically are behavior problems, and they are the ones that respond the most to very structured and supportive environments. I really think that the structure of our classes helps them tremendously (NAS).

The best possible solution [in dealing with students who are behavior issues], which is an aide. It was very helpful. I have a teacher's aide who is very helpful—because we do pull the problem children out—so that they don't disrupt, but. . . if you don't have a strong aide that could be a problem (NAS).

My intensive reading classes have 25 [students] and the behaviors in there—you get five or six kids acting out, you can't move them far enough away from each other without them getting the other kids to come in [and join in the unwanted behavior]. [In that group of 25 students] four or five really want to get out of there. The rest of them don't care (STJN).

If you keep grouping them all of them together, you're going to have behavior issues (STJN).

All of the teachers in all focus groups vocalized concerns about behavioral issues within the secondary intensive reading classrooms. Teachers were concerned that the negative behaviors of those who had given up on the possibility of escaping the secondary intensive reading placement had a significant impact on the relatively smaller groups who were in fact trying to remain on task and were motivated to improve their performance.

Change Factors

Teachers were given the opportunity to share their recommendations for change in Florida's Secondary Intensive Reading Program. Their answers fell into the categories of professional development and administrative policy.

Professional development. The teachers in the Duval County group felt the professional development that they received was poorly planned and did not adequately prepare them to use their required programs effectively.

The Janet Allen program— like I say it's a really good program but they bring us the program at the last minute. Two weeks. . . maybe a week before school starts—and then you want to put the pressure on me? No, you're not going to put the pressure on me (DUV).

We didn't have all the materials. I remember when I saw the teacher materials for "*Plugged In*," it wasn't until after the year had started. I remember we were saying we didn't have training. Everybody's like, "Oh, you have a training tomorrow." Then they didn't even have the stuff for the training for us. Then, we didn't have all the books that we were supposed to be doing with the program. You're going to do the program without any materials. No, we had nothing. I am supposed to tell them about this book. I don't have any of the books. They don't have the books, and I don't have the book on CD. And, then, I didn't have the materials that went with the books so we could do it—it was just a mess (DUV).

We were constantly searching for ancillary materials off of the Internet. . . . Printing, printing, printing (DUV).

Could [policy-makers] make it so that they're not building the plane as they fly it (DUV)?

The blind are leading the blind. We have to figure it out. We have to be the one to figure it out and—the ones that implement it (DUV).

Duval County teachers' recommendations for changes to improve the implementation process with regard to professional development were to schedule professional development well in advance of their implementation date and to break extended professional development into several sessions to allow for practice and reinforcement. Additionally, teachers

recommended that the trainers have in their possession, and be proficient in, the use of all ancillary program materials prior to presenting a professional development session.

Furthermore, teachers requested that they be allowed to have in their possession all teacher materials and all ancillary materials in sufficient time prior to implementing a program within their classrooms so that they would have adequate planning time to use the programs as they were intended to be used. Duval teachers reiterated an urgent need to have professional development that focused on collaborative efforts with other teachers, including collaborative meetings with other teachers in the district and collaborative meetings with teachers from other districts in the state. Although Nassau and St. Johns County teachers were satisfied with the content and manner of their professional development with regard to the secondary intensive reading policy implementation, they too reiterated a sense of urgency to be allowed to have scheduled collaborative professional development sessions with teachers from within their district and with those from other districts.

Administrative policy. Nassau County teachers focused on administrative decisions for curriculum use at various grade levels. They also voiced a need for increased teacher-to-teacher, school-to-school, and county-to-county collaboration.

[High-school students] are reading the same stories [as middle-school students]. . . Even if they had a difference, "Come on, Jamestown people, for a hundred bucks a kid, can you come up with trek 2 year 1, trek 2 year 2? Because I know in an ideal world they would move on; that doesn't always happen (NAS).

What would I change? I'd love to go into other schools and say, "Hey, this is working." I want to change other people's way of thinking about it (NAS).

St. Johns teachers focused on administrative decisions with regard to curriculum for instruction, scheduling, class sizes, state administrative decisions to change cutoff scores, and testing methodology. Although they stated that they did not want a commercial reading

program, they felt that they had no curriculum resources provided to them by the district other than FCAT workbooks, FCAT Explorer, and the various content area textbooks.

Teachers stated a need for high-interest instructional materials with teacher supports and ancillary materials.

I don't think you want a canned program—but you need more—but because of money, there's nothing. . . You have to keep these kids interested. You don't want to be doing the workbook page all the time, the FCAT workbook . . . Poor kid (STJN).

There was no real curriculum for it. There was no curriculum (STJN).

Teachers noted that a lack of funding kept them from acquiring the types of instructional materials they needed to incorporate into their curriculum.

Nothing's funded. There's no funding for the books. . .all kinds of interesting material for these kids to read and guides and actually some kind of format for us and no money (STJN).

Scheduling issues. Although teachers expressed concern over a lack of funding and materials, they were also distressed over scheduling issues that had arisen due to lack of funding.

I have kids now who passed in the retakes, but, because there's no money for [increasing] electives, they're back in my class. That used to be the ticket out, like a golden ticket (STJN).

They passed but still they didn't get to that next level...There's nowhere for them to go because we have so many intensive courses. . . and gym [already] has a hundred kids in there (STJN).

Teachers in St. Johns County observed that the student who had successfully met the requirements of the secondary intensive reading program had no place to go. The student who had passed the FCAT or achieved a concordant score on the ACT should have been able to move into a chosen or wanted elective. The fact that such a move could not be made was demotivational to the student and increased teachers' class sizes. This increase in class size

and increase in student frustration, increased the teachers' challenges in facilitating learning for the students who had not met the requirements of the program.

Another concern that was voiced was the constant grouping together of low-level students. Teachers were of the opinion that the lowest quartile students (formerly called "level ones" and subsequently referred to as iii students by the Florida *Response to Intervention* initiative program) and students in the next quartile up (formerly called "level twos" and subsequently referred to as ii students by the same program) did not benefit from being scheduled exclusively with each other.

[In] elementary—they wouldn't let us have a "low group" you know, and a "high group" and I kind of see that now with just having low all the time. . . . The behaviors in there. . . .you can't move them far enough away from each other (STJN).

I would like to mix the lower iii students with the ii students. I think all groups should have a high, intermediate, and low level. I think better dialogue would be achieved, and all groups would be more motivated (STJN).

Teachers were of the opinion that having a heterogeneous mix of student ability would be beneficial to them instructionally and would provide a greater opportunity for cooperative and constructive learning for their students. The teachers noted that having such opportunities would bring higher interest to the classroom environment and might increase students' motivation.

Class size. Florida's 2010 class size amendment, according to the Florida Department of Education, allowed for the placement of 22 students per teacher in middle grades and 25 students per teacher at the high-school level. Districts that have a higher student-to-teacher ratio were required to pay a fine. In many cases, the fine was less than the cost of adding additional teaching allocations and, thus, many districts chose to pay the fine rather than hire teachers.

Under the original policy of the secondary intensive reading program, the recommendation for intensive reading class caps was no more than 15 students per teacher. However, the class size amendment legislation required that all classes be capped at 22 - 25 students per teacher. This legislation necessitated more allocations to be made for core subject areas and removed the luxury of having more reading allocations. Although reading courses were mandatory courses, they were considered "elective" in the scheduling process. When discussing changes that they would like to see made to the Florida reading policy implementation, teachers in St. Johns County were very vocal about class size.

Class size, I think it's huge!...it's supposed to be intensive and then they want you to do small-group instruction... And, I know as one teacher by myself, if I put these in a group over here and these in a group over there and I go over and work with a different group, what do you think the other groups of 17 and 18 year old kids are doing (STJN)?

I mean the size—I think that's one of the biggest things is class size. And then you know, you have kids in there who passed, but they're still in there! So I think class size is a big one (STJN).

Teachers were in unanimous agreement that reduction in the size of their classes—even with just the rescheduling of students who had met the requirements of the program—would significantly aid their instructional efforts.

Data-driven instruction and state score requirements. Although all of these concerns were deemed important, there were other topics stressed within the discussion, notably, the constant change in cutoff scores, shifts in data points, and adherence to data-driven instruction based on meaningless data. Teachers had been increasingly required to implement data-driven and data-based instruction; however, St. Johns County teachers noted that the data on which they were to rely often were not good data because they were incongruous. For example, student lexile scores were based on various methods: Accelerated

Reader, or the Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR) test. Although each assessment method offered a lexile score, the scales of the lexile scores varied, along with the ability levels they were to represent. Also, qualitative data, such as fluency, were being measured by quantitative means; that is, the number of words per minute that a student could read aloud. In addition, teachers were given a percentage of probability that their individual students were likely to score a level three or above on the FCAT. That percentage was derived by an unpublished formula from the Florida Center for Reading incorporating previous student FCAT performance and students' scores on benchmark testing.

