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Upper Elementary Reading Instruction in the Age of Accountability: Balancing Best Practices with Pressures to Achieve on High-Stakes Tests

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UPPER ELEMENTARY READING INSTRUCTION IN THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY:

BALANCING BEST PRACTICES WITH PRESSURES TO ACHIEVE ON HIGH-STAKES

TESTS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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Abstract

UPPER ELEMENTARY READING INSTRUCTION IN THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY: BALANCING BEST PRACTICES WITH PRESSURES TO ACHIEVE ON HIGH-STAKES TESTS

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The present study identifies reading instructional practices used in upper elementary classrooms during the age of high-stakes test accountability and compares reading practices among schools of varying accreditation status and socio-economic status (SES). The current study partially replicates and extends a study conducted by Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Ro in 2000. The Baumann et al. (2000) study provides a frame of reference to compare instructional practices prior to high stakes testing with those used in the current high stakes testing environment. Third- through fifth-grade teachers in seven school districts in central Virginia were asked to complete an electronic survey. Descriptive statistics from 113 surveys identified current instructional practices, materials used for instruction, and grouping strategies

used for reading instruction. Kruskal-Wallis *H* tests were used to identify differences between groups based upon socio-economic or accreditation statuses. Participating teachers reported using a balanced approach to reading instruction, indicated a desire to develop independent readers, and noted that a considerable amount of time is spent on comprehension instruction. Leveled guided reading books, fiction books, and nonfiction books are used frequently for instruction, but basal readers are used infrequently. Ability-based groups were reported as a primary grouping structure, but many teachers indicated they also use whole-class mini-lessons. Schools with higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch, Title 1 status, and those that have not met accreditation benchmarks are more likely to spend time on vocabulary instruction. Title 1 schools are also more likely to use test preparation materials and twelve additional classroom resources, such as general reading skill workbooks, phonics workbooks, and commercial classroom libraries. While most teachers felt pressure to modify instruction to match assessments, no differences in the degree of pressure felt were found based upon either measure of SES or accreditation status.

Keywords: reading instruction, upper-elementary, accountability, instructional practices, guided reading

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized, and in 2002, the legislation, otherwise known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, went into effect (Allington, 2009; Dee, Jacob, & Schwartz, 2013; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, & Buese, 2008). This legislation required statewide accountability systems that measure proficiency with an annual test (Coburn, Pearson, & Woulfin, 2011). These annual tests are referred to as high-stakes because of the potential consequences attached to them (International Reading Association, 1999a; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Student retention, graduation, teacher and administrator job security, and financial repercussions can be tied to the results of high stakes testing (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). In December 2015, ESEA was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). While this new legislation allows states to determine how to use required tests, accountability is still a focus of this law, and states are still required to assess students in key grades (Klein, 2016).

As the first decade of the 2000s concluded, a movement designed to create a set of high standards in English language arts and mathematics emerged. Citing stagnate academic growth and test scores below international peers, a group of state school chiefs and governors created the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; Common Core State Standard Initiative, n.d.). These standards were designed to "define the knowledge and skills students should gain throughout

their K-12 education in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs" (Common Core State Standard Initiative, n.d., para. 4). While adoption of the CCSS is optional for states, forty-two states plus the District of Columbia adopted these standards as their core instructional blueprint for schools in 2009. Virginia, the Commonwealth of interest for this study, is one of a few states that did not elect to adopt the CCSS. Virginia adheres to its own Standards of Learning (SOL; Commonwealth of Virginia Board of Education, 2010).

As the education field moves forward, it is important to explore how reliance on testing as a means of measuring achievement effects reading instruction. The increased attention on accountability forces schools to focus on the "bottom line of test scores," and on a view of instruction that is based on increasing that bottom line (Shannon, Edmondson, Ortega, Pitcher, Robbins, 2009, p. 256). A focus on improving test scores, though, does not always work in tandem with what has been identified by reading researchers as best instructional practices. Now, as more than a decade of accountability tied to high-stakes tests has concluded, it is important to explore how the pressure of accountability has impacted reading instruction. How have teachers been able to balance best practices with pressure to achieve on high-stakes tests?

Rationale for the Study

While research exists that investigates outcomes of high stakes testing on general instruction and teachers' perceptions of the effects of high stakes testing on instruction, very little research exists on the effects of testing on daily instructional practices and how testing has specifically impacted reading instruction. This study seeks to explore how reading instruction is delivered in upper elementary classrooms in Virginia during an era of high-stakes testing.

Specifically, this study examined how time is allocated during the reading block, which types of materials or activities are used for instruction, and how students are grouped for instruction. Achievement of upper elementary students is measured by performance on high stakes tests; therefore, it is important to examine what kind of instructional practices upper elementary teachers use as they balance instructional beliefs with high stakes accountability.

Statement of Purpose

A primary purpose of this study was to identify reading instructional practices used in upper elementary classrooms. To gain this insight into reading instructional practices, a partial replication and extension of a study conducted by Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Ro in 2000 was made. In order to capture a snapshot of then current reading practices, the Baumann et al. (2000) study partially replicated a study conducted by Austin and Morrison (1963) that investigated reading instruction in the early 1960s. The Baumann et al. study (2000) allowed for a comparative view of reading instruction between the early 1960s and late 1990s. Conducting a partial replication of Baumann et al.'s (2000) study provides a frame of reference to compare instructional practices prior to high stakes testing with those used in the current high stakes testing environment. Given the pressure on teachers to have students meet state proficiency benchmarks, an additional purpose of this study is to compare reading practices among schools of varying accreditation status and socio-economic status (SES).

Literature/Research Background

Reading instructional practices. "Reading is more than just the oral rendering of written text" (Hoffman, Baumann, Afflerbach, Duffy-Hester, McCarthey & Ro, 2000, p. 3). Reading is a cognitive process (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development,

2000). Since children and teachers differ, there is no one best program or method to teach reading (Allington, 2001; Flippo, 2012; Hoffman et al., 2000; International Reading Association, 1999b). Teachers and the quality of instruction delivered have been shown to be the most influential factor in student reading success (Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Hoffman et al., 2000). While the teacher and his/her instructional decisions are paramount, research has identified several elements that promote reading success.

The National Reading Panel Report highlighted five key components of reading instruction: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency (NICHD, 2000). While all five elements are present, in some form, in all elementary reading instruction, phonics and phonemic awareness are emphasized more in primary grades (K-2). After students develop a sound understanding of printed words, typically in third grade, the focus shifts from decoding and learning to read to reading in order to extract meaning from text (Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin, 1990). Instruction in vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency are emphasized more than phonics and phonemic awareness in upper elementary classrooms.

Reading instruction reflects many philosophical stances ranging from a language-based whole language approach to a teacher-direct comprehension strategy approach. Balanced literacy, according to Pressley (2006) combines the strengths of whole language and skill instruction to create a new model where instruction is more than just the "sum of its parts" (p. 1). Students are exposed to authentic literature, but also to explicit skills. Teachers use specific strategies and grouping practices to scaffold and differentiate instruction, and students are grouped homogenously for some activities, and heterogeneously for others (Bingham & Hall-

Kenyon, 2011). Both sides of the literature-centered to skill-based continuum are important, but balance between the two sides is essential (Pressley, 2006).

While five key components of literacy instruction have been identified and the influence of multiple perspectives can be seen through classroom practices, relatively few contemporary studies could be located that focus on reading, as a cohesive block of instruction, in an upper elementary (3-5) classroom. Studies that examine the practices of teachers identified as exemplary noted that these teachers modeled responses, directly taught critical thinking skills, used literature-based instruction, offered choice in materials, and incorporated a variety of grouping practices (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Morrow, Wamsley, Duhammel, & Fittipaldi, 2002; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampston & Echevarria, 1998; Pressley, Yokoi, Rankin, Wharton-McDonald & Mistretta, 1997). Reading in the upper elementary grades was noted as complex, and while each classroom was similar in practices, they varied in the degree to which practices were used (Pressley et al., 1998). While several studies could be located that describe how effective teachers provide reading instruction, only three studies could be located that examine how teachers, not identified as exemplary, allocate time and resources during the core reading block. Little research could be located that describes how teachers facilitate instruction in a typical upper elementary classroom suggesting a gap in the extant literature.

A changing educational landscape. The 21st century is marked by the age of accountability in public schools. Even though testing has always been part of the school experience, current legislation has put high-stakes testing and accountability into the forefront of education. Previously, federal government influences on reading instruction came in the form of inputs, such as Chapter 1 (later known as Title 1) reading programs (Shannon et al., 2009; Valli

et al., 2008). These efforts were aimed at providing funds or resources to level the disparity

among different groups of students (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000; Shannon et al., 2009).

It was thought that it was the lack of resources, not teacher knowledge and instruction, that was

causing differences in achievement (McGill-Franzen, 2000). The legislation in effect in the 21st

century deviates from this by placing the emphasis on teacher accountability so that performance

on tests is linked to sanctions and rewards (Coburn et al., 2011; Hamilton, 2003; Valli et al.,

2008). The belief is that focusing on outcomes, or test scores, will force educators to identify

what students should know, how to best teach them, and provide motivation to do so (Hamilton,

2003; Lee & Reeves, 2012; Valli et al., 2008). The current legislation mandating accountability

is an effort to use policy to improve teaching (Coburn et al., 2011; Hamilton, 2003).

Opponents to testing cite several concerns. First, the emphasis on testing results in a

narrowing of the curriculum (Afflerbach, 2005; Coburn et al., 2011; Hamilton, 2003; Jones &

Egley, 2004; Valli et al., 2008; White, Sturtevant, & Dunlap, 2002). Second, testing impacts

instruction and classroom practices (White et al., 2002). Testing prompts teachers to focus on

basic skills or isolated facts rather than developing higher level learning opportunities (Coburn et

al., 2011; Diamond, 2012; Hamilton, 2003; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). Testing influences time

spent in instructional methods such as grouping, seatwork, and cooperative learning (Pedulla,

Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, & Miao, 2003). Mandated differentiation and lack of teacher

control in determining intervention groups and materials are also cited as consequences of high-

stakes testing (Valli, Chroninger, & Buese, 2012).

High-stakes testing can lead to an increase in the inclusion of test preparation activities

taking time away from authentic reading instruction (Afflerbach, 2005; Coburn et al., 2011;

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White et al., 2002). Additionally, teachers who taught in states with high-stakes tests reflected the testing format in their own classroom assessments and instruction (Pedulla et al., 2003; Valli et al., 2008). Teachers felt a need to teach to the test and struggled to balance instructional beliefs with preparing for the tests (Jones & Egley, 2004; Palmer & Rangel, 2010). Valli et al. (2008) saw a trend toward "transforming teaching into test preparation and learning into improvement in test scores" (p. 3).

Teachers feel a lot of pressure to have their students perform well on standardized tests (Jones & Egley, 2004, 2008; Plank & Condliffe, 2013; White et al., 2002). Valli et al., (2008) found that testing "influenced almost every aspect of school life" (p. 3). Changes teachers made to their instructional practices were less about a change in their beliefs than a response to the high-pressure environment (Coburn et al., 2011). This pressure to achieve high scores contributed to teachers feeling like they had little time to teach material not on the test, resulting in the narrowing of the curriculum to tested material (Pedulla et al., 2003). Additionally, elementary teachers, as compared to the secondary teachers surveyed, indicated that they have taught in ways that contradicted their ideas of sound instruction due to the pressure to perform well on high-stakes tests (Pedulla et al., 2003).