[The state] wants us to collect all of this data and see growth. Look on snapshot and see what they've done in the past. . . When they keep changing these scores,...there is no way. . . Its apples-oranges. . . I can't look at the kid last year and say, "Okay, he's a 247 or 298. Oh, he's 2 points from passing." There is no comparison. I have nowhere to look other than my classroom observations because the data points keep changing (STJN).

What we are using as progress monitoring is the FAIR test, which is a series [of tests]. They've got the FCAT reading/questioning part, they've got a maze part [cloze comprehension test], and then they've got the spelling part [phonemic awareness/phonological test]. . . They will give you a lexile level but they don't really do anything with that. They were kind of ignoring that part (STJN).

The FAIR test is a benchmark test that was given three times a year. The first benchmark test was given in August or September. The second test was given at the end of November or the beginning of December, and the last benchmark test is given in May after the FCAT test. Teachers all agreed that the data they received from the FAIR test were poor data. Although the test was presented as a predictive measure of students' performance, it provided only descriptive data of the students' performance during a given assessment. Teachers stated that repetitive administrations of the test, coupled with a poor testing environment, invalidated the results of the test and rendered the data unusable to monitor their students' progress with a high degree of accuracy.

I tell my students, whatever percentage your score is at the top of the test, that's going to be a class work grade. Take it seriously. But you have to threaten them with "take it seriously, this counts" or they [Christmas tree] (STJN).

The teachers were not averse to data-driven instruction; however, they wanted the data to be as sound as possible in order to facilitate instruction by the best possible means. Teacher talk throughout the three focus groups was always heavily student-oriented. Teachers were not only concerned about the quality of the data upon which they based their instruction but also on technological changes in testing methodology that may require a completely new approach to teaching literacy skills.

Changing Trends in Assessment Testing Formats

Teachers in St. Johns County speculated on what the changeover for FCAT from pencil and paper to an online format would mean for their students in particular. Many of the strategies that the teachers learned in their professional development sessions that they subsequently taught to their students in order for students to interact with their text involved making notes on the text, underlining, circling, and marking up the text in various ways. With a shift to online reading and test-taking, these strategies for comprehension would no longer be available to the students. Major concerns of the teachers centered on trying to shift the paradigm for assessment with students who had never been taught any strategies for reading online or for online test taking.

I've been pushing [reading on the computer] heavily in my class because the 10th graders are on the computer and reading on the computer-timed test. We can give them articles all day long and I teach them the reading strategies left and right; but, if it's going to be on the computer, that's almost changing in my mind my methodology of how I'm teaching reading to them (STJN).

Reading on the computer. It's completely different. Right now, the retakes are on paper, and I think that is the only thing that may help (STJN).

If they were started on the computer in 3rd grade, then it would be fair game to test them on the computer in high-school. Whatever system you came in under should be how you are assessed. . . But they [decision makers at the state level] just see [these issues as] little, so we can change these rules, left and right. And those [students] just have to jump these hoops now. . . And, it's just killing [the students] (STJN).

Teachers agreed that there are many kinds of literacy and believed that online literacy differs from book-and-paper literacy. They were very concerned that the book-and-paper strategies, which they had heavily emphasized in their instructional practice since the inception of the secondary intensive reading policy implementation, would soon be obsolete, and they were concerned about how to cope with this issue.

Analysis of Data and Identification of Themes

Analyzing the data led to the identification of patterns and similarities, as well as differences. Observing these similarities and differences allowed me to name these ideas as themes. The thematic relationships based on the domains of challenges/constraints and empowerment included: (a) challenges from within the classroom setting, (b) challenges from outside the classroom setting, and (c) challenges yet to come

This study was based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of political systems theory (Easton, 1957), and shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003) or distributed leadership (Gronn, 2005). The perception of teachers' experiences can be seen through the lens of these theoretical and conceptual frames. That is, political systems theory (Easton, 1957) and shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003) provide value to the voices of policy stakeholders as integral pieces of information that connect the implementers of policy to the policy agenda through the feedback loop during the evaluation and assessment phase of the policy implementation process. In my discussion of the data, I present the three overarching themes that were developed from the data.

The narrative of the Florida reading teachers who undertook Florida's secondary reading policy implementation in secondary schools is complex. Each teacher's experience with the implementation process was unique to the teacher, as it filtered through her own particular lens of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. My service as a reading coach and as a reading teacher in Clay County, Florida, from 2005 to 2011 provided me with a connoisseurship of some of the issues that the teachers in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties faced in implementing the new reading policy. I used this connoisseurship, in conjunction with Merton's (1987) guidelines, in forming my focus group questions with the hope that the informed questions would elicit rich discussion response. In this, I was not disappointed.

Through talking with the teachers about their perceptions of their experiences, it became apparent that some facets of teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the policy implementation were shared in common. These common facets provided a starting position from which diversity of perception could then be discussed. The discussion of this study follows that same pattern, describing first the common facets of the teachers' perceptions and then examining unique perceptions.

Theme One: A Sudden Change of Content is a Challenge in Implementing Policy Change

One significant theme in the data analysis was the manner in which teachers were introduced to and informed about Florida's secondary intensive reading policy. The policy was introduced in the spring of 2005 due to the number of students who were not achieving at least a passing score of 3 on the FCAT. Florida planned to begin mandatory scheduling for the fall of 2005 of those students into secondary intensive reading classes that would vary

in length from 50 to 100 minutes. Policy-makers, in examining the issue of low secondary student performance on the reading portion of the FCAT, framed the issue in terms of inadequate literacy instruction. This problem frame was evident from the measures they put into place that incorporated instructional time in explicit literacy instruction into the secondary schedule where it had previously not existed.

According to Goffman's framing theory (1974), the frame of the problem attributes the blame and identifies the actors that can be responsible for change. Having diagnostically framed the problem and identified a lack of adequate literacy instruction, policy-makers were able to identify teachers as the principal actors of change to rectify the problem of inadequate literacy instruction. Policy-makers then shifted from a diagnostic framing of the problem to a prognostic framing of the problem as they sought to address the desired goal and employ appropriate tactics for achieving this goal.

In the prognostic frame of delivering intensive literacy instruction, they recognized that they did not have the resources of knowledgeable, highly qualified teachers capable of delivering explicit intensive literacy instruction. Therefore, they created, by executive order in 2001, a comprehensive coordinated reading initiative known as Just Read, Florida!. This order created the Family Reading and Excellence Center, which prepared the master teachers to teach the endorsement classes. It also mandated the training of "highly effective" reading coaches, created multiple designations of effective reading instruction along with the reading endorsement credentials, and mandated the training of teachers and school principals on effective content-area-specific reading strategies. The initiative also mandated that secondary teachers emphasize technical text through intensive remedial instruction. Because the problem was framed as urgent, the timeframe for the implementation of the solution was

immediate. In three years, the machine of the policy was in place and ready to train teachers to become secondary intensive reading teachers. Seeing the problem within the frame of urgency in 2001, the problem seemed increasingly pressing by 2004, and the decision was made to place students by mandate into secondary intensive reading classes for the fall of 2005.

Teachers who were recruited by mandate from English and language arts content areas did not possess an interchangeable skill set for teaching secondary intensive reading. The sudden shift from their previous content areas to the new content area put them "out of field," creating disequilibrium and increasing their stress factors while simultaneously making them increasingly responsible for the instruction of the most fragile set of Florida's learners, the lowest quartile.

Although the intent of the policy was to provide a means of support for those students who scored below a passing level of three on the FCAT, the manner in which the policy was implemented contrasted sharply with prevalent literature on teacher efficacy and teacher quality. Research conducted in the past (e.g., Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996) has been clear about the connection between teacher quality and student learning. What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996) made teaching the nucleus of the "three simple premises" in its blueprint for reforming the nation's schools:

 Teachers' content knowledge and application of pedagogical skill are critical to positive student performance.

- The preparation, recruitment, and retention of knowledgeable and skilled teachers are the central strategies for continuous school improvement.
- School reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating ideal conditions
 under which teachers can perform optimally. (p. 10)

In the case of Florida's secondary reading implementation, teachers were undergoing content area training at the same time they were responsible for facilitating instruction for the lowest quartile. With the sudden introduction of a new content area to the secondary environment, no one was already knowledgeable and skilled in teaching reading to failing secondary students.

Principals announced the policy to teachers who were teaching in the content area of English and language arts. They were to be the primary teachers responsible for this intensive instruction and were required to complete the Florida reading endorsement in order to instruct the secondary intensive reading courses adequately. This announcement came without warning for these teachers.

These teachers confessed or asserted that they did not fully understand the ramifications of becoming a secondary intensive reading teacher. In many cases, such assignments elicited fear or at least some apprehension.

I came here in 2006 from Pennsylvania. . .when they saw I had a master's in reading, they said, "She's great for secondary intensive reading." I said, "What is that?" I had no idea. So I was told. . .and then it was sort of like 'learn as you go' (STJN).