High stakes testing can also promote inequality of instruction. Teachers devote an increased amount of targeted instruction and resources to "bubble kids" (p. 233), students who are close to achieving the proficiency mark on the assessment (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond, 2012; Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Rothstein, 2008). This increased attention comes at the expense of the high and low achievers (Diamond, 2012; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). The "bubble kids" benefit from a majority of resources, while the

lowest-scoring students receive the least attention (Booher-Jennings, 2005, p. 233). Some schools try to ensure the "score suppressors," or lowest performing students, do not take the test by withdrawing or suspending students (Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 74).

When faced with a changing educational landscape and increased teacher accountability, it is important to investigate how teachers in testing grades provide reading instruction. Many best practices have been identified in the literature, but few studies could be located that examine how teachers balance sound reading instruction with the pressures associated with achievement on high stakes tests. This study seeks to gain a contemporary view of reading instructional practices that occur in upper elementary classrooms in the current educational environment of accountability and high stakes testing.

Research Questions

Research questions addressed through this study included:

1. How does current reading instruction in upper elementary classrooms compare to the findings of the Baumann et al. (2000) study?

   Specifically:

   a. How is time for reading instruction allocated in upper elementary classrooms?

   b. What kinds of materials are used to teach reading in upper elementary classrooms

   c. How are students grouped for reading instruction in upper elementary reading classrooms?

2. Do schools of varying socio-economic status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

3. Do schools of varying accreditation status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

Methodology

This study replicated and extended a study conducted by Baumann et al. in 2000. Data for this study were collected through an electronically distributed survey of upper elementary (grades 3, 4, and 5) teachers in Virginia. The survey instrument from the Baumann et al.'s (2000) study was used in this study with slight modifications. The original survey instrument included general questions for K-5 teachers as well as questions aimed specifically at K-2 teachers or 3-5 teachers. Since the present study examined practices in upper elementary classrooms, the three specific questions directed towards K-2 teachers were eliminated along with four open-ended questions that did not address the research questions of this study. Additionally, questions that capture SES and accreditation status were added in order to explore differences between schools on these variables. General comparisons between the Baumann et al. (2000) and the present study were made through the use of descriptive statistics. Since the Baumann et al. (2000) study surveyed K-5 teachers, direct comparisons were not possible. The Baumann et al. (2000) study served as a frame of reference to discuss trends identified through the current study of upper elementary teachers with educational practices used by K-5 teachers in 2000. When possible, general comparisons between the present study and the 1963 Austin and Morrison study were also made. Differences in responses from schools of varying SES and accreditation status were also explored.

Findings

  A total of 113 teachers participated in the study and were fairly equally distributed between third, fourth, and fifth-grade. Descriptive statistics were used to identify current instructional practices and materials used. Reading comprehension, reading strategies instruction, and guided reading instruction were identified as the top three instructional practices used most frequently by participants. Phonics and handwriting instruction were two instructional practices that did not receive much time in the contemporary classroom. In terms of materials used for instruction, leveled guided reading books, fiction books, and non-fiction books were used most frequently. A basal reading series was used least frequently and 60.7% of participants noted that it was *never* used.

  Teachers indicated that they believe in a balanced literacy approach, guided reading, and an eclectic approach to teaching reading. While teachers noted that they use ability groups, flexible groups, and whole-class instruction, 67.3% of the participants indicated that ability groups are the primary grouping structure. Teachers also noted that instruction is guided by district-created pacing guides and most teachers are required to administer district-created benchmark assessments.

  A nonparametric test, the Kruskal-Wallis *H* test, was used to investigate differences between groups based upon SES and accreditation status. A significant difference was found based upon SES and accreditation status for vocabulary instruction. Differences in 12 instructional materials were noted based upon SES status (see Table 20), and a difference in time spent in test preparation activities was significant based upon Title 1 status. No differences were

found, based upon the percentage of free and reduced lunch, Title 1 status, or accreditation status, for grouping practices.

A Pearson's Chi-square analysis was used to look for differences in groups based upon the pressure to modify instruction to match mandated assessments. No significant differences were found between groups. Each group was equally likely to feel pressure to modify curriculum to match assessments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Upper elementary teachers indicated that a balanced approach to reading instruction is used in contemporary classrooms. Instructional practices, such as small group work, instruction in reading strategies, and the use of authentic materials, such as fiction and non-fiction books, support the use of a balanced approach in current classrooms. Participants also expressed a belief in guided reading as an instructional philosophy. This belief is evident through materials used for instruction, such as the predominant use of leveled books for reading instruction, and the use of ability groups. In contrast to an emphasis on whole group instruction and the use of basal reading materials in the Baumann et al. (2000) study, current teachers use ability groups as the primary organizational structure and indicate that basal materials are used *little* or *none* for instruction. Comprehension instruction continues to be an area of focus, and almost all teachers surveyed (99%) indicated that a *considerable* or *moderate* amount of instructional time is devoted to this area.

Many instructional practices used by teachers identified as exemplary in the literature, such as the use of a variety of grouping practices, use of authentic literature, integration of reading in the content areas, and the teaching of reading strategies, are evident in current

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classrooms. Additionally, while teachers state they feel pressure to modify curriculum in light of mandated assessments, the use of test preparation materials and instructional time spent in test preparation activities do not comprise a large portion of the instructional day.

Few differences, based upon SES or accreditation status, were noted in terms of instructional practices and materials used for instruction. It appears that schools that are not accredited or have students from lower SES backgrounds tend to focus more on vocabulary instruction. Additionally, Title 1 schools were more likely to spend time in test preparation activities than non-Title 1 schools. Spending more time on test preparation reduces the time available for authentic reading instruction. While the use some instructional materials and practices differed on SES levels, no differences were noted based upon accreditation status.

Summary

While research exists on the broad ramifications of testing on instruction, little information could be found that examined how daily reading instruction has changed in the face of high stakes testing. Additionally, few studies could be found that reviewed how a typical upper elementary teacher structures her language arts block and delivers reading instruction. Research identified that opportunities for dialogue with peers and the teacher, choice in materials, integration of reading into content areas, a balance of literature-based and explicit instruction, the use of a variety of grouping practices, and time spent reading are key elements in effective language arts classrooms (Allington, 2002; Allington & Johnston, 2002; Knapp, 1995; Morrow et al., 2002; Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007; Pressley et al., 1998; Pressley et al., 1997). By partially replicating the Baumann et al. (2000) study, the current study sought to identify practices used by teachers in light of mandated state assessments, to compare the

reported practices to Baumann et al.'s (2000) previous findings, and to examine if differences in

teaching practices exist between schools of varying SES and accreditation status.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Method for Review of the Literature

A review of literature pertinent to this topic was conducted through the use of online databases, reviews of references and cited work in studies, recommendations of committee members, and electronic searches for work conducted by leading researchers in their respective fields.

ERIC was the principal database used to locate sources of information on testing and instruction. Key words used in searches included *testing, teaching methods, policy, accountability, high-stakes testing,* and *reading instruction*. Various combinations of the keywords were used to generate relevant pieces of literature. Approximately 985 works were identified that addressed high-stakes testing and instruction. Each work was reviewed for relevancy to the current study, and only studies related to upper elementary education were used. While studies that explored reading instruction and high-stakes testing were desired, many of the selected pieces of work also included mathematics and/or other content areas. Studies that did not include reading were excluded.

Searches of ERIC and other online sources were not as fruitful for locating information on effective literacy classrooms. While keywords such as *reading instruction, effective, teaching methods, literacy instruction,* and *instructional effectiveness* were used, a large number of sources, over 2,400 pieces of literature, were generated. Various combinations of keywords were used to whittle the list to a manageable level of studies that could be reviewed for relevance

to this study. Careful inspection, though, revealed that the majority of the work was situated in a context that was not relevant for the current study, such as focusing on beginning reading instruction or a specific non-reading content area. As a result, alternative methods were used to locate key pieces of literature for this portion of the literature review. Leading researchers were identified through readings and committee recommendations. Searches were conducted through ERIC and the VCU library database to locate work published by these researchers. Additional sources were identified through a review of references used by these researchers. Care was taken to only include work that was relevant to the upper elementary focus of this study. This limited the sources of information, but identified research related specifically to instructional foci of upper elementary classrooms.

All work included in the review of the literature was vetted against research standards set forth by the American Educational Research Association. Any studies that were not of sufficient rigor were excluded from the review. After careful analysis, 61 articles and reports, two position statements from the International Literacy Association (formerly the International Reading Association), and 30 books or book chapters were used in this review of the literature.

The literature review begins with a discussion of Reading Instruction that includes key components of literacy instruction, learning theories that influence reading instruction, and a review of studies that investigate the instructional practices used by teachers to teach reading. The second section of the literature review, A Changing Educational Landscape, addresses the use of high-stakes reading tests as a measure of accountability for schools. A brief review of legislative policies that have resulted in the use of high-stakes testing will be presented followed by a discussion of studies that have explored the effects of high-stakes testing on general

instructional practices and studies that specifically investigate the effect of high-stakes testing on reading. The literature review concludes with a summary that interweaves the findings from the research on reading instruction with research on high-stakes testing to build a case for the current study.

Reading Instruction

> Reading is the act of constructing meaning from text. We use skills, strategies, and prior knowledge, all of which are developmental in nature, to understand what we read. The act of reading is supported by reader motivation and positive reader affect. We read to help us achieve our goals, within and outside of school. (Afflerbach, 2012, p. 14)

Key components of reading instruction. Reading instruction tends to draw from many different learning theories, and elements of these different theories are evident in classroom instructional practices (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). For example, classroom practices, such as reciprocal teaching or literature groups, embody a constructivist and social constructivist perspective as children construct meaning through dialogue. The use of authentic reading and writing anchored to literature follows more of a psycholinguistic leaning; whereas, systematic instruction in a basal text or isolated skill work is indicative of a behaviorist perspective. Instructional practices, such as modeling and thinking aloud, subscribe to a cognitive perspective as the teacher attempts to make thinking visible to students. While all of these perspectives have helped to shape reading instruction, a single conclusive, well-accepted theory on how best to teach reading does not exist (Flippo, 2012). Teachers use a variety of practices that are derived from these many theories of learning. Despite the lack of a universally accepted theory on reading instruction, several components of effective reading instruction have emerged.

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The National Reading Panel Report (NRP), published in 2000 by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), reviewed research collected since 1966 and identified five key components of reading instruction: 1) phonemic awareness, 2) phonics, 3) vocabulary, 4) comprehension, and 5) fluency. While a main focus of this panel was on beginning reading, research on upper elementary grades was also reviewed. Even though the degree to which each component is addressed varies by grade level, all five of these elements may be present in any elementary reading program.

Phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize that words are comprised of individual sound units or phonemes. Understanding how phonemes work together to form words is necessary in order to learn how to match sounds to printed letters. Phonemic awareness, at the beginning of kindergarten, is a predictor of reading achievement (Harris & Hodges, 1995; NICHD, 2000). The NICHD (2000), in its meta-analysis review of 96 studies, found that instruction in phonemic awareness was effective in teaching students how to manipulate phonemes ($d =.86$) and improved students' abilities to read ($d =.53$) and spell ($d =.59$). Larger effect sizes were found when instruction occurred in small groups, compared to whole class activities or individual instruction, and when instruction lasted between 5 to 18 hours (NICHD, 2000). Instruction in phonemic awareness was more effective with younger students, and larger effect sizes were found for students in preschool and kindergarten than for students in first grade or above. While being able to manipulate sounds is an important skill for later reading skills, instruction in phonemic awareness is not typically a focus of upper elementary classrooms.

Phonics. The National Reading Panel (NRP) report highlighted phonics instruction as important for beginning reading development (NICHD, 2000). Phonics is a process in which beginning readers use a sound-letter relationship to decode and spell words (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Systematic phonics instruction relies on the teaching of reading through explicit sound-letter relationships to assist beginning readers. While phonics instruction can be found in any elementary classroom, it is most frequently seen in beginning reading instruction and as support for older students experiencing difficulty with reading. The NICHD (2000), in a review of 38 studies, found that systematic phonics instruction resulted in reading growth with a moderate overall effect size ($d = .44$). Phonics instruction was also shown to be effective whether it was delivered to the whole class, small groups, or on an individual basis ($d = .39$, $d = .43$, $d = .57$, respectively). While phonics instruction contributed to reading growth, it was more effective when introduced early. When grade levels were compared, phonics instruction in kindergarten ($d = .56$) and first grade ($d = .54$) produced a greater effect size than phonics instruction in grades two through six ($d = .27$). Phonics is an important part of early reading instruction. As students become more proficient readers, less phonics instruction is needed.

Decoding is a process in which students use phonics, or their knowledge of letter-sound relationships, to access printed words. Being able to decode helps students acquire new knowledge of orthographic forms that helps them to understand words when reading (Verhoeven, van Leeuwe, & Vermeer, 2011). Verhoeven et al. (2011) conducted a longitudinal study with students in the Netherlands that explored the relationships between decoding, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. A representative nationwide sample from 118 schools was used, and data were collected in grades 1 through 6. Measures of decoding were collected

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for grades 1 and 2, vocabulary for all grades, and reading comprehension for grades 2 to 6. Data were examined through repeated measures of analysis of variance. A weak, but significant correlation was found between decoding and vocabulary knowledge. Verhoeven et al., (2011) found that beginning reader vocabulary knowledge predicts levels of word decoding and reading comprehension. Decoding skills and vocabulary knowledge work together to assist students while reading.

While older students may not typically receive phonics instruction, students use knowledge of word structure to derive meaning from text. Morphology involves the study of the structure of words beginning with the morpheme, the smallest unit of meaning in words (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). Understanding how morphemes come together to form words can help students decipher word meanings. Kieffer & Lesaux (2007) investigated the relationship between a student's ability to break down words and their vocabulary knowledge. Fourth- and fifth-grade Spanish-speaking English language learners ($n = 87$) and native English speakers ($n = 24$) in a large urban district in California participated in the study. Students were given assessments that tested morphological understanding as well as standardized tests of reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Kieffer & Lesaux (2007) found that morphology understanding was related to comprehension and that it became more important as students aged. No difference was found between the groups; morphology was equally important for both Spanish speaking ELLs and the native English speakers (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). While a significant relationship was found for fourth graders, the relationship between morphological understanding and comprehension strengthened in fifth grade. Morphological understanding was a better predictor of comprehension than vocabulary for the fifth-grade students in the study

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(Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). Applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships and word parts can help to support readers as they derive meaning from text.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge, a third component highlighted by the NICHD (2000), is necessary for reading success. While students may accurately match letters to sounds to read a printed word, in order for meaning making to occur, the word must be in the reader's vocabulary. A "strong and continually growing oral and reading vocabulary" (p. 1) is important for the development of reading skills (Farstrup & Samuels, 2008). Vocabulary is a predictor of later reading comprehension (Hart & Risley, 2003; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Verhoeven et al., 2011). In a seminal study in the 1960s, Hart and Risley (2003) conducted a longitudinal study of language use with children from ages seven to nine months to age three. They found that by age 3, patterns of vocabulary growth and language usage were established. When comparing vocabulary of children from professional, working class, and welfare families, they found that a gap of 30 million words exists; children of professional families are exposed to 20 million more words than working class families and 30 million more words than families on welfare (Hart & Risley, 2003). Continuing their work, they also found that children's vocabulary knowledge at age 3 was correlated with language skill ($r = .57$) and reading comprehension ($r =. 56$) at age 9-10 (Hart & Risley, 2003). Vocabulary is important for successful reading, and instruction in vocabulary is a critical component of reading instruction.

The NICHD (2000) reviewed vocabulary instruction research, but a formal meta-analysis was not conducted since none of the studies located met the NRP criteria. The studies reviewed incorporated a variety of "methodologies, implementations, and conceptions of vocabulary instruction" (p. 4-17) making a meta-analysis difficult (NICHD, 2000). While a formal

statistical analysis was not conducted, the panel noted that vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly. In direct instruction, students are provided with definitions of words prior to reading. Indirect instruction, on the other hand, involves exposing students to words while reading in the hopes that students are able to infer the meaning from the context (NICHD, 2000). While direct teaching is important, a challenge for teachers is to identify important words to teach (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Beck & McKeown, 2007; NICHD, 2000; Verhoweven et al., 2011). Given the vastness of the English language, there are too many words for a teacher to be able to directly teach all of the important ones. Beck et al. (2013) developed a three-tier format for vocabulary instruction. The first tier consists of basic words (such as "warm, dog, tired, run") and do not typically require instruction (Beck et al., 2013, p. 9). The third tier, on the other hand, includes words that are content specific (such as "pantheon, epidermis, filibuster") and have a low frequency of occurrence outside of a specific context or domain (Beck et al., 2013, p. 9). The second tier reflects high utility words (such as "contradict, precede, retrospect") that appear in a variety of domains; instruction in these words can support readers (Beck et al., 2013, p. 9).

Beck et al. (2013) also propose that vocabulary instruction should be "robust" (p. 3). Instruction should include direct explanations of word meanings as well as "thought-provoking, playful, and interactive follow-up" (p. 3). Using a protocol called "Text Talk," Beck and McKeown (2007) conducted two studies that examined the impact of "rich and focused" (p. 1) vocabulary instruction. Low-income kindergarten and first grade students were provided vocabulary instruction through the use of age-appropriate, yet sophisticated picture books. Half of the classrooms in the study followed the "Text Talk" protocol that included the use of specific

picture books and a lightly scripted way of supporting pre-identified vocabulary words. The

other half of the classrooms used picture books and lesson plans selected by the classroom

teacher. Pre- and post-test analysis showed significantly higher gains for the Text Talk

classrooms than the other classrooms. In a second phase of this study, Beck and McKeown

(2007) examined the effects of increased exposure to the vocabulary words after the story

reading, increasing the length of the treatment from six weeks to nine weeks. The classrooms

that experienced the additional instruction achieved gains that were twice as large for the

targeted words. More instruction brings about better vocabulary knowledge (Beck and

McKeown, 2007).

While the previously discussed study addresses the direct teaching of oral vocabulary in

context, as children move past the primary grades, vocabulary learning shifts to written contexts

(Beck et al., 2013; Graves, 2008). Upper elementary students learn new words through oral

discourse, and reading becomes a principal means for increasing vocabulary (Graves, 2008).

Nagy and Anderson (1984) estimated that there are about 88,500 distinct word families that

students need to know for school. Given the number of vocabulary words that students will

encounter in text from third grade on, it is important to provide students with tools to learn words

on their own (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). In order for students to successfully derive meaning

from words in context, students must read widely enough to encounter unfamiliar words and they

must possess the skills to successfully infer the meanings of the unknown words (Beck et al.,

2013). Relying on wide reading, though, can add to inequities in vocabulary knowledge since

struggling readers do not read well enough to read widely or possess the skills to derive

meanings from context (Beck at al., 2013). Instruction should include direct teaching of key

words, opportunities for wide reading, and instruction on understanding words in context (Graves, 2008).

When the NRP reviewed studies that focused on vocabulary instruction for trends, the majority of the studies involved students in grades three through eight. Specifically, of the 73 grade level samples included in the 50 studies reviewed, 53 of the samples represented students in grades three through eight with the majority of the studies using students in grades four or five. Relatively few studies were examined that used preschool through second grade students (NICHD, 2000). Vocabulary instruction appears to be studied more frequently in upper elementary classrooms and beyond.

Comprehension. Comprehension, the act of making meaning from the printed word, is the fourth key component identified by the NRP report (Harris & Hodges, 1995; NICHD, 2000). While 481 studies were identified for review by the NRP, only 205 met the criteria for analysis. These 205 studies were further broken down and classified into 16 types of instruction. Seven individual comprehension strategies, out of the 16, had a "firm scientific basis for concluding that they improve comprehension in normal readers" (NICHD, 2000, p. 4-42). These strategies include "comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, graphic and semantic organizers including story maps, question answering, question generation, and summarization" (NICHD, 2000, p. 4-42).

Teaching of strategies improves reading comprehension (NICHD, 2000). It is important for teachers to "demonstrate, explain, model, and implement interaction with students in teaching them how to comprehend a text" (NICHD, 2000, p. 4-47). It is also important to teach students how to flexibly use multiple strategies to understand text in natural settings (NICHD, 2000).

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Similar to the research on vocabulary instruction, studies that investigate comprehension focused on grades three through six, with 76% of the studies examined by the NICHD (2000) at this level. From the studies reviewed, the NICHD (2000) surmised that participating students had an understanding of decoding and reading prior to being taught comprehension strategies (NICHD, 2000).

Research has shown, though, that although teachers value comprehension, students are not always taught how to use comprehension strategies (Durkin, 1978-79; Ness, 2011; Pressley, 2006; Pressley et al., 1998). Durkin (1978-1979) examined the comprehension instruction occurring in schools. Through observing 24 fourth-grade classrooms over a school year, including 4,469 minutes of reading instruction and 2,775 minutes of social studies instruction, she found that only 1% of reading time was spent actually teaching students how to use these strategies. Durkin (1978-1979) noted that while teachers did address comprehension, their explanations were just enough to get students started on assignments. Comprehension was addressed through post-reading questioning and testing. In other words, students were assessed on comprehension, but not taught how to comprehend (Durkin, 1978-1979).

Pressley et al. (1998) examined comprehension in 10 fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in New York. Four districts volunteered to participate in the study. Three of the districts served primarily lower income students while one district served upper middle class students. A district level language arts coordinator in each district was asked to nominate teachers that provide effective language arts instruction. Data collected included observations, interviews and classroom artifacts.

Similar to Durkin's (1978-1979) study, Pressley et al. (1998) found a lack of comprehension instruction. Students were asked to respond to what was read, but they were not taught how to self-regulate as they read (Pressley et al., 1998). There was no evidence that students were actually taught how to use the strategies while reading (Pressley et al., 1998). Teachers "seemed to expect that the behaviors would develop naturally if students were given enough assignments (e.g., workbook sheets) that prompted them to generate the kinds of thoughts generated by strategic readers as they read" (Pressley, 2006, p. 299). While teachers seemed to incorporate instruction based on research, such as use of comprehension strategies, there was little opportunity for students to practice in authentic text.