Nobody wanted to [teach reading] (STJN).

I remember all the English teachers. . .were told we were each going to have an intensive reading. . .class the following school year. The county immediately put us—started intensive training that summer (NAS).

Secondary English and language arts teachers, who were already considered "highly qualified" in their field according to the Florida Department of Education, were told that they were being removed from their content area of literature and analysis to move to a content area of phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary—the five core strands of intensive reading. Few of these teachers had elementary teaching experience; therefore, the content of reading as a subject area was completely unfamiliar. This lack of familiarity caused considerable stress, given that student performance was, in large part, the measure of their effectiveness as teachers. The state-mandated percentage of students required for the school to be deemed proficient by FCAT was not diminishing. On the contrary, the required percentage of proficient students was rising each year. This increasing demand to accountability led to greater stress for the teachers. However, the teachers' tools and means to control that stress factor—their knowledge of their content area and methods of instruction— were limited. Their experiences of stressors mirrored some of the findings of the most common sources of teacher stress as reported by Travers and Cooper (1996), Benmansour (1998), and Pithers and Soden (1998). Their findings of what factors caused teacher stress centered most notably on lack of student motivation; difficulty in maintaining discipline or classroom management problems; undue burdens in workload combined with time constraints; inability to cope with change; continuous performance evaluation; feelings of decreased self-esteem and status; poor, unsupportive, or adversarial administration and management; the perceived need to fulfill ambiguous and sometimes seemingly conflicting roles; and poor working conditions.

Teachers knew from their general experience the challenge of teaching an unmotivated student; they did not understand the challenge of trying to facilitate instruction

for an entire population of unmotivated students and the specific behavioral issues that arise from grouping these students together. Additionally, teachers found that they were being placed into these classes while simultaneously attending the professional development courses for the reading endorsement, a course of study that took two years to complete. Furthermore, they were required to monitor the progress of their students three times a year to show student achievement and efficacy of instruction.

Administrators initially sought to give each English and language arts teacher a section of intensive reading courses in addition to their regular preparation. Eventually, this system was abandoned, and reading developed into its own department. This organizational change effectively isolated teachers from their previous core subject area. Placed in the reading department, teachers discovered that there was no curriculum map for the content area. There was no uniformly adopted text or program, and, as one teacher stated, "it was learn as you go." Teachers responded to their new positions and responsibilities individually. Some mirrored the findings of Chan and Hui (1995), that is, the teachers' increased responsibility gave them a greater sense of personal achievement in their teaching experience when they were able to realize some success with their students.

Other teachers did not perceive their new environment as one in which they could achieve success; their experiences were characterized by symptoms of "burnout" as detailed by the studies of Dworkin (1997), Maslach and Jackson (1981), and Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler (1986). Teachers sought to cope with their new environments and responsibilities by forming strong cohesive groups in their new content area. Some teachers had a reading coach in their schools to provide professional development and act as a mentor or a facilitator. Other teachers did not have such support.

The focus groups of teachers who reported having peer support, mentoring, and ongoing professional development experienced elevated feelings of satisfaction as compared with the focus group that did not have this ongoing support. This finding corroborated the literature on the positive effect of peer support and coaching on teaching (Achinstein, 2002; Bush, 2003; Birchak et al., 1998; Bowman, 1989). The teachers with support saw themselves as lifelong learners (Grimmett et al., 1990; Hart & Marshall, 1992; Wildman et al., 1990) and actively sought new ways to become more effective with the students they taught.

The secondary reading teachers in this study stated that they saw themselves as the last means of the educational system to reach out to students and to give them the tools they needed in post-secondary life. In this task, they perceived that they were empowered and sought to transmit culture to their students. They also perceived that they were enabled to transform a culture through the success of their students (Cuthell, 2002; Hamstra, 1996; Johnston & Kay, 1987; Louis et al., 1996). As one teacher stated,

If we can get them and prepare them for the future world [by becoming better readers], we will have been successful; otherwise, they won't understand a lot of what's out there [culturally]" (NAS).

Another reiterated this view:

This is our last chance to open the door [for students] (NAS).

By opening the door of literacy, teachers saw themselves as transmitters of culture. They saw the ability of literacy to empower the future of their students as having a transformational impact on their students' lives most immediately and by extension to the culture in the future.

The group that did not have the peer support, mentoring, and coaching model in effect placed the least value on the training they received through the endorsement process. These teachers voiced unanimously, "I don't value it [the endorsement]." Although the instructional strategies and content knowledge of the endorsement training process were a constant through all three groups, the group without the peer support, mentoring, and coaching model in place felt unable to adapt and tailor these strategies to their particular student populations. They cited unique cultural, sociological, and academic issues within their population that were incongruous with the instructional strategies presented throughout the endorsement process. Among the issues they cited were students' academic inexperience, lack of readiness, and negative emotional and sociological experiences throughout their school years prior to arriving in the secondary intensive reading classroom. These issues mesh with the arguments of Kozol (2005) and Kober (2006) concerning the plight of students in low socioeconomic environments. Kober showed that more than half of the nation's African American and Latino students attend public schools in which at least three-quarters of students are children of color and that African American and Latino students are much more likely than white students to attend high-poverty schools. Kozol noted that among students in low socioeconomic environments, an educational deficit exists from before the beginning of the formal education as compared with students in more affluent environments.

Kozol (2005) also opined on the strategy of "one size fits all" programs within urban public schools that drive curriculum changes which are usually based on organizational models of industrial efficiency and Taylorism. Kozol also discussed the naming ritual that permeates the formality of various courses for remedial instruction that have been adopted in

many schools. Examples of these types of programs include 'Authentic Writing,' 'Active Listening,' 'Accountable Talk,' and 'Zero Noise.' The emphasis on high stakes testing encourages the teachers in urban to follow these scripted lessons to bring formality and structure to the learning environment. Students are scored into various levels, which places them into categories for further instruction. Kozol decried the use of these placement levels as labels for students. "Teachers also tell me that these numbering and naming rituals are forcing them to sacrifice a huge proportion of their time to what are basically promotional, not educational activities" (Kozol, 2005, p.77). Regardless of the county in which they worked, the demographics of the schools in which they taught, their years of experience in various content areas, their years of experience as reading teachers, or the way they valued their endorsement training, all teachers consistently stressed the importance of dedicated collaborative professional development with other secondary intensive reading teachers in their district and across districts.

Theme Two: Challenges from Inside and Outside of the Classroom Hindered Policy Implementation

Another overarching theme that was consistent among teachers in all three groups was the challenges from inside and outside the classroom. All groups of teachers in this study spoke about the challenges of implementing the policy with the students in their classrooms. The teachers perceived these challenges as the ones that students brought with them into the learning environment. These were challenges from inside. The teachers also spoke about challenges they experienced as a result of interactions with policy actors outside of their classrooms. These were challenges from outside.

Challenges from inside. Teachers generally characterized the challenges they faced as either student challenges or program implementation challenges. The student challenges were homogeneous: lack of motivation, low self-esteem, presence of behavior issues, the impact of low socioeconomic status, lack of home support, abuse, lack of value on education, years of academic failure or failure on high-stakes testing measures, a sense of punishment in being placed in reading courses, and a visceral hatred of reading. Concerning these challenges, teachers continuously sought to pool their knowledge as they tried to make sense of their situation in view of the larger systems of their educational beliefs and practices (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Weick, 1995). Also, they were forced to borrow methods of instruction and skills to support their ability to teach. Given their limited ability to access other teachers to do this, they reported many efforts to meet these challenges. Consistently and unanimously, teachers voiced the fact that, although they might have been prepared by the endorsement process with content area knowledge, they were in no way prepared to deal with these types of issues that the students brought with them into the classrooms. These teachers have relied, intuitively, through trial and error, on their own emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Although studies have shown the efficacy of providing staff development to empower teachers in these areas (Cattani, 2002; Kyriacou, 2001; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Rosetto & Grosenick, 1987; Wyatt & White, 2002), such professional development was not a part of the endorsement process.

Challenges from outside. The program implementation challenges that the teachers faced were somewhat varied. However, these challenges can be categorized into two groups: local implementation challenges and state implementation challenges. The local implementation challenges are presented first.

District challenges. The local challenges that secondary intensive reading teachers encountered were primarily in the areas of scheduling and the selection and use of curriculum programs. In these areas, teachers encountered an increasing sense of frustration as their content area knowledge grew and their experience as secondary intensive reading teachers broadened. They became knowledgeable of the needs of their students, but they were powerless to use the tools of scheduling and curriculum selection to aid their instruction because these tools of scheduling and curriculum were the responsibility of other actors in the educational system.

Although each district was given the same mandate to incorporate secondary intensive reading courses into its schedule, each district took unique approaches to the task of scheduling students into these courses and to providing curriculum resources for teachers to use in instruction. This latitude created varied experiences in implementation among the teacher groups.

Each focus group's district approached the scheduling and curriculum issues differently. In one group, teachers were barraged from the district by commercial reading programs that seemed to change so frequently that teachers did not have adequate time to implement a program completely before they were given the next program. Nor did the teachers have a consistence point of measurement of student ability to monitor program effectiveness. The lack adequate implementation time for a particular reading program made it difficult to evaluate the worth of the program. The lack of consistent data in measuring student performance, such as lexile levels, fluency rates, and comprehension, meant that teachers did not have enough information to determine if the new programs were of greater benefit than the old programs.

For another focus group, the district had established no set curriculum resource or commercial program. The teachers relied solely on their endorsement training to invent their curriculum resources using the materials at hand, such as novels, textbooks, articles, and FCAT preparation workbooks. In the third group, the district had one commercial program in place in the middle-school and another commercial program in place at the high-school level. However, these programs had not been explicitly delineated between the middle-school and high-school. Therefore, some students had already completed the program designated for high-school during their middle-school career and faced the possible prospect of tedious repetition in their continued reading courses.

Another program implementation challenge that was common to all teachers in each of the three districts was instructional technology support. There was a clear disconnect between the purposes for using instructional technology in the instruction and assessment of students and the timeframes and logistics of district instructional technology departments for making the intended purposes occur. Teachers cited computer program updates conducted during the first weeks of school that rendered the programs inaccessible, program updates that were incompatible with already existing commercial computer-based reading programs, and mandatory computer progress monitoring assessments in labs of 50 students with insufficient space between each student as problematic, and at cross-purposes with their instructional goals.

Scheduling issues were another program implementation challenge cited by two of the three focus groups in this study. Teachers in both of these groups voiced a sense of helplessness concerning the scheduling of students into secondary intensive reading classes. In the experience of one teacher group, all scheduling was done based on FCAT scores.

Students who did not have an FCAT score were placed into intensive reading until a guidance counselor determined that they did not need to remain in the program. Teachers in this group cited the experience of a student who failed to pass an intensive reading class and who was rescheduled for additional coursework with the same teacher. Teachers stated these practices were detrimental to the student's learning experience and compounded the teacher's task in the face of numerous existing obstacles in the classroom.

The teachers in the second group experienced scheduling issues of a different nature. Here class sizes of 25 students in intensive reading were the norm. Students who were able to pass the FCAT retakes or achieve a concordant score on the ACT still sat in intensive reading courses because there were no electives with physical space available to house them; teachers stated that this practice was detrimental to both the student's learning experience and the teacher's tasks in the classroom.

State challenges. The state implementation challenges experienced by secondary intensive reading teachers within the scope of this study included concerns over understanding the purpose of the secondary intensive reading policy. Teachers also voiced concerns regarding the improvement of data-driven instruction, quality of data, and state score requirements. The conversation regarding challenges which teachers perceived as originating with the state concluded with a discussion of changing trends in standardized testing methods, the need for appropriate instructional methods for teaching online literacy, and the need for ongoing professional development.

Teachers evidenced their "buy-in" to the secondary intensive reading policy through their actions in becoming "highly-qualified" (according to the Department of Education) in their content area through training. In voicing their concerns over these issues, they clearly assumed a leadership role. They acknowledged that they did not have answers to the questions they raised about the apparently dual purpose of Florida's secondary intensive reading policy—to fulfill the higher purpose of creating "readers for life" *equally well* with the practical purpose of helping students to pass the FCAT.

We're not supposed to be teaching to the test, you know. . .just to pass the FCAT. We're supposed to be teaching them to read for life—that's what I understand, for life. But the reality is that you have to pass that darn test to get out. You know, that's why they're in [here] (STJN).

This is a tool used to give every student that chance to succeed in postgraduate. I see it as one of the final opportunities we have to create an opportunity for a child to access reading in their life, because these kids hate reading. I think it's our last chance to kind of open the door in reading and give them things that are content interest. . .the last chance to let them make a choice to like reading (NAS).

The teachers recognized the usefulness of data-driven instruction, but were at a loss to isolate congruent reliable data when the types and quality of data sources varied. As stakeholders in the policy implementation process, they sought to open a dialogue to investigate these issues to inform and improve their practice.

Secondary intensive reading teachers within the scope of this study voiced concerns over issues they saw as conflicting purposes in the policy. They understood that the purpose of the policy was to facilitate students' ability to pass the reading section of the FCAT or to achieve a concordant score on the ACT. Yet, in the course of their endorsement training, the emphasis was placed on helping their students to become readers for life. Teachers were concerned that the nature of the intensive reading environment, with its emphasis on performance in high-stakes testing and constant monitoring of progress with FCAT and FCAT-like assessments, precluded the larger purpose and goal of policy. The goal of the policy was not to teach to the test but to open a world of literacy to students, who for various reasons found themselves excluded from it. Teachers speculated and voiced concern about

shaping a culture in which students were professional test-takers, looking for the correct answer instead of critically thinking about an issue.

And if you could see the number of kids we have signing up for Florida Virtual School now, it's insane. High-school as we knew it is going to be gone. It's all test (STJN).

When I first started teaching, there wasn't all this [testing] either. We did SATs every year, but there was creativity, there was incidental learning, there was energy in the classroom, it was just amazing what you could get through. . . All teachers monitor their test scores to make sure they're giving the kids what they need. All of those kids came through and as far as I know they're successful—but this, this is a whole other ball game (STJN).

It's not only intensive reading policy, it's the entire system. . .it's everything. We are creating a group of test takers. In Florida, you're going to see this: we have kids who are not thinkers anymore. I can ask them, "So, how was your Valentine's Day?" And they just stare at me and say nothing, because they think their answer has to be either right or wrong. They won't express opinions anymore (STJN).

I know, really we are creating a society of test takers who cannot think because all we do is test them. Even though it's supposed to be intensive reading, my day is, you know—FCAT, preparing for FCAT, FCAT re-takes, ACT, then we're back to FCAT, it's all testing, that's all it is (STJN).

Teachers recognized the importance of both high instructional standards and the weight and importance of their students passing the high-stakes test. Although teachers acknowledged the stress of high-stakes testing in their own lives, concordant with the studies of Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003), they were at a loss as to ways to fulfill both purposes of this policy; i.e., creating a love of learning, and facilitating an increase of standardized testing scores, equally well in order best and most fully to serve their populations that were deemed "marginalized," "at risk," and "struggling" (Ash, 2002; Flammer, 2001; Haberman & Post, 1998; Ivey, 1999; Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000; NICHHD, 2000; Williams, 2001; Wilhelm, 1997;).

Data-driven instruction was another challenge faced in policy implementation by the teachers in this study. Because of the implementation of the secondary intensive reading policy, teachers became increasingly aware of the importance of data in guiding their instructional practices. However, teachers in this particular study voiced concern over the quantity, the quality, and the relevance of the data they were provided to inform their instruction. Their baseline of data was the high-stakes measure of FCAT. This information was the gatekeeper of the secondary intensive reading policy. Students had been assigned to secondary intensive reading on the basis of their FCAT scores or, as reported by one group of teachers, on the basis of their lack of an FCAT score. Once students were placed in the system, they were monitored at least three times throughout the school year. In the beginning years of the secondary intensive reading program, fluency was the primary emphasis of monitoring. Tests of oral reading fluency (ORF) were administered along with a cloze comprehension exercise called the Reading MAZE Test. The most important data, however, were the oral reading fluency scores. Within three years of the inception of the secondary intensive reading policy, the emphasis shifted from oral reading fluency to a focus on comprehension, and the Florida Center for Reading Research launched a new progressmonitoring tool known as the Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR). This test was comprised of three parts: an FCAT-style test of reading comprehension, the cloze comprehension test (MAZE), and a word analysis component that required students to listen to a word and then spell it correctly.

However, the teachers in this study consistently described the data they received from the FAIR test as "poor." Although the test was intended to be predictive, it did not consider the mindset of the student who knew that the score did not count. If students took the

monitoring seriously and worked to the best of their abilities, the results offered a description of their understanding and application of reading skills. However, repeated monitoring along with test-taking anxiety caused many students to "shut down" mentally and seek only to reach the end of the test without regard for the accuracy of their responses.

And my guys just go, "Oh, God! FAIR." And they said, "I don't try, I don't care" (STJN).

That's what they say. . . "I'm just going to Christmas Tree" (STJN).

As a means to inform instruction, the data from FAIR fell short of their intended purpose.

Districts also created tools for teachers to examine their students' FCAT scores from previous years. Although they have different names—e.g., Pearson Inform, Snapshot, Dashboard, Performance Matters—their purpose is the same: to provide teachers with data about their students' areas of strength and weakness as measured by the benchmark strands of the FCAT. Teachers voiced concern about the recent shifting of data points with the new cutoff scores for FCAT 2.0 and ways they were to relate these data to the FCAT data from previous years.