Ness (2011), in a study of 20 first- through fifth-grade classrooms in two schools, examined comprehension instruction. Each classroom was observed for 120 minutes with observations occurring in five 30-minute blocks. Observers coded instruction based upon two categories: comprehension instruction or non-comprehension instruction. Through analysis of data, Ness (2011) documented that comprehension instruction took place in only 25% of the allotted reading time. While this is an increase over Durkin's (1979) and Pressley et al.'s (1998) findings, teacher generated questions still dominated reading comprehension instruction. Ness (2011) also noted that teachers relied on only a few comprehension strategies rather than teaching a wider variety. Additionally, strategies were taught singularly rather than as a bundled repertoire of strategies (Ness, 2011). Comprehension monitoring was only minimally taught, and accounted for just 19 minutes out of a total of 3,000 observed minutes.

Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, and Joshi (2007) examined the effects of explicit comprehension instruction on vocabulary growth and comprehension of 119 third-grade

students. Six third-grade classes were selected from two urban schools. Students were pretested with three subtests of the 2001 Woodcock Johnson III Test of Achievement to ensure comparable decoding skills. Students were also pre- and post-tested with the 2000 Gray Silent Reading Test and a criterion vocabulary assessment. Both schools used the same commercial reading series to deliver comprehension instruction for 30 minutes over a 25-day period. One school, selected as the intervention school, supplemented the core instruction with explicit comprehension strategy instruction. The intervention group that received the explicit comprehension instruction showed a significant improvement in vocabulary development and comprehension. Boulware-Gooden et al. (2007) calculated a 40% gain in vocabulary and a 20% gain in comprehension over the students in the control group that did not receive the explicit comprehension strategy instruction. Additionally, they found that the students in the intervention group demonstrated more metacognitive awareness during and after reading. Explicit instruction in comprehension strategies supports both vocabulary development and overall comprehension of text.

Fluency. Fluency, the fifth component identified by the NRP, acts as a "bridge" between comprehension and decoding (Pikulski & Chard, 2005, p. 510). Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, and Meisinger (2010) reviewed literature on fluency and proposed this definition:

Fluency combines accuracy, automaticity, and oral reading prosody, which, taken together, facilitate the reader's construction of meaning. It is demonstrated during oral reading through ease of word recognition, appropriate pacing, phrasing, and intonation. It is a factor in both oral and silent reading that can limit or support comprehension. (p. 240)

Speed, accuracy, and expression while reading indicate a reader's fluency (Kuhn et al., 2010). As fluency increases, the reader's accuracy, rate, and expression also increase. If a student is not fluent, comprehension may be affected (Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Rasinski, Rikli, Johnston, 2009). Decoding and comprehension require cognitive processes. If more cognitive resources are required to decode, fewer resources are available for interpretation of the text. Being able to automatically recognize the printed word quickly allows a fluent reader to devote more cognitive capacity to understanding the text (NICHD, 2000; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Important to note that rate is often used as a measure of fluency, resulting in students being encourage to read fast (Kuhn et al., 2010). This can generate an overreliance on automaticity and decoding skills at the expense of meaning (Kuhn et al, 2010). Fluent readers read with automaticity, expression, and at a pace appropriate for the text.

While fluency is often equated with rate, Rasinski et al. (2009) studied the relationship between prosody and silent reading comprehension in third, fifth, and seventh grade students. Students in a small, urban school district were administered a norm-referenced standardized achievement test including a silent reading subtest to measure reading comprehension for the study. To gauge the students' prosody, students read grade level passages, from a commercially published trade book, into a computer program that recorded the first minute of oral reading. Two raters independently scored the prosody on a scale of 1-12 using a Multi-Dimensional Fluency Scoring Guide. Using a Pearson's product-moment correlation, fluency and comprehension were significantly correlated at all three grade levels ($r = .634, .657, .571$, respectively). Rasinski et al. (2009) found that strong prosodic reading correlated with higher reading comprehension. Importantly, the study also established that fluency strongly correlates

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with reading proficiency past the primary grades suggesting that attention to fluency, particularly prosody, can impact reading comprehension growth.

In light of the common belief that increased reading practice develops fluency, the NICHD (2000) examined two common reading instructional practices: oral reading with feedback and encouragement of individual reading. Oral reading with feedback includes activities such as repeated readings, shared or buddy reading, and assisted reading (NICHD, 2000, p. 3-1). Instructional activities that facilitate independent reading include Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and reading incentive programs (NICHD, 2000, p. 3-1). The panel, through a review of 77 studies that met the NRP criteria, found that guided oral reading had a moderate impact on reading achievement (d =.41). When examining specific reading outcomes, repeated oral readings produced the highest effect size for accuracy (d = .55) followed by fluency (d = .44) (NICHD, 2000). In contrast, few studies could be located by the NICHD that focus on encouraging individual reading, and of the ones reviewed most "failed to find a positive relationship between encouraging reading and either the amount of reading or reading achievement" (NICHD, 2000, p. 3-3).

In contrast to the panel findings that the amount of time spent reading, in and of itself has not been shown to increase achievement, previous studies could be located that show a relationship between the amount of time spent reading and improvement in reading achievement (Allington, 1983; Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). Time spent reading, for the purpose of this discussion, is defined as time that students spend actually reading rather than working on a reading related activity, such as a skill worksheet, or listening to others read in a traditional round robin format.

Taylor et al. (1990) evaluated reading logs of 105 fifth and sixth grade students from two suburban schools. Students recorded the amount of time spent reading during a 50-minute reading block at school and while at home. Time spent reading was also broken down into assigned reading and pleasure reading. The relation between time spent reading and achievement, as measured by a comprehension section of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, was computed using a stepwise multiple regression. Taylor et al.'s (1990) analysis showed that students read an average of 15.8 minutes during the reading block at school and self-reported that they spent an average of 15 minutes reading at home each day. The relationship between achievement and minutes read at home was not significant, but time spent reading in school contributes significantly to reading achievement (Taylor et al., 1990).

Allington (2001) calculated that when using a commercial basal series, if an hour a day was spent on reading instruction, only 30 minutes a week would be spent in authentic reading and 270 minutes would be spent on other related activities. It is not uncommon for children to spend as little as 10% of a 90-minute reading block actually reading or writing (Allington, 2002). For students to become better readers, they must have opportunities to actually read. Effective teachers balance reading and writing with other "stuff" (Allington, 2002, p. 742). "Stuff," as defined by Allington (2002), is "all the other things teachers have children do instead of reading and writing," including test-preparation work and comprehension worksheets (p. 742). Exemplary teachers provide more opportunities for guided reading, independent reading and content-area reading than less effective classrooms (Allington, 2002).

Students need an opportunity to have a choice in reading material. In a review of research, Malloy & Gambrell (2012) noted that self-selection of reading materials was linked to

motivation. Choice can motivate children to read, and research has proven that children who read are better readers (Allington, 2001; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999/2004; Malloy & Gambrell, 2012; McGeown, Norgate, & Warhurst, 2012). Students who are motivated to read also spend more time reading (Guthrie et al., 1999/2004). Motivation "increases reading amount, which then increases text comprehension" (Guthrie at al., 1999/2004, p. 948). This, in turn, can lead to reading achievement since it has been established that students who read more have higher text comprehension (Guthrie et al., 1999/2004). Additionally, motivation can lead to deeper understanding rather than superficial learning (Malloy & Gambrell, 2012).

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) investigated motivation among 105 fourth- and fifth-grade students using the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MQR). The MQR contained 82 items that are answered on a scale that ranged from 1, *very different from me*, to 4, *a lot like me*. This measure was administered to the students in the fall and in the spring. Students also completed a Reading Activity Inventory that measures the breadth and frequency of reading. Data from a school reading program that tracked minutes read outside of school were also collected. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) found that intrinsic motivation was found to be a stronger factor for time spent reading than extrinsic motivation. Students with stronger intrinsic motivation read nearly three times as many minutes as their peers with low intrinsic motivation. Additionally, children with higher intrinsic motivation were found to read more and with greater breadth.

Writing. While not addressed through the NRP, writing is also an important element of elementary reading instruction. Reading and writing are seen to develop in tandem. Students move through predictable reading and writing stages, and development of these areas has a

synchronistic relationship (Bear, 1991). Research has identified several principles and

instructional practices that promote effective writing instruction.

Through conversations with seven literacy experts, Zumbrunn and Krause (2012)

identified five guiding principles for effective writing instruction. First, teachers should be

aware of the impact that their own beliefs about writing have on their instruction. The experts

interviewed noted that teachers with more confidence in their own writing ability tended to spend

more time teaching writing. Next, writing instruction should encourage students to write. Writing

for real purposes and for a real audience are ways to engage student writers. Third, writing

instruction should be planned with a clear goal. While a clear plan for instruction is needed,

flexibility is also needed to take advantage of teachable moments as they arise. Fourth, students

should have opportunities to write every day. The experts noted that writing is something that

sometimes gets pushed aside due to demands placed on teachers and time constraints. Using

technology, such as blogging, was suggested as a way to increase opportunities to write.

Collaboration between teachers and students is the last principle of effective writing instruction.

Effective writing instruction is responsive to the needs of individual students, and providing

individualized feedback is an important aspect of writing instruction.

Through a meta-analysis of 115 experimental and quasi-experimental studies on writing

instruction in grades 1-5, Graham, Kiuhara, McKeown, and Harris (2012) examined effective

writing instructional practices. The studies included in the analysis were classified based upon

writing treatment used, and a total of 13 writing instructional practices were identified. An

average weighted effect size was calculated to determine if the treatment improved the quality of

elementary students' writing. Studies that taught explicit strategies for planning, drafting, and

revising yielded the largest average weighted effect size ($d = 1.02$). Teaching students to use a

process approach to plan, draft, revise, and edit writing was also statistically significant with an

average weighted effect size of .89. Setting specific goals and teaching students to be more

creative also yielded significant results with an average weighted effect size of .79 and .70,

respectively. Other writing instructional strategies that produced statistically significant average

weighted effect sizes included teaching students self-regulating strategies, such as self-

assessment, teaching how different texts are structured, teaching spelling, handwriting, and

keyboard skills, assessing writing, teaching students to organize ideas for writing, allowing

students to use word-processing tools to write, increasing how much time students spend writing,

and using a comprehensive writing program. The only instructional practice that did not produce

a statistically significant average weighted effect size was grammar instruction.

Process writing is a common instructional strategy found in many elementary classrooms.

While a universally agreed-upon definition does not exist, process writing includes certain

underlying elements (Graham & Sandmel, 2011). In this writing model, students first plan by

generating and organizing ideas. Then, students put the ideas into writing. Writing is then

reviewed through a process of evaluating, editing, and revising. A real purpose and authentic

audience is the basis for writing, and student ownership of their writing is emphasized. Students

are also encouraged to work collaboratively. Instruction, in this model, is provided through

mini-lessons and is personalized for students through conferences.

In a meta-analysis of 29 experimental and quasi-experimental studies, Graham and

Sandmel (2011) examined the effects of process writing instruction on the quality of writing and

motivation in students in grades 1-12. When examining the quality of writing, a statistically

significant average weighted effect size ($d = .34$) was produced for students in general education classrooms ($n = 24$) receiving instruction in the writing process approach. In contrast, when examining if the process approach is effective in improving the quality of writing for struggling students, the average weighted effect size ($d = .29$) was not significant. Six of the studies in the meta-analysis also examined whether the writing process approach increased student motivation to write. An average weighted effect size ($d = .19$) was calculated that was not statistically significant. Results from this meta-analysis support the use of the process approach with general education students as a way to improve the quality of writing (Graham & Sandmel, 2011).