Moreover, teachers had been encouraged to share data with their students, especially those "on the verge" or "borderline" or "bubble students," in hopes of encouraging them to increase their efforts. With the shift in cutoff scores, students who had worked to become close to success found themselves far away from the goal again. Teachers voiced concern over the effect this shift had on student motivation.

They [the students] can see it [stress], and I have to remind myself: Acting! Acting! Ok, everything is wonderful, guys! Everything is great! Don't worry about it! [laughter from group] And then in my mind it's like, "Oh my God, how am I going to tell them that the test is on the computer—oh, you can't take notes, no—oh, the cut score has changed—I mean when I told them that I was waiting for them to throw the chairs and start crying. And the first thing out of one of the most outspoken girls' mouths was, "This is so unfair. This is so unfair. They make it to where they don't

want us to pass. That's why I hate school." And then she was gone for a week (STJN).

Theme Three: Policy Implementation Brings Insights: Changing Standardized Assessment Trends and Instructional Implications May Call for New Strategies

The final state level implementation challenge that teachers spoke about was an issue they perceived as trends in online, standardized assessment testing. I created a separate theme for this challenge because it has yet to be realized fully. FCAT, end-of-course exams (EOCs), and many other student assessment measures have begun to shift to online delivery. Teachers in this study speculated on the implications of online literacy as opposed to its more traditional form with regard to student performance on standardized tests. Teachers noted that reading online is a different experience from reading a book or a test in paper format. They also noted that the instructional strategies that they learned in their endorsement courses were geared to traditional forms of reading, not digital ones. They perceived a gap in their instructional methods and knowledge as to ways to instruct students in online literacy.

Well, they have to do Florida Achieves first, and then they go to FCAT Explorer to do the practices. I've been pushing that heavily in my class because the 10th graders are on the computer and reading on the computer, time test. We can give them articles all day long and I teach them the reading strategies left and right but if it's going to be on the computer, that's almost changing in my mind my methodology of how I'm teaching reading to them (STJN).

Reading on the computer. It's completely different (STJN).

I ask mine. Which way do you like do – I mean especially after we've been to the library to do Florida Achieves, and then we come back and I've given them something and which do you like? Having these [articles] in your hand working with it or working it on the computer? [Student response] I want to do it on paper (STJN).

Having seen and experienced a new content area arise where it once did not exist, secondary intensive reading teachers are aware of the symptoms of impending systemic

change (Heifetz & Linsky 2002; Senge et al., 1999). They have become a bellwether group in recognizing, first, that a change in the format of student assessments from paper and pencil to an online format requires them to teach their students ways to read online and, second, that this is a completely new type of literacy that they have not been prepared to teach. Their instructional strategies of physical interaction with the text cannot apply when there is no physical text to underline, circle, and notate. Although the technology exists to make such physical strategies possible in a virtual digital environment, they have yet to be implemented with the state standardized assessment tests. Teachers have yet to learn ways to teach students to be proficient in a virtual testing environment.

Conclusion

All the teachers who participated in these focus groups volunteered to do so based on encouragement from district- and school-based administrators. I did not screen participants in any way, except that all participants had to have taught secondary intensive reading in the State of Florida at some time between the years of 2004 and 2012, nor did I refuse any volunteer to participate. The participants in the groups were of uniform gender—female. They represented a mix of age, years of teaching, and previous content areas of specialty. I conducted three focus groups with five to six participants. The focus groups were conducted in three counties and at the teachers' schools in order to enhance their comfort level in discussing their perceptions of their experiences.

Prior to the first focus group, I worried that the teachers would not talk freely or openly about their experiences. I feared that they would somehow view me as an academic pursuing a degree and not as a fellow teacher trying make sense of their perceptions of their experiences as secondary intensive reading teachers. Lack of participation, though, was

never a problem. Indeed, secondary intensive reading teachers were eager to talk about their experiences, their work, their students, and their thoughts for the future. In each of the focus groups, time constraints were the only factor in ending conversations.

As a former reading coach, reading teacher, and language arts teacher, I found the discussions to be stimulating. During the focus group discussions about their perceptions of their experiences as secondary intensive reading teachers, participants often voiced similar experiences and opinions about the implementation of the secondary intensive reading policy in Florida. One significant area in which the three groups differed was in the way they valued the professional development and training they received during the endorsement process. The participants voiced challenges in their roles as secondary intensive reading teachers, and these challenges seemed to fall into two major categories: those that appeared to come from inside their classrooms, and those that appeared to come from outside their classrooms. The most troubling challenges within their classrooms were those dealing with student affect such as motivational and behavioral issues. Teachers' lack of preparation for dealing with students who had been the victims of emotional abuse, physical abuse, or simply parental apathy also presented a challenge. The experiences voiced about the challenges from outside of their classrooms dealt mainly with issues of administration and planning at school, district, and state levels. They discussed the use and misuse of commercial reading programs, the ways in which students were scheduled and grouped for instruction, negative and unintended effects of the policy implementation, class sizes, and the ways in which student assessments were conducted.

Teachers were also very candid about the ways they have interpreted the policy implementation practically in their daily teaching. Unanimously, they recommended an

increased amount of professional development time to be set aside for collaborative sharing. They cited a need to network with teachers in other schools in their district as well as with teachers from other districts. Participants discussed the quality of data they used to drive their instructional practice. Finally, they speculated on the implications of a paradigm shift in testing from paper and pencil to online reading assessments and ways this shift might affect their instructional strategies.

Chapter 4 has presented the data analysis of this study collected from the focus group discussions with secondary intensive reading teachers. Chapter 5 will present the lessons learned and recommendations of this study.

Chapter 5

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents an overview of the entire study. The recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research follow the overview and a discussion of themes as they relate to the lessons learned. A chapter summary follows at the end of the chapter. The study concludes with my reflections.

Summary of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of teachers who had taught secondary intensive reading in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties in Florida regarding their experiences as a result of Florida's reading policy implementation and to obtain their perceptions of the process of policy implementation. It was assumed that, having experienced the policy implementation, the teachers were qualified to provide valuable feedback regarding their experiences in order to inform future policy implementation procedures.

The issues surrounding the teaching of secondary intensive reading were complex. Each teacher implemented the reading policy using his or her understanding of the policy through a unique lens of personal schema. To gather such data required an exploration of these unique personal experiences, which were complex; therefore, this study was qualitative in nature.

Participants

Three secondary school sites in north Florida were selected for this study.

District administrators were contacted first by telephone and then by email for permission to speak with secondary intensive reading teachers. In the case of the Duval County Schools, the research proposal, interview protocol, and application to conduct research were reviewed and approved; and permission to conduct research on school property was given with the proviso that the researcher be screened through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, photographed, and fingerprinted. All of these conditions were met.

With the exception of Nassau County, I chose the schools at which I conducted the research after speaking with the principal of each school and providing copies of the research proposal, interview protocol, and institutional review board (IRB) approval from my institution. In Nassau County, the district coordinator assigned the school at which I could conduct my research; the district was provided with the same research proposal, instrument, and IRB approval from my institution.

After the administrators granted permission to conduct the study in their schools, they arranged times and places for the focus groups and invited their reading teachers to participate. Attendance was not mandatory, and in some cases, not all reading teachers employed by a given school were in attendance. Prior to beginning the focus group, each participant signed a statement of informed consent. A copy of the consent form appears in Appendix B. Focus groups consisted of secondary intensive reading teachers who had taught in the secondary intensive reading content area in various secondary schools throughout all three counties. One focus group was held in a high-school in each county for a total of three focus groups consisting of 5 to 6 participants apiece.

Focus Group Protocols

Focus group interview protocol content was based on the research question addressed in the study. As I was seeking to know what the perceptions of the teachers' experiences were, I began to construct an interview protocol in a chronological manner in order to elicit a process of recollection. That is, the protocol had basic questions to begin with to assist teachers in recalling the circumstances in which they were first introduced to the concept and content area of secondary intensive reading. The questions of the protocol then turned to their experiences in the professional development and the trainings to become reading endorsed. The questions progressed to their experiences and observations with regard to implementing the reading policy, what they perceived to be the purpose of the policy, and finally asked for their recommendations regarding the policy implementation. The same focus group interview protocol was used with all three focus groups (see Appendix A). The focus group interview protocol questions were developed based upon Merton's (1987) guidelines for writing interview protocols; that is, questions were open-ended, and prompts and probes were written to elicit participant responses, using my connoisseurship of the secondary intensive reading policy implementation. The questions were arranged in order to provoke a narrative of teachers' perceptions of their experiences.

Methodology

A qualitative focus group research design was chosen to obtain data for this study. Three focus groups were conducted, with 5 to 6 participants apiece, from secondary schools in the respective counties of Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns in north Florida. The same procedures were used in each interview session. A total of 16 secondary intensive reading teachers participated. Each focus group session was audio-recorded, and I used an interview

protocol sheet to guide the interviewees through the questions. Notes highlighting the interviewee responses were recorded at each interview with the help of an assistant.

I asked participants to complete an anonymous demographic information sheet at each focus group session prior to the start of the focus group discussion. Teachers were asked to state their age, the content area in which they were teaching at the time, the content areas in which they had previously taught, and the number of years of teaching experience they had.

The purpose of the focus group was explained to participants. They were informed that focus groups were to be recorded and that they could withdraw from the focus group at any time without any repercussions. The focus group sessions lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Following each interview, the digital recording was transcribed, and I checked the transcript for accuracy. Transcripts of the recorded interviews were read, coded, and analyzed using Boyatzis' (1998) thematic approach, with input from Eisner's (1991) educational criticism and Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis. Based on these analyses, I developed three overarching themes from the data: (a) A sudden change of content is a challenge in implementing a policy change; (b) Challenges from inside and outside of the classroom hindered policy implementation; and (c) Policy implementation brings insights: Changing assessment trends and instructional implications may call for new strategies.

Lessons Learned

Based on the feedback from the teachers who participated in the focus groups for this study, it was learned that teachers experienced feelings of intimidation and stress when it was announced that their content areas were to be changed. Making such changes, without first discerning some interest in the new content area via a survey or professional learning

community, brought about feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and confusion. From the existing professional literature on teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001), it had been known that teachers reduced their stress levels by informing themselves in their subject areas and by networking with other teachers. However, the approach to implementation was to announce to teachers that they were to teach something with which they were unfamiliar.

Furthermore, teachers were told they were to learn a new content area and to teach the most fragile learners simultaneously. The professional development courses, which were administered to the teachers, varied in delivery methods; some were online, some face-to-face, and some hybrids of virtual and face-to-face. Within the focus groups of this study, professional development delivery methods varied. Significantly, those who took only online courses did not value the professional development as highly as those who took the courses face-to-face or participated in hybrid courses. Because the professional development content was the same for all teachers, regardless of the delivery method, some of the focus group participants expressed that they did not feel that the professional development courses were realistically designed for the challenges presented to them by their struggling, urban, low socio-economic status populations. In retrospect, it may have served the implementation effort to have piloted the policy in strategic locations first; successful teachers within those pilot programs could then have developed and delivered professional developments sensitive to the specific needs and issues of urban, suburban, and rural populations.

The way in which the implementation was approached failed to take into account that teachers are professionals; instead of bringing them into the implementation as allies, they became intimidated and sometimes fearful recruits. In speaking with the participants in the focus groups who have come to embrace the secondary intensive reading implementation, it

was obvious that their positive experiences would enable them to mentor others in the process of teaching secondary intensive reading.

Based on the information from the teachers, there are several important issues to consider for future policy implementations. Although teachers are the final implementers of educational policy, it is important to consider the students the policy is meant to impact. In this case, the target populations of this policy were the struggling, at risk, and marginalized populations with the lowest quartile of reading performance. While the teachers' professional development, the reading endorsement classes, were attempting to equip the teachers with the tools necessary to teach remedial reading to middle and high-school students it was not preparing the teachers to be able to cope with the students' negative emotional and social issues. That is, while the teachers were being prepared to instruct the students in remedial literacy, they were not being prepared in ways to assist those students to become emotionally capable of receiving the instruction. When policy implementations are to impact specific populations such as (a) low socio-economic status students, (b) students who have long histories of low academic performance, (c) students with histories of behavior problems, (d) students with low academic motivation, or (d) students with specific learning issues, it would be helpful to have professional development geared toward coping with these issues to facilitate the implementation process prior to actual implementation.

During the course of this policy implementation, curriculum—here meaning instructional texts—was very important. However, the teachers of each focus group in this study had curriculum available to them in varying amounts. One group of teachers had a plethora of commercial reading programs for middle school and high school, one group of teachers had only two commercial reading programs for middle school and high school, and

the third group of teachers had no set curriculum. During the beginning of the implementation, the elementary nature of reading curriculum was a limitation for the instruction of adolescent literacy (Kamil, 2003). Commercial reading programs became popular as they advertised improved test scores and increased fluency and comprehension. However, funding for these programs, as well as funding for reading texts and ancillary materials was not consistent from district to district. Teachers opined that during the policy implementation, it would have been helpful for them, as the implementers of the policy, to give input on the selection of the teaching materials, ancillary materials, and various texts to be used for instruction. (Curriculum councils and teacher teams often meet to assess curriculum and vote on what teaching materials are to be incorporated into their teaching routines.) Having input into the textbook selection process is a means of gaining teacher support in the implementation process. This input and support would also allow for more diversity in the curriculum as the teachers would select curricula with their own particular student populations in mind.

In speaking with the secondary reading teachers who participated in this study, they perceived that commercial reading programs were purchased and implemented without prior coordination with district technology departments. That is, teachers perceived a lack of planning and integration of technology into their curriculum implementation. Teachers reflected that their academic calendar should have been the primary consideration in having labs configured and programs and software updates installed. They reasoned that the primary goal of the technology was to maximize instructional time. However, in some cases, they had to wait on district technology personnel for several weeks. When implementing a policy which includes various means of instructional delivery, it is extremely important to consider

all aspects of instructional implementation—that is, it is important to have a plan prior to the actual implementation to coordinate the teacher, the curriculum, and the technology so that all work together to meet the purpose of the implementation.

Teachers who participated in this study pointed out that early in the implementation process, the instructional emphasis was on oral reading fluency. Although comprehension was considered important, it was thought that comprehension was dependent upon oral reading fluency. Initial tests measured only how many words a minute a student could read correctly. Later, comprehension tests were included, but still the emphasis was fluency. lexile levels, a scale of reading development, were also used; however the scales were not consistent in various curricula and assessments. Teachers were asked to use data from these various measures to drive their instruction. Some districts adopted commercial benchmark assessments with questions geared to the strands of the FCAT. Others chose to use the Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR) Test. However, the data scales from these tests varied and were sometimes incongruous; that is, what was a cut-off score for a level 3 changed to mid-range for level 2 on the FCAT. Therefore, it was difficult to show student progress over time; it was also difficult to engage and motivate struggling learners when their achievement of a high score was no longer an achievement but a return to further struggle.

Although it is important to set and maintain high standards for education, such an implementation process is hampered by shifts in cut-off scores that place higher expectations on teachers and students who were already stretching their resources and abilities to meet the goals that were set when they began implementation. When data points shift, or are measured by various means, these should not be used to attempt to motivate students. These

should be used to inform and guide teachers' instruction and should have a correlation guide to previous data scales.

The secondary reading teachers who participated in this study became proficient in adaptation. They recognized change and the need for change in their task of policy implementation. The implementation process does not stop at implementation because it continues with a feedback loop to the policy actors who have the power and ability to set the agenda for policymaking. Because these teachers experienced the implementation, they had insight into ways the implementation process interacts with the daily business of teaching and learning. These insights should be incorporated into the improvement of professional development for teachers prior to policy implementation. According to the teachers who participated in this study, their greatest resources and strength for carrying out the implementation were the professional support, instruction, and interaction that they received from with other teachers. This finding corroborates the literature on collegial professional development and peer support (Achinstein, 2002; Birchak, et al., 1998; Bowman, 1989; Bush, 2003).

Recommendations

The following recommendations, based on the conclusions of this research study, focus on (a) educational leadership at district and state levels, and (b) future research.

Recommendations for District Level Administration

Participant responses reinforced the need for communication and dialogue between secondary intensive reading teachers and district level administrators with particular emphasis on incorporating teacher feedback on student scheduling issues, instructional technology issues, and curriculum resources and development. That is, teachers should have

input into the process of scheduling students into reading classes based on the students' specific literacy deficiencies and learning needs. Teachers should also communicate with district instructional technology departments and school-based administrators. Finally, teachers should have an active role in the selection and development of curriculum resources for use in the classroom. These dialogues could develop a better means of coordinating the reporting and resolution of school-based scheduling issues, and instructional technology issues. This could alleviate many problematic issues, such as, peripheral problems and support problems, and curriculum resources and development in each district or sub-area in a district. A monthly meeting could be held with directors of language arts and reading programs, reading coaches or reading department heads, a curriculum specialist, an instructional technology specialist, and a school-based administrator to discuss implementation plans and to brainstorm and anticipate what possible issues may arise from future actions or to brainstorm and resolve issues that have already arisen from actions taken.

By brokering communication, information, and feedback across these departments, the various sub-systems of the local school district will be informed and equipped to serve the needs of their students more capably. Additionally, participants strongly reinforced the need for intra-district and inter-district collaborative professional development with other secondary intensive reading teachers. This professional development could be accomplished at relatively little cost using such technology that is already in place, such as Blackboard and Skype.