Writing workshop is one method for facilitating writing instruction in contemporary elementary classrooms. The writing workshop includes the underlying elements of the process approach to writing and many of the guiding principles identified by Zumbrunn and Krause (2012), such as such as writing frequently for authentic purposes. Instead of focusing solely on the written product, writing workshop focuses on writers and the writing process (Ray, 2001; Troia, 2013). In a writing workshop model, students write for real purposes and for an authentic audience (Ray, 2001). Writing workshop includes a whole group mini-lesson on a common element, such as writer's craft or genre elements. Teachers adjust instruction to meet individual students' needs (Ray, 2001; Troia, 2013). Students have choice in topics when writing and explore individual interests through writing (Ray, 2001; Troia, 2013).

While writing instruction is an important part of the language arts block, instructional practices can differ based upon pressures of accountability and SES status. McCarthey (2008) interviewed elementary teachers as part of a qualitative study that explored teachers' perception of NCLB, what characterizes writing instruction, and if there are differences in instruction based

on SES status. Two high-income and three low-income schools from two states were represented in the study. Interviews were conducted with each teacher ($n = 18$), and a language arts lesson was observed for each teacher. Teachers at the high-income schools had more flexibility in time spent on writing instruction and in the instructional format used to teach writing. These teachers used a writer's workshop format, focused on a connection between reading and writing, integrated writing into the curriculum, or used a genre focus to model and teach writing. Teachers in the low-income schools felt more pressure to focus on areas other than writing, and instructional format was sometimes mandated. Five of the teachers in the low-income school were required to use a packaged program with a skills approach. Three teachers from low-income schools used a writer's workshop model, one teacher integrated writing into the curriculum, and one teacher used a genre focus to teach writing. Time spent on writing instruction also varied along socio-economic lines. The teachers in the low-income schools noted that writing instruction, even as part of a scripted package, sometimes got pushed aside in order to prepare students for state tests. Writing is an important aspect of literacy instruction, but instruction can vary based upon economic status and demands for accountability in a high-stakes testing environment (McCarthey, 2008).

Assessing reading. It is important to monitor progress and to assess reading growth. Teaching and learning are intertwined; teachers must be able to evaluate student progress to adapt teaching (Black & Wiliam, 2010/1998). Reading assessments can be given for diagnostic, formative, summative, or predictive purposes, and can be formal and informal in nature (Landrigan & Mulligan, 2013; Perie, Marion & Gong, 2009).

Formative assessments help to guide instruction and are responsive to individual student needs. Frequently seen in classrooms, formative assessments provide corrective feedback to students and provide teachers information to adapt instruction (Black & Wiliam, 2010/1998; Perie et al., 2009). It is the use of assessment information that is important (Valencia & Hebard, 2013). In a discussion on formative assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998/2010) also stress the importance of self-assessment for students. Students need to understand the purpose of their learning and what they can specifically do to improve their performance (Black & Wiliam, 2010/1998). Information learned through formative assessment is typically not aggregated past the classroom level; its principal use is for classroom instruction (Perie et al., 2009).

Reading inventories are an example of a reading assessment commonly found in an elementary classroom. Informal reading inventories (IRI) can provide both diagnostic and formative information. Reading inventories are typically comprised of word lists, reading passages, and comprehension questions (Afflerbach, 2012). In addition to commercially-produced reading inventories, teacher-initiated reading inventories can also provide valuable information about a student's reading strengths (Afflerbach, 2012; Valencia & Hebard, 2013). Teacher-initiated reading inventories, such as running records conducted with students' authentic classroom text, take place within the normal classroom routines (Afflerbach, 2012). Running records provide a glimpse of a student's reading ability that can be analyzed to assess growth (Ross, 2004). It is important to bear in mind that these assessments are formative only if the information is used to influence instruction. School mandated IRIs and running records do not constitute formative assessment if the information is recorded, but not used to make instructional decisions (Valencia & Hebard, 2013).

Other forms of authentic reading assessments are embedded into classroom routines and are closely linked to instruction. Portfolios can provide both formative and summative information about a student's reading and writing (Afflerbach, 2012). Portfolios document student growth over time and include samples of students' ongoing work (Afflerbach, 2012). Performance-based assessments, another example, allow students to demonstrate their understanding (Afflerbach, 2012). Rubrics are used to evaluate student work in a performance-based assessment. Reading instruction often involves opportunities for discussion. Think-alouds and discussions can also serve as formative assessments by allowing students to demonstrate understanding through discourse (Black & Wiliam, 1998/2010; Valencia & Hebard, 2013;)

In contrast to authentic assessments tied directly into instruction and classroom routines, summative assessments happen infrequently, test a broader scope of material and are the least flexible. They can include end-of-the-year testing and end of unit tests (Perie et al., 2009; Valencia & Hebard, 2013). High stakes tests are also a form of summative assessment and are typically norm-referenced, standardized, and given to a large group of students at the same time. Answers are provided in multiple choice format or short answer and are scored electronically. These assessments are used to compare student performance to similar students (Afflerbach, 2012).

Increased accountability, in the form of state mandated tests, has also produced an influx of other assessments. Perie et al. (2009) discuss an additional form of assessment called interim assessments and offer this definition:

Assessments administered during instruction to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals in order to inform policymaker or educator

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decisions at the classroom, school, or district level. The specific interim assessment

designs are driven by the purposes and intended uses, but the results of any interim

assessment must be reported in a manner allowing aggregation across students,

occasions, or concepts. (p. 6)

Often referred to as benchmark or diagnostic, these assessments purport to help schools improve

performance on state tests. Interim assessments can offer an "early warning" for students who

may not perform well on summative assessments (Olson, 2005, "Approaches Differ", para. 12).

In a survey for *Education Week,* Olson (2005) found that seven in ten superintendents said that

they give district-wide tests and an additional 10% indicated that they planned to give them in

the next year. Common interim assessments include commercial or district-developed multiple-

choice tests that mirror state assessments or assessments of oral reading fluency (Olson, 2005;

Valencia & Hebard, 2013). Many publishers have entered the market to provide interim

assessments (Olson, 2005). While some of the publishers work with districts to tie assessments

to state and/or district standards, there is concern that the quantity of assessments exceeds the

quality (Olson, 2005). Many assessment items have not been field-tested or undergone a

psychometric review (Olson, 2005). Interim assessments can be given several times a year, and

the information can be used at the teacher or student level as well as aggregated to a school or

district level. Rather than producing a grade or providing feedback on instruction, interim

assessments can predict a student's performance on a summative assessment, evaluate an

educational program, or diagnose gaps in learning (Perie et al., 2009).

   Research-based frameworks of reading instruction. Reading research has come a

long way in terms of understanding components of reading, but there does not seem to be one

agreed upon method of preferred instruction. Research has provided tools of best practices, but no definitive answer to the overall question, "How is reading best taught?" (Flippo, 2012). In light of this, six contemporary frameworks for reading instruction are discussed below. These perspectives run on a continuum from the language-based approach of whole language to teacher-directed comprehension strategy instruction. Although there is some overlap between models, these formats reflect different theoretical orientations and philosophies of learning. These models are not prescriptions on what to teach, but rather serve as formats for facilitating learning during an elementary reading block. These frameworks can influence the choice of materials used for instruction and how a classroom teacher utilizes time during the instructional block.

Whole language, as a philosophy of instruction, draws on many principles of psycholinguistic theory. Psycholinguists believe in the natural link between language and reading. Children are hard-wired to learn to read (Alexander & Fox, 2013). While the whole language philosophy espouses that reading is connected to language, whole language supporters view reading as more than just recording the spoken word (Goodman, 1986/2005). Both psycholinguists and whole language advocates believe that children should use authentic text and be exposed to language in a natural setting (Goodman, 1986/2005). Whole language supporters stress the role of function in learning to speak and read (Goodman, 1986/2005). Bergeron (1990) reviewed literature to compile a definition of whole language:

> Whole language is a concept that embodies both a philosophy of language development as well as the instructional approaches embedded within, and supportive of, that philosophy. This concept includes the use of real literature and writing in context of

meaningful, functional, and cooperative experiences in order to develop in students'

motivation and interest in the process of learning. (p. 319)

In a whole language classroom, children are enveloped in a literate environment that promotes

the natural development of literacy (Goodman, 1986/2005; Pressley, 2006). When students learn

to read, they use meaning language clues to understand words (Goodman, 1986/2005; Pressley,

2006).

For the whole language supporter, learning about print occurs naturally as children

maneuver through authentic literature experiences. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are

viewed as interconnected (Goodman, 1986/2005; Tracy & Morrow, 2012). Real literature is

used instead of basal readers (Bergeron, 1990; Goodman, 1986/2005; Tracy & Morrow, 2012).

Isolated skill exercises are not used in a whole language approach (Bergeron, 1990; Goodman,

1986/2005). Children develop comprehension by reading rather than through isolated, specific

instruction (Pressley, 2006).

Although whole language theory is based on psycholinguistic tenets, it also embodies

many ideas of constructivism and social-constructivism. The nature of the whole language

learning experience allows students to construct their own knowledge. The use of centers

encourages students to work independently on areas of interest. As the students work with

words, read, or write, they are constructing their own knowledge pathways. The locus of control

over learning is on the individual (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Although

individual learning is key, social learning is also important in a whole language classroom.

Many activities in a whole language environment encourage social interactions (Goodman,

1986/2005; Tracy & Morrow, 2012). In this way, students learn from each other as well.

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is an instructional framework that also embraces psycholinguistic principles. LEA, like whole language, is also built upon the idea that reading is based upon the functional aspect of communication (Stauffer, 1971). Reading is not simply a subject taught at school, but is a process of communication (Stauffer, 1971). Additionally, LEA also embodies constructivist ideas. Learning occurs as a child interacts with his environment, and is determined by the quality and quantity of experiences. Proponents of LEA, similar to whole language supporters, believe in providing a rich and authentic language environment. Reading occurs through authentic contexts and through "purposeful participation" (Stauffer, 1971, p. 11). For example, LEA encourages use of student dictated sentences to allow students to use language to record experiences. In this way, the link between communication and reading is purposeful, thus strengthening that bond (Stauffer, 1971). Recognizing the role experience plays in learning is a key facet of the Language Experience Approach.

Another instruction framework, Reading Workshop, relies on constructivism and social constructivism. In the Reading Workshop format, the teacher is cast as a guide. Her role is to set up the instructional environment so that it is conducive to learning and to guide the discussions (Merriam et al., 2006). Although the teacher teaches a short mini-lesson to the group, students have control over their learning for the bulk of the block. While the teacher selects the topics to be shared during the mini-lesson, the identification of material is derived from the needs and interests of the specific class. Students spend the majority of their time reading a book of their choosing and independently responding to the text.

While students are working, the teacher can confer with individual students to informally assess their progress. Conferring provides an opportunity for students to practice what they are

learning in authentic context with nonthreatening feedback available (Morrow, 1992). At times, teachers will also meet with a heterogeneous group reading the same book to discuss their reading. Vygotsky (1978), in his discussions of the zone of proximal development, explains that internal development processes are awakened while a child is interacting with people and working in cooperation with peers. Through guided book discussions, with the teacher acting as facilitator, the students can learn from and scaffold for each other.

Guided Reading, another model for reading instruction, is also sometimes used as an element within Reading Workshop. Instead of pulling heterogeneously grouped students who are reading a book of interest, guided reading groups focus on students that are similar in reading needs. Grouping similar students together provides the opportunity for students to read and understand text on their instructional level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Guided reading groups are not static; they are flexible (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). As students grow, groups change. Through guided reading, teachers support students as they read (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) list several elements of guided reading (a) instruction occurs in a small group; (b) groups are based upon similar reading needs and level; (c) instruction supports reading with the goal of developing independent strategies; (d) the whole text is read by each child; (e) independent and silent reading is a goal; (f) difficulty level of books increases with time; (g) grouping is a dynamic process that uses ongoing assessment. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) describe the purpose of guided reading as enabling children to read "for meaning at all times" (p. 4). During a guided reading group, a teacher's guidance is essential (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

To facilitate learning in this environment, the teacher is a guide. Her role is to set the stage by ensuring that students have adequate prior knowledge to successfully derive meaning from the text. For this reason, guided reading lessons are typically divided into three parts. In the before reading phase, the teacher prepares students for reading. Prior knowledge is activated and supported (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Tracy & Morrow, 2012). During reading, the teacher focuses on comprehension and ensuring students understand what is being read. After reading, the teacher designs activities to reinforce and extend learning (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Tracy & Morrow, 2012). During a guided reading group, the teacher models strategies, monitors her students, and scaffolds learning (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Learning, though, is inherently under the individual's control. A goal of guided reading is to move students towards using reading strategies independently (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

The teacher selects text in a guided reading model. The level of text is perhaps more important than the type of text used. In order for students to glean meaning from the text, careful attention is paid to matching text to readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Students must be able to accurately read text in order to learn from the text (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Text needs to be within a reader's control (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). If a student can accurately read the text, he can use his knowledge of language to build a "coherent representation of what the text says" (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011, p. 53). Through guided reading, teachers help students to "build a network of strategic actions for processing texts" (p. 272) and grow as readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012).

Guided reading embodies many cognitive theory attributes. Learning is reliant on the information processing that occurs in the brain. Students bring knowledge with them that shapes their comprehension. As students read, new information is gained that modifies stored knowledge, and is later used for comprehension. Knowledge and comprehension are dependent upon each other. Knowledge leads to comprehension, which in turn, leads to more knowledge (Duke et al., 2011). Students need to be able to correctly retrieve prior knowledge and store, or assimilate, new learning into existing knowledge. Guided reading allows teachers to differentiate and scaffold instruction to meet the individual needs of students (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

Prompted by reading standards presented in the CCSS, close reading has gained momentum as an instructional practice (Fisher & Frey, 2012, 2014a; Serafini, 2014). Close reading involves a structural and textual analysis of literature (Beers & Probst, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2014a; Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Serafini, 2014). It emerged from a 1940s literacy criticism movement, New Criticism, which sought to create ways to facilitate an analytical discussion of books. New Criticism believes that conversations about a text should only be about the text; a reader's experience should not be considered (Serafini, 2014). Modern close reading, though, includes a reader's responses, cultural contexts, and the writer's intentions. The emergence of the CCSS offered a renewed focus on reading closely, and more interest in a close reading as an instructional approach has emerged (Beers & Probst, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2012, 2014a; Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Serafini, 2014). Even though the newer version of close reading encourages readers to "stay within the four corners of the text" by relying more on the author's words rather than background knowledge, a reader's response and the writer's

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intentions are considered in the analysis (Serafini, 2014, p. 300). Influenced by Rosenblatt

(1982), current close reading reflects an understanding that the meaning of text does not come

from just the words on the page. Meaning comes from the "transaction with those words that

takes place in the reader's mind" (Beers & Probst, 2013, p. 34). Through close reading, a reader

expands his schema as information from the text assimilates with background knowledge (Fisher

& Frey, 2012).

Close reading differs from other reading instructional practices in that time is not spent

prior to reading to activate a student's background knowledge or in making text-to-self

connections (Fisher & Frey, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Serafini, 2014). When using a close reading

approach, the first read of the text is cold; students read the first time without much teacher

support or frontloading of information (Fisher & Frey, 2012). A hallmark of close reading,

though, is repeated readings of the text with each subsequent reading digging deeper through the

use of text-dependent questions using student annotated text (Fisher & Frey, 2012, 2014b;

Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Serafini, 2014). Close reading texts tend to be short, yet complex.

While close reading is a contemporary approach to reading, Fisher and Frey (2012) caution this

approach should be used in conjunction with other instructional practices, such as read-alouds,

teacher modeling, think-alouds, guided reading with level text, and collaborative reading and

discussion opportunities. "To abandon these practices in favor of close reading exclusively

would be akin to having a toolbox with only one tool in it" (Fisher & Frey, 2012, p. 178).

Another approach to reading instruction is comprehension strategy instruction.

Comprehension strategy instruction involves the explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies.

Following cognitive theory perspective, the focus of strategy instruction is metacognitive in

nature and seeks to help readers to be more aware of their thinking while reading (Tracy &

Morrow, 2012). Strategy instruction focuses on the internal workings of the mind while reading,

and attempts to make thinking visible. Reading is viewed as a conscious, controlled process

(Pressley, 2006). While strategy instruction may occur in a whole class or small group format,

the focus is on the individual and his capacity to use these strategies independently (Tracy &

Morrow, 2012).

Proponents of strategy instruction feel that readers will succeed if they are explicitly

taught strategies that identified good readers automatically use. Teachers use modeling and a

think-aloud strategy to explicitly teach these strategies one at a time. Focus is paid to teaching

when, how, and why a reader uses these strategies (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008; Tracy &

Morrow, 2012). The goal is to make the invisible mental processes that good readers use visible

for all readers. Through a gradual release of responsibility, the learner will develop proficiency,

and later automaticity in their use (Palinscar & Schutz, 2011; Tracy & Morrow, 2012). The use

of these strategies will then transfer to other materials and contexts. In this way, those supporting

strategy instruction believe they can develop strong readers.

Whole language and strategy instruction stand at opposing ends of the instructional

spectrum. One believes that language is natural and reading skills will grow from meaningful

experiences. The other believes that direct teaching of specific skills and strategies needs to

occur and is more teacher-directed. Balanced literacy, according to Pressley (2006) combines the

strengths of whole language and direct skill and strategy instruction to create a new model where

instruction is more than just the "sum of its parts" (p. 1). A balanced approach to reading

instruction contains elements of many of the other models. Students are exposed to authentic

literature, but also to explicit skills. Balanced literacy employs both a whole-to-part and a part-to-whole focus (Heydon, Hibbert, & Iannacci, 2004). Teachers can use specific strategies and grouping practices to scaffold and differentiate instruction (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2011). It also ensures that all aspects of reading, writing, listening and speaking are appropriately addressed (Heydon et al., 2004). The emphasis is on the use of a variety of perspectives and methods. Students are grouped homogenously for some activities, and heterogeneously for others.

Research on classroom reading instruction. Reading in the upper elementary (3-5) classroom differs from the primary (K-2) grades as the focus shifts from learning to read to being able to read to learn. Decoding is less emphasized and extracting meaning from text plays a greater role. In an upper elementary classroom, "linguistic, cognitive, and conceptual demands of reading increase somewhat dramatically; there is a heavier use of textbooks and an expectation of greater independence in using reading and writing as tools for learning" (Allington & Johnston, 2002, p. 15). While many studies exist that examine effective practices in a beginning reading K-2 environment, fewer studies could be located that focus on reading, as a cohesive block of instruction, in an upper elementary classroom. Furthermore, most of the upper elementary studies reviewed were published more than 10 years ago and focused on practices of teachers deemed exemplary.

In a study conducted by Pressley et al. (1997), reading supervisors nominated 67 outstanding fifth-grade teachers that were seen as effective in promoting literacy. The selected teachers were surveyed, and 62 teachers returned the final survey. A quantitative analysis of the survey responses indicated that teachers used authentic literature, such as trade books and novels,

more than basal materials, and that students spent time reading silently daily. Reading and writing was also integrated into content areas. A variety of grouping practices were used, including whole-class instruction, cooperative learning groups, and small groups that are fluid in composition. Teachers modeled responses to reading, including comprehension strategies, and critical thinking skills were taught directly.

Pressley et al. (1998) examined the literacy instruction of ten exemplary fourth- and fifth-grade teachers that were nominated by a district language arts coordinator. When examining the literacy instruction as a whole, Pressley et al. (1998) observed that teachers balanced authentic literacy experiences with explicit teaching of skills. All classrooms used "literature-driven" (p. 170) instruction that included read-aloud and opportunities for students to choose books (Pressley et al., 1998). Trade books, particularly novels, were used as instructional materials. Teachers used a variety of grouping formats including whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one conferences. While teachers expressed the belief that comprehension strategies and self-regulation were important, little to no direct instruction in these areas was observed.

While commonalties among practices in each of the ten classrooms were observed, Pressley et al. (1998) recognized that there is "more diversity in literacy instruction at the intermediate level than there is at the primary level" when compared to similar studies conducted at the primary levels (p. 185). Despite the presence of common elements in each classroom, the degree to which they were used varied greatly by classroom. All classrooms used a balanced literacy approach, but each teacher used a different set of core activities to facilitate instruction. Pressley et al. (1998) noted that reading instruction in the upper elementary classroom is complex, and that teachers in the study "managed this complexity by focusing on a particular set

of instructional practices as the defining emphases around which their literacy programs were implemented" (p. 160). Each teacher in the study maintained a set of core literacy values that they used to define their instruction, and that, in their opinion, differentiated their classroom from other fourth- or fifth-grade classrooms.

Morrow et al. (2002) observed four fourth-grade teachers nominated as exemplary by supervisors and administrators in their respective districts. Twenty-five hours of observational data were collected during language arts instruction. Morrow et al. (2002) sought to identify key characteristics of reading instruction in classrooms of teachers considered to be exemplary. Each classroom observed included multiple reading materials that allow students the opportunities for choice, "challenges, social interaction, and success" (Morrow et al., 2002, p. 305). Children had opportunities to read orally and silently as well as to write. A variety of grouping practices were used, including whole-group, small group, and one-on-one instruction. Instruction was "explicit, direct, and systematic" (p. 305) and teachers modeled instruction (Morrow, et al., 2002). Literacy skills were taught, but they were situated in the context of authentic literature. The exemplary teachers, according to Morrow et al. (2002) used a combination of direct instruction and a constructivist perspective on learning.

Allington and Johnston (2002) observed fourth-grade teachers nominated as effective in a study that included 30 classrooms in five states. Nominations of teachers considered to be "extraordinarily effective" (p. 32) were solicited from educators in each study location (Allington & Johnston 2002). Teachers were selected based upon nominations received; diversity of classrooms was a consideration in the selection process. Data consisted of notes collected during ten days of observation in each classroom and information collected from

interviews with teachers and students. A post-hoc analysis compared the test scores of the

students in the studied fourth-grade classrooms with corresponding scores from third-grade.

Since not all schools used standardized testing at every grade, test scores for 19 classrooms were

used. Test scores were converted to normal curve equivalents in order to compare the means to

determine if there was a significant difference between years. "Better than average progress"

(t_{243}, p < .000) was made by the students in the exemplary fourth-grade classrooms (Allington &

Johnston, 2002, p. 233).