Recommendations for State Level Administration

Participant responses reinforced the need for better teacher preparation prior to program implementation and on-going professional development support. Of particular

concern to secondary intensive reading teachers was their lack of preparation for the types of student challenges they encountered in implementing Florida's secondary intensive reading program. Professional development courses that attend to engagement theory rather than motivation theory may be helpful for teachers assigned to work with struggling students. In the past, teachers were given motivational strategies to use to promote better student performance. However, the concept of engagement has emerged as a key to effective work and learning (Shneiderman, 1994). Engagement occurs when people undertake tasks related to their competence, learn continuously, immerse themselves and persist because of the value they attribute to the work; conceptually, it is very similar to intrinsic motivation (Thomas, 2009).

By supplying teachers with the conceptual understandings of engagement theory, the state could then support and assist teachers to structure their lessons in ways that the student perceives the content as valuable, meaningful, and worthwhile. That is, lesson plans can be structured using Shneiderman's (1998) principle components: *relate, create, donate*.

Shneiderman contended that engagement in learning happens when activities (a) occur in a group context (i.e., collaborative teams); (b) are project-based; and (c) have an outside (authentic) focus. His first principle, *relate*, emphasizes team efforts that involve communication, planning, management and social skills. The modern workplace demands increasing proficiency in these skills. However, historically students have been taught to work and learn on their own. Research on collaborative learning suggests that in the process of collaboration, students are forced to clarify and verbalize their problems, thereby facilitating solutions (Johnson & Johnson, 1986; Totten, Sills, Digby, & Russ, 1991).

Collaboration also increases the motivation of students to learn, a significant consideration in

settings with high drop-out rates such as teen-agers and struggling readers (Hootstein, 1995; Zahorik, 1996). Furthermore, when students work in teams, opportunities arise to work with others from different backgrounds; and, this may foster an appreciation of diversity and multiple perspectives.

Shneiderman's second principle, *create*, makes learning a purposeful and creative, activity. Students have to define their learning projects—where their understanding is limited—and focuses their efforts on creating and completing tasks to challenge their limitations. Conducting their own projects is much more interesting, and labor intensive, to students than answering workbook questions or lower level comprehension questions. Giving students input into the shape of their learning gives them a sense of control over their learning which is absent in traditional classroom instruction.

The third principle, *donate*, emphasizes the value of making a useful contribution while learning. In the real world, each project has a customer. Within the context of secondary intensive reading, student projects could serve lower grade levels, campus groups, community organizations, churches, nursing homes, libraries, local government agencies, or individuals in need. In many cases, the projects can be work-related, such as an activity that fits into a students' future occupational or career interests. The authentic learning context of the project increases student motivation and satisfaction. By doing real world activities with their learning, students answer their own question of, "When are we ever going to use this?" This principle is consistent the increased focus on common core standards as well as the emphasis on school-to-work programs offered by many schools systems and colleges, as well as the philosophy of service and servant leadership embedded in modern organizational

and leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977). State administrators could seek cooperation among other state agencies to promote such partnerships in education.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused only on the experiences of three groups of teachers in three counties of north Florida. In order better to understand the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers throughout Florida and to add to the body of knowledge on this implementation process, further research needs to be done statewide with secondary intensive reading teachers. Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for further research were developed.

Further research should be done on the instructional implications of teaching students to read in a digital format, strategies for teaching virtual reading comprehension, and digital text interaction with challenged readers. Teachers acknowledged that reading skills and strategies differed according to the modality in which the reading occurs. They also acknowledged that the skills and instructional strategies which they had acquired from the reading endorsement professional development did not address reading in a digital modality. Therefore, research should be done into ways to adapt known and effective instructional strategies for reading from a paper modality to digital modalities as well as to develop effective instructional strategies that may be solely relevant to digital modalities.

Additionally, further research should be done in the field of assessment regarding the relationship between teaching in a paper modality and testing in a virtual modality with students in the 21st century. Much research has been conducted into the science of assessment and measurement; validity and reliability. Research should be conducted on the validity of teaching in one modality and testing in another, as well as the reliability and

validity of those test results. Conducting research in this area will inform the existing body of knowledge on preferred and best instructional and assessment practices. This information will facilitate continuous improvement in the educational system.

Finally, further research should be done on effective ways to broker feedback across the competing values of the subsystems of education with the purpose of better serving student stakeholders through subsystem synergy. For example, research should be done on brokering feedback between state and district agents within the context of policy implementation.

Concluding Study Summary

The rationale for conducting this study began with the premise that, by understanding the perceptions of the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers as they undertook the task of implementing Florida's secondary intensive reading policy, it might be possible to refine the policy implementation process for continuous improvement of adolescent literacy at both local and state levels. In the body of literature on adolescent literacy, a void exists regarding the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers. This study began to fill that void and to open a dialogue for future research.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of the experiences of teachers who taught secondary intensive reading in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties in Florida regarding Florida's reading policy implementation and to access their perceptions of the policy implementation process. Having experienced the policy implementation, it was assumed that these teachers were qualified to provide valuable feedback to inform future policy implementation procedures in the context of their instructional frame. This study was qualitative in nature.

The significance of this study was two-fold. First, the creation of secondary intensive reading in the State of Florida in 2004 had a major impact on teacher qualifications, teacher preparation, course scheduling, and curriculum. Much information has been collected on student achievement and responses to the State's intervention. However, relatively little information exists about the experiences of teaching in a new content area inside a developing field of instruction. This exploratory study of the perceptions of the experiences of secondary intensive reading teachers contributes to the body of knowledge in policy implementation.

Researcher Reflection

This study was conceptualized using the specialized knowledge garnered through my experience as an English language arts teacher who experienced the implementation of Florida's secondary intensive reading initiative. In the year 2004, I was recruited into the reading endorsement program. Subsequently, I served as a reading coach from 2005 until 2010 in Clay County, Florida. During those years, I gained a connoisseurship of the issues surrounding Florida's secondary reading initiative. There were many and varied voices struggling for an outlet of expression. I believed then and now that these voices were important to an understanding of the success of the intensive reading initiative. Through the guidance of my doctoral committee, I have crafted this study and conducted it with teachers whom I had never met or spoken to prior to conducting the focus groups. This strategy was an effort to control bias on my part as the researcher. I had intended to speak both to teachers who were teaching in the content area of secondary intensive reading and to teachers who had left the content area. However, the logistics of being able to meet with teachers who had left the content area precluded access to them.

There were some surprises for me in this research. One surprise was the difference in the ways that these three counties, in a small geographic area, had implemented the secondary intensive reading policy. Another surprise was that, even though the districts had implemented differently, the basic needs of the secondary intensive reading teachers remained the same. The last unexpected discovery of this research was the prospect of rethinking intensive literacy instruction to coordinate with the new online assessments. In all of my thinking about literacy instruction and secondary intensive reading, it had not occurred to me that this change in testing would nullify many of the instructional strategies that teachers have used.

Appendix A

Focus Group Questions for Secondary Intensive Reading Teachers

- 1. When, and under what circumstances did you first become knowledgeable about Florida's plan for implementing secondary intensive reading instruction in middle and high-schools?
- 2. How did you come to the decision to teach secondary intensive reading?
- 3. To become reading-endorsed, a teacher must fulfill a 300 hour professional development. Where are you in the endorsement process? How would you evaluate the information and instruction you have received through this professional development?
- 4. What is your understanding of the purpose of the Secondary Intensive Reading program in Florida?
- 5. What do you think are the greatest strengths of the Secondary Intensive Reading program in Florida?
- 6. What do you think are the biggest weaknesses of the Secondary Intensive Reading program in Florida?
- 7. How do you think the Secondary Intensive Reading program affects students in your classes in terms of the following:

Academic Performance Motivation Social Development Behavior

- 8. Describe how students are typically placed within the Secondary Intensive Reading Program at your school?
- 9. Describe and evaluate [for effectiveness] curriculum you use or have used for Secondary Intensive Reading Instruction.
- 10. What do you like best about the Secondary Intensive Reading Program and what would you change?
- 11. Here's my original question: Do you plan to remain in the content area of secondary intensive reading? Why or why not? But in light of the recent events in our legislature, now, do you see yourself remaining within the area of secondary intensive reading? If not, to which content area do you plan to move? How do you see your experience as a secondary intensive reading teacher influencing your instruction within that content area?

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Focus Group Participation: Post-Mortem Investigation of the Experiences of Secondary Intensive Reading Teachers on Secondary Reading Policy Implementation

Investigators

Rebekah S. Bliss, M.Ed.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to obtain feedback from teachers who implemented a Florida reading initiative from 2004-2011 in the secondary schools. The rationale for obtaining this information is to conduct a post mortem on the initiative implementation: which procedural actions regarding the implementation were beneficial and which procedural actions needed improvement; specifically to inform future policy implementation processes.

Explanation of Procedures

If you decide to participate in this study, you will take part in a focus group discussion with 4-6 other participants, which will be led by a focus group facilitator (Rebekah Bliss). A focus group assistant/observer (Dr. Marcia Lamkin) will also be present during the focus group session. We will audio-record the session and make a written copy for later analysis.