Allington and Johnston's (2002) study noted that the importance of the teacher and

decisions made by the teachers, rather than a set program or materials, was responsible for

creating a strong literacy environment. The classrooms observed through this study were

language-rich environments that incorporated teacher-student and student-student dialogue.

Teachers and students were seen as working together, and a "direct transmission of knowledge

from teachers to students" (p. xiii) was not emphasized (Allington & Johnston, 2002). Teachers

capitalized on teachable moments by responding to the students' individual needs during the

lesson. Observed teachers also integrated reading instruction into content areas and used content

area texts for reading instruction.

Four key themes emerged from the data collected. First, "classroom talk" (p.205) was

important (Allington & Johnston, 2002). Teachers frequently engaged students in conversations

about learning, but teachers also used conversations to learn about individual students.

Classroom talk was used to make connections, such as to background knowledge, previous

topics, strategies, etc. Productive classroom talk helped to make inquiry possible in the

classroom.

Teachers used multiple sources of text for instruction rather than one single text (Allington & Johnston, 2002). Classrooms had large libraries for students to explore, and teachers incorporated a variety of genres as well as digital media into instruction. Text used for instruction varied in reading level enabling all students to have an opportunity to read with understanding. Allington and Johnston (2002) indicated, though, that teachers often had to locate and fund the purchase of these materials on their own. Materials provided by the schools often lacked the breadth of levels and variety of genre needed for instruction.

Exemplary teachers often used "managed choice," (p. 210) and students had choice in assessments (Allington & Johnston, 2002). Tasks were also open-ended allowing for multiple answers and pathways to learning. The use of assignments that last for a week or longer were more prevalent than short, unrelated daily tasks. Teachers were more likely to be seen working individually with students or with a small group of students rather than standing in front of the classroom. Collaborative learning was frequently used, and students constructed meaning together.

Allington (2002), in a review of data from the study of fourth-grade teachers described above and a companion study of first-grade teachers, identified six commonalities that effective reading instruction embraces: time, texts, teaching, talk, tasks, and testing. Students need time to read each day and should read texts that they are able to read with accuracy and understanding. Exemplary teachers encourage more student talk. The talk observed in effective classrooms was discussion oriented rather than traditional question-answer format. Work in effective classrooms utilized longer assignments instead of relying on multiple, shorter tasks. Tasks were more complex and required self-regulation from the students. Students in the same

class often completed similar, but not exactly the same tasks. Exemplary teachers relied more on rubrics and performance based measures than on achievement measures. Little to no test-preparation activities were observed in the exemplary classrooms. These six elements capture the essence of what research has presented as effective reading instructional practices and are discussed as elements of effective instruction.

The preponderance of reading material is one salient feature of Bennett Woods Elementary, a school that was studied due its exceptionally high reading and writing scores on a state test. Using grounded theory, Pressley et al. (2007) closely examined the practices used at Bennett Woods Elementary. Through interviews, observations, and artifact analysis, key elements of reading instruction were noted. Reading was emphasized and students at each grade level had access to a variety of books and maintained a stocked book bin near their desks. Teachers also read aloud to their students daily. Teachers were observed modeling and explicitly teaching strategies. Academic conversations were encouraged and occurred on a daily basis. Reading instruction at Bennett Woods, a high performing school, reflected a balance between holistic reading and skills (Pressley et al., 2007).

In a large, mixed-methods study of 140 high-poverty classrooms, Knapp and Associates (1995) investigated classrooms that performed well on assessments. Data were collected in 140 classrooms from 15 schools in six districts. Specific districts were selected through analysis of demographics and test scores. Schools selected served over 50% lower income students, but performed better than average when compared to schools with similar populations. Classrooms in grades one through six were studied over a two-year period. Data included observations, interviews, surveys, student background data, and teacher logs.

Knapp (1995) identified four key instructional strategies that strengthened reading instruction: a) maximizing the opportunity to read; b) integrating reading with writing and other subjects; c) focusing on meaning and the means for constructing meaning; and d) providing opportunities to discuss what is read and extend knowledge (p. 65). In a "meaning-oriented" (p. 187) classroom, students had ample opportunities to read and discuss text (Knapp, 1995). They were taught strategies for understanding what they read. Reading was integrated with writing. In contrast, students in "skills-oriented" (p. 187) classrooms spent more time on basic skills and less time actually reading (Knapp, 1995). When comparing achievement between a "meaning-oriented" classroom and a "skills-oriented" classroom, the "meaning-oriented" classroom made more gains. "Meaning-oriented" instruction allowed for the learning of advanced skills for both low-performing and high-performing students. Knapp (1995) concluded that instruction that focused on higher-level thinking was more effective than instruction that focused on lower-level skills.

The above studies outline effective components of literacy instruction and highlight practices of effective upper elementary literacy teachers. While there is much to learn from studies of exemplary teachers, few studies could be found that describe what instruction looks like in typical upper elementary classrooms. Three studies were located that examined how teachers, not identified as exemplary, allocate time and resources during their core reading block.

Austin and Morrison (1963), as part of a second Harvard report on reading, conducted a national survey of teachers, administrators, and superintendents. A questionnaire was sent to all school systems that had a population exceeding 10,000. In addition to the questionnaire, teachers and administers were interviewed and a representative sample of two thousand

classrooms were observed from fifty-one school systems. Twenty-five hundred teachers and administrators were interviewed. The goal of Austin and Morrison's (1963) research was to investigate "what instructional methods and techniques are being used in the elementary schools to help children read" (p. ix).

In summarizing the results of the study, Austin and Morrison (1963) state that "today's readers are growing up in a world vastly different from the past and in a society which demands of its citizens the ability to read with understanding, insight, and critical analysis, it must follow that an instructional program ample for yesterday will not begin to suffice today" (p. 3). They go further to cite overarching conclusions from the data collected that emphasize a description of reading instruction as "mediocre at best and not currently designed to produce a future society of mature readers" (Austin & Morrison, 1963, p. 2). For example, they noted an emphasis on word calling without attention to meaning, oral reading exercises, comprehension drills, lack of teaching of reading skills for intermediate grades, and the teaching of reading as discrete subject apart from content areas (Austin & Morrison, 1963).

In a second phase of the Durkin (1978-1979) study outlined previously, Durkin also looked at instructional practices used by third through sixth grade teachers. Twelve classrooms, from three different schools, were observed in three consecutive day periods over the course of a school year. The information gained through classroom observations was categorized and indicated the four categories utilized most during the reading block were a) help with assignment, b) assessment of comprehension, c) non-instruction, and d) transitions. Durkin (1978-1979) noted that comprehension instruction was almost non-existent, similar to her findings in the study of fourth-grade classrooms. When examining how time was spent on

reading comprehension instruction, a key facet of upper elementary instruction, one of the three schools spent less than 1% of time on comprehension instruction. Classrooms in the other two schools were not observed teaching any comprehension strategies. The bulk of the time observed in comprehension related activities was spent in assessment. Durkin (1978-1979) also observed "…other kinds of reading instruction were not seen with any frequency either. It cannot be said, therefore, that the teachers neglected comprehension because they were too busy teaching phonics, structural analysis, or word meanings" (Durkin, 1978-79, p. 520). Durkin (1978-79) described the third- through sixth-grade teachers observed in this study as "assignment-givers" and "interrogators" (p. 510).

In an endeavor to reevaluate instructional practices, Baumann et al. (2000) replicated Austin and Morrison's (1963) study. Similar to the original study, the Baumann et al. (2000) study also queried K-5 teachers, principals, and district level administrators. Since the original survey instrument could not be obtained, a new instrument was constructed based upon the data published from the Austin and Morrison (1963) study. While the Austin and Morrison (1963) study relied heavily on administrator data, the Baumann et al. (2000) study chose to rely more on teachers' opinions. Teachers' opinions, in their view, were more valuable since they are directly responsible for delivering the instruction. As a result, more teachers than administrators were surveyed. A total of 1,207 teacher surveys and 161 administrator surveys were collected. The Baumann et al. (2000) modified replication study relied solely on self-reported information gained through the survey; no observations were conducted.

According to the data, teachers reserved a large block of time for reading instruction; an average of two hours and twenty-three minutes were used for reading activities (Baumann et al.,

2000). This large reading block was typically broken down into three areas: teacher-directed instruction and/or small groups (55 minutes), time to practice through independent reading and/or student-led groups (42 minutes), and writing activities (46 minutes). The amount of time spent on teacher-directed instruction varied by grade level with younger students more likely to have a longer period. Only 11% of the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers indicated that an hour of daily reading instruction occurred compared to 37% of first grade teachers.

Teachers in the Baumann et al. (2000) study were more apt to use a balanced approach. Teachers balanced explicit skill work with a "literature-rich environment" (Baumann et al., 2000, p. 356). Teachers used a variety of materials for instruction, and 83% of teachers reported using a combination of basal readers and trade books. In fact, a movement towards the use of trade books and literature-based instruction was the most frequent response when teachers were asked about a change or innovation in their reading instruction. A range of grouping practices was used with teachers using whole-class instruction (68%), flexible grouping (56%), ability grouping (27%), and individualized instruction (20%). When asked about their primary organizational patterns, 52% of the teachers indicated that they use whole-class instruction and 25% noted that they use flexible grouping as the primary organizational pattern.

Teachers reported using authentic assessment measures, such as running records, checklists, and portfolios, to gauge student progress (Baumann et al., 2000). Reading and writing portfolios were noted as having the most influence over instructional decision-making. Individual and group standardized tests, as well as emergent literacy assessments, were viewed as the least influential for instructional decisions. Teachers reported that mandated assessments were not helpful, but when asked how instruction was affected by mandated assessments, the

average teacher response was 1.8 on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 3 (*very much*). Despite being

mandated, the teachers did not report that standardized assessments were a strong influence on

their instructional decisions (Baumann et al., 2000). A summary of the findings, as compared

with the Austin and Morrison (1963) study, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Baumann et al. (2000) and Austin and Morrison (1963) findings

Category	2000 Baumann et al. findings	1963 Austin and Morrison findings
Overall profile of teachers and schools	• Educated, experienced, professionally active workforce • Diverse children in varied districts • Presence of teacher research • Lukewarm evaluation of preservice courses in teaching reading	• Administrators read professional journals • Few teachers with advanced degrees • General dissatisfaction with preservice courses in teaching reading
Philosophy and Goals	• Balanced, eclectic perspective pervaded • Major theme of systematic instruction in decoding along with a literature-rich environment • Common goal was to produce skillful, fluent, motivated, independent readers	• Heavy reliance on basal materials suggested a skills-based perspective • Teachers promoted independent, self-selected reading • Phonics taught along with other word identification skills
Instructional Time and Materials	• Considerable time dedicated to reading and language arts instruction and activities • Basal and trade books used in combination	• Considerable time dedicated to teaching reading skills • High reliance on basal readers, with infrequent use of trade books
Organizing for Instruction	• Students typically assigned heterogeneously to self-contained classrooms • Whole-class reading instruction common with some flexible groups	• Students typically assigned heterogeneously to self-contained classrooms • Ability groups predominate for reading instruction

Beginning Reading Instruction	• Emergent literacy perspective commonly held • Synthetic phonics taught directly and systematically • Multiple word identification skills taught in context-rich ways • High incidence of reading aloud, exposure to literature, and independent self-selected reading	• Reading readiness framework assumed • Formal reading instruction deferred until students deemed ready through readiness tests • Phonics taught analytically through basal materials • Dissatisfaction with content of basal selections
Reading Assessment	• Teachers commonly used alternative assessment measures and procedures • Standardized tests still mandated and administered • Teachers report alternative assessments useful; administration reported standardized tests useful	• Standardized tests administered almost universally but utilized little • Basal tests used occasionally • Informal tests used infrequently
Teaching Struggling and Gifted Readers	• Classroom teachers expected to accommodate struggling and gifted readers • Special support programs or teachers for struggling readers generally available, but less often for gifted readers	• Modest classroom and programmatic support for struggling readers • Infrequent or poor programs for gifted readers
Libraries and Leadership	• Strong school libraries and frequent in-classroom libraries • Teachers and administrators share decision-making about reading programs • Modest amount of district-sponsored in service programs	• School and in-classroom libraries less frequent and evaluated poorly • Program decisions typically made by school or district administrators with little teacher involvement • Sporadic in service programs of dubious quality

Note. Adapted from "The first R yesterday and today: U.S. elementary reading instructional practices reported by teachers and administrators," by Baumann, J.F, Hoffman, J.V., Duffy-Hester, A.M., and Ro, J.M., 2000, *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(3), p. 346-347. Copyright 2000 by International Reading Association. Reprinted with permission.