The questions that the focus group facilitator will ask will address your opinions about your experiences as a secondary intensive reading teacher in Florida during the Just Read, Florida! secondary intensive reading policy implementation. You also will complete a brief survey that will request information about your age, occupation, and educational background. The focus group session will last 90 minutes.

Confidentiality

The information collected in this study will remain confidential. This means that your identity as a participant will not be revealed to people other than the investigators listed above. Any references to information that would reveal your identity will be removed or disguised prior to the preparation of the research reports and publications. All research materials will be kept in a locked office and secure server at The University of North Florida. All audio recordings will be erased at the completion of the study.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not anticipate that participation in this study will pose physical or psychological risks beyond what you encounter in everyday life. However, if you are uncomfortable answering a particular question, you are free to refuse to answer the question, and you are free to quit the study at any time.

Benefits

The benefits to this study include troubleshooting suggestions for future pracital implementation proceedures at the school and district levels as well as training and professional development feedback for teacher training institutions.

Freedom to Withdraw Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary; you will not be penalized if you decide not to participate. You are free to withdraw consent and end your participation in this project at any time.

Contact Information

If you have concerns about this study or would like to have a copy of the results after we have completed the project, please contact Dr. Marcia Lamkin or Dr. Katherine Kasten at or I may be reached at (Rebekah Bliss)

Your signature below shows that you understand the above and agree to participate in th focus group discussion.	
Please print your name	Witness signature
Please sign your name	Date

Appendix C

RECRUITMENT Letter (via email)

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Rebekah Bliss; I am a doctoral candidate from the College of Education at The University of North Florida. I would like to invite you to participate in my research to examine the instructional frames of reference on secondary intensive reading initiatives: reading teachers provide feedback on policy implementation to inform the policy implementation process. You may participate if you have taught secondary intensive reading at any time between the years 2004 to the present. You do not have to be teaching currently in the secondary intensive reading content area to participate. As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a two-hour focus group during which you will be asked to share your experiences in implementing the secondary reading initiative in Florida schools.

The study objective is to obtain feedback from teachers who implemented a Florida reading initiative from 2004-2011 in the secondary schools. The purpose of obtaining this information is to conduct a post mortem on the initiative implementation: which procedural actions regarding the implementation were beneficial and which procedural actions needed improvement; specifically to inform future policy implementation processes.

There are no anticipated physical, psychological, social, legal, employment risks to participants. The participants will incur the cost of travelling to the meeting site; however, lunch and refreshments will be provided. The anticipated benefits to the body of knowledge regarding policy implementation exceed any unanticipated risks to the participants.

Participants will be ensured confidentiality. All data collected will be kept on a secure server and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants and their schools. Participation in this study is voluntary; participants will not be penalized if they decide not to participate. Participants are free to withdraw consent and end their participation in this project at any time. If you would like to participate in this research study, please reply to

If you have questions, please contact me at or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marcia Lamkin at or Dr. Katherine Kasten of the University of North Florida Institutional Review Board

Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Appendix D

Permission to Conduct Research in Duval County

Nov 02 2011 9:05AM HP LASERJET FOX p.2



Instructional-Research and Accountability Timothy & Ballontine, Executive Director 1761 Printerial Drive Jacksonville, FL 32207 (904) 390-2976 www.duvaischools.org/resoval

October 27, \$011.

Rebekah Blis 3197 Firesiu**e D**r. Middleburg, FL 32068

Door Miss Biles:

Your reques to conduct research in Duval County Schools has been approved. This approval apolles to your project Instructional Frames of Reference on Secondary Intensive Reading Initiatives in the form and confent as supplied to this office for review. Any variations or modifications to the approved protocol must be cleared with this office prior to implementing such changes.

Participation in studios of this nature is voluntary on the part of principals, teachers, staff, and students. Our approval doc: not obligate any principal, teacher, staff member, or student to participate in your study. A signed copy of this letter mus accompany any initial contact with principals, teachers, porents, and students.

Our approvals for research run through June 30th of each school year. If your research will extend beyond that date, you will have to resultmit an application at the appropriate time. You will be required to supply copies of signed consent an assent forms at that time. If there have been to changes to the approved protocol you may refer to the previously submitted paperwork.

The Chief Officer of Human Resources has advised that matther you not your students/colleagues are to be in any Tuys County Public School nor have any contact with students until you have gone through the fingerprinting process at DCP? Please schedule an appointment with the School Police at 904-858-5) 00 and bring a copy of this approval felter with you t your appointment.

Upon completion of the study, it is customary to forward a copy of the finished report to the Office of Instructions Research and Accountability, 1701 Prudential Dr., rm. 327, Jucksonville, Florida 32207. This office also snall be notified, i advance, of the publication of any reports/articles in which Duval County is mentioned by hame.

If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me or Dawn Botkin at 390-2976.

Signature Deleted

Timothy Ballentine | Executive Director

Instructional Research and Accountability

Appendix E

UNF IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2665
904-620-2455 FAX 904-620-2457
Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Institution

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 2, 2011

TO: Ms. Rebekah Bliss

VIA: Dr. Marcia Lamkin

LSCSM

FROM: Dr. Katherine Kasten, Chairperson

On behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board

RE: Review by the UNF Institutional Review Board IRB#11-065:

"INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMES OF REFERENCE ON SECONDARY INTENSIVE READING

UNF IIO Number: <u>11-665</u> Contingent Approval Date: <u>39-25-2011</u> Final Approval Date: <u>11-62-2011</u>

Expiration Date: Ecompt - None
Processed on behalf of UNP's IRB

INITIATIVES: READING TEACHERS PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION TO INFORM THE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS"

This is to advise you that your project, "INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMES OF REFERENCE ON SECONDARY INTENSIVE READING INITIATIVES: READING TEACHERS PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION TO INFORM THE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS" was reviewed on behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board and has been declared Exempt, Category 2." Therefore, this project requires no further IRB oversight unless substantive changes are made. The contingency has been lifted and recruitment, informed consent, and data collection may now begin.

This approval applies to your project in the form and content as submitted to the IRB for review. Any variations or modifications to the approved protocol and/or informed consent forms that might increase risk to human participants must be submitted to the IRB prior to implementing the changes. Please see the <u>UNF Standard Operating Procedures</u> for additional information about what types of changes might elevate risk to human participants. Any unanticipated problems involving risk and any occurrence of serious harm to subjects and others shall be reported promptly to the IRB within 3 business days.

Please note that the IRB approval for Duval County Public Schools expires every year on June 30th. Therefore it will be necessary to submit an extension request to the Duval County Public School IRB if your study will be continuing past June 30, 2012. Please submit a copy of that updated DCPS approval memo to UNF's IRB upon receipt of approval.

As you may know, CITI Course Completion Reports are valid for 3 years. Your completion report is valid through 9/26/2012 and Dr. Lamkin's completion report is valid through 9/16/2012. If your completion report

expires within the next 60 days or has expired, please take CITI's refresher course and contact us to let us know you have completed that training. If you have not yet completed your CITI training or if you need to complete the refresher course, please do so by following this link: http://www.citiprogram.org/. Based on your research interests we ask that you complete either the "Group 1 Biomedical Research Investigators and Key Personnel" CITI training or the "Group 2 Social Behavioral Researcher Investigators and Key Personnel" CITI training.

Should you have any questions regarding your project or any other IRB issues, please contact Kayla Champaigne at 904-620-2312, or K.Champaigne@unf.edu.

UNIT IEB Number: 11-562 Castingent Approval Date: 19-25-2011 Final Approval Date: 11-63-2011 Enginetion Date: (Incomp. None Processed on behalf of UNIT's IEB ALL

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Education 2013 2005 2002	Doctorate of Education, University of North Florida Masters of Secondary Education, University of Florida Bachelor of Arts English, George Mason University
<u>Professional Experience</u>	
2010 - 2013 2005 - 2010 2007 - 2008 2006 - 2008 2004 - 2005 1994 - 1995 1991 - 1992	Language arts Teacher, Orange Park Junior High School Reading Coach, Orange Park Junior High School Visiting Professor, University of North Florida Adjunct Instructor, University of North Florida Language arts Teacher, Twin Lakes Middle School Remedial Literacy Instructor, Belize, C.A. Kindergarten/Primary Teacher, Fairfax Christian School
Related Experience 2005	Graduate Assistant, University North Florida
Publications and Papers 2012	"Ari's Haggadah, A Parable of Enough." Jewish Magazine
2009	Understanding Q-Methodology. Presented at AERA conference, San Antonio, Texas.
2008	Integrating Technology, Multicultural Education, and Fluency Instruction in the Intensive Reading Classroom, <i>Voices in the Middle.</i>
2004	Multiculturalism in Children's Literature. Presented at ACEI conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.
2002	"How to Refill The Ink When Your Well Runs Dry." University of North Florida Chapbook.
Awards 2010	Middle-School Reading Coach of the Year, State of Florida
2010	Middle-school Reading Coach of the Year, Regional Winner