When the original study conducted by Austin and Morrison (1963) took place, public perception of reading instruction was tarnished. A controversial book by Rudolf Flesch (1955), *Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do About It,* questioned the current reading methods and brought phonics back into the limelight (Alexander & Fox, 2013; Flippo, 2012; Monaghan, 2007). This push towards phonics, combined with the launch of the Russian satellite, Sputnik, and public concern about reading failure, began to generate pressure on educators to solve the problem of learning to read (Alexander & Fox, 2013; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000). Austin and Morrison's (1963) study was conducted during a time in which "the theories underlying the instructional approach to teaching children how to read have undergone revision in many school systems as societal changes have called for changes in the educational program" (p. 1). Austin and Morrison's (1963) study was set against a backdrop of changing educational landscape resulting from a growing public concern over instruction.

Similar to swings in societal views of education in the 1960's, the Baumann et al. (2000) study was also conducted in a changing political and instructional landscape. The formation of the 1981 National Commission on Excellence in Education and 1983 report, *A National at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform,* created the perception that education in the United States was falling behind other countries (Long & Selden, 2011; Shannon et al., 2009). This marked a shift in thinking beyond basic skills to a focus on quality (Long & Selden, 2011). In 1985, the National Institute of Education published *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. This report examined current reading research in an attempt to define reading processes and frame instructional approaches. The report listed five generalizations about reading: 1) reading is a constructive process; 2) reading must be fluent; 3) reading must be

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strategic; 4) reading requires motivation; and 5) reading is a continuously developing skill (Anderson et al., 1984). These findings also declared that "in a well-designed reading program, mastering the parts does not become an end in itself, but a means to an end, and there is a proper balance between practice of the parts and practice of the whole" (Anderson et al., 1984, p. 17). The findings in this report encouraged a broader focus on reading comprehension and the development of language (Kim, 2008; Pearson & Hiebert, 2010). The findings of the Baumann et al. (2000) study reflect the shift to a more balanced approach to literacy that was prevalent during this time (Morrison, Wilcox, Billen, Carr, Wilcox, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2011).

Austin and Morrison's (1963) study occurred during a time when reading instructional methods reflected a more direct instruction, behaviorist approach. Baumann et al.'s (2000) study occurred at a time when research was guiding instructional practices to include a more balanced approach to literacy instruction, and federal involvement in reading research and instruction was beginning to intensify. Both studies occurred when public perception of reading instruction was low and societal or legislative interests were influencing instruction. In the fifteen years since the Baumann (2000) study, the educational landscape has shifted again. Federal legislation has an increased presence in reading instruction, media sources fuel a concern about instruction, and school success is measured through high-stakes tests. Similar to how the two preceding studies surveyed reading practices in their respective times, it is important to examine how current reading instructional practices reflect the changing educational climate. As Austin and Morrison (1963) stated over 50 years ago, "we must examine the present status of reading instruction to determine whether we are meeting the demands of today, not to see whether we are doing better than we did yesterday" (p. 1). Just as Austin and Morrison (1963) and Baumann et al. (2000)

attempted to capture a snapshot of reading instruction in their respective times, it is important to investigate what reading instruction looks like in the contemporary educational landscape.

A Changing Educational Landscape

Legislative background. The 21st century is marked by the age of accountability in public schools. Even though testing has always been a part of the school experience, current legislation has put high-stakes testing and accountability into the forefront of education. When the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A National at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*, reading achievement was thrust into the spotlight (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Shannon et al., 2009; Valli et al., 2008). Low reading scores on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in 1992 and 1994 created a public perception of a problem with reading instruction and evidence that schools were not doing their job setting the stage for more federal intervention in education (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000; Coburn et al., 2011).

Previously, federal government influences on reading instruction came in the form of inputs, such as Chapter 1 (later known as Title 1) reading programs (Shannon et al., 2009; Valli et al., 2008). These efforts were aimed at providing funds or resources to level the disparity among different groups of students (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2011; Shannon et al., 2009). It was thought that it was the lack of resources, not teacher knowledge and instruction, that was causing differences in achievement (McGill-Franzen, 2000). The legislation in effect in the 21st century deviates from this by placing the emphasis on teacher accountability so that performance on tests is linked to sanctions and rewards (Coburn et al., 2011; Hamilton, 2003; Valli et al., 2008). The belief is that focusing on outcomes, or test scores, will force educators to identify

what students should know, how to best teach them, and provide motivation to do so (Lee & Reeves, 2012; Hamilton, 2003; Valli et al., 2008). The current legislation mandating accountability is an effort to use policy to improve teaching (Coburn et al., 2011; Hamilton, 2003).

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized, and in 2002, the legislation known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) went into effect (Allington, 2009; Dee et al., 2013; NCLB, 2002; Valli et al., 2008). This legislation tied federal Title 1 funds to the "development of a single statewide accountability system" (p. 563) with an annual test. (Coburn et al., 2011). Importantly, it created a performance-based system of accountability (Valli et al., 2008). Proficiency targets were initially set for all students to meet by 2014 (NCLB, 2002). States were also required to create serious sanctions for not achieving the targets (Coburn et al., 2011; Valli et al., 2008). These assessments are considered high-stakes because of the potential consequences attached to them (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Outcomes from these assessments have the power to influence student retention and graduation, impact teacher and administrator job security, and can produce financial repercussions (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). ESEA was reauthorized again in December 2015 in a legislation titled Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). While some power shifted from the federal level to the individual state level, the federal legislation still mandates that students in elementary grades three through five demonstrate proficiency on a state proficiency test. The use of high-stakes testing and a focus on school and teacher accountability are still present in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).

Impact of high-stakes testing on instruction. The use of high-stakes testing can impact instructional practices and teacher perception. Pedulla et al., (2003) conducted a national survey

of second- through fifth-grade elementary teachers (n = 2,448), middle school teachers (n = 836), and high school teachers (n = 911). Urban and suburban schools were represented, and schools were classified based on the consequences of the testing (high, moderate or low) for students and/or schools. Teachers in high-stakes states felt more pressure to do well on the tests, with most of the pressure to perform on tests was perceived as coming from the superintendent (92%) or building principal (85%). Elementary teachers reported greater feelings of pressure than middle or high school teachers. Teachers reported that the pressure caused them to change the way they deliver instruction, often in a way that differs from their belief of sound instructional practices. Elementary teachers (78%) reported changing their instruction in a way that conflicted with their perceptions of appropriate instruction more often than middle (77%) or high school teachers (71%).

The pressure to perform well also resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum as teachers taught material that only appears on the test (Pedulla, et al., 2003). For teachers teaching in a high-stakes state, 80% indicated that they felt a pressure to teach to the test. Over half of the elementary teachers (58%) indicated that their classroom tests mirrored the state tests. Additionally, 44% of teachers in a high-stakes testing environment said that they use more than 30 hours of test preparation activities a year, whereas only 10% of teachers in a low-stakes environment used over 30 hours. Elementary teachers (51%) in a high-stakes environment spent more time in test preparation activities than middle (42%) or high school (25%) teachers. Test preparation activities were more likely to be carried out throughout the year in a high-stakes environment.

In a longitudinal study of a several elementary schools outside of a major metropolitan city, Valli and Buese (2007) documented changes NCLB had on teaching roles. The data collected for this study were part of a larger, mixed-methods study of fourth- and fifth-grade reading and mathematics teachers. Teachers (*n* = 150) from 25 moderate to high-poverty schools participated in the four-year study (2001-2005). Qualitative data were collected through observations, interviews, and focus groups. As the study progressed, curricular changes were noted. Pacing guides began to be important, and it became necessary for teachers to map out curriculum coverage in order to prepare students for testing. Teachers also felt a need to align their instruction and assessment with the state test, particularly in schools with AYP concerns. Deliberate efforts to bring students up to proficiency levels on the test triggered the need for increased tutoring. Students were frequently tested during the year and grouped based upon the results. Teachers also began to experience less control over differentiation. By the 2004-05 school year, teachers were required to differentiate reading instruction by meeting in small, guided reading groups. Additionally, schools that had a low performance on annual tests were required to use a reading intervention program. This added an additional hour to the mandated 90 minutes of reading instruction for children.

When discussing how testing affected their pedagogies, teachers referred to teaching under NCLB policy as "hit or miss" and "drive-by" (Valli & Beuse, 2007, p. 545). The teachers felt that the brisk pacing prevented them from creating inquiry-based lessons. Differentiation was mandated, and control for determining intervention grouping and materials was often removed from the teachers' power (Valli & Beuse, 2007).

Jones and Egley (2004) conducted a statewide survey of teachers in Florida to examine the impact the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) had on instruction in reading, writing, and math. Although all districts in Florida were invited to participate, teachers from 30 districts, representing 45% of the districts in Florida, completed the survey. A total of 708 third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers returned the survey, representing 37.2% of the participating schools. While the survey contained multiple questions, the responses for three specific survey items were analyzed in this report. Specifically, teachers were asked "Is the FCAT program taking Florida's public schools in the right direction?" (Jones & Egley, 2004, p. 6). This question was followed up with an open-ended question asking teachers to explain their answer. The third question examined in this report asked teachers if they believed it was fair to assign grades to schools based upon testing performance. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the first and third questions, and the open-ended question was analyzed using a grounded theory approach.

Of the teachers surveyed, 79.9% indicated that the FCAT was not moving schools in the right direction, and analysis of the open-ended responses described negative effects of testing on instruction (Jones & Egley, 2004). Several themes emerged from the analysis of the open-ended response. Over half of the teachers (52.6%) included a comment based upon the use and accuracy of the test. Teachers reported that judging schools by test scores was unfair due to differences in populations. Concerns about negative effects on teacher and student motivation were reported by 46.4% of the teachers with pressure on students (25.2%) and teachers (22.5%) cited as main areas of complaint. Negative effects on teaching and learning were reported by

35.2% of the teachers. Time spent teaching to the test was cited as the most common complaint in the teaching and learning theme. As one teacher surveyed said

> Schools aren't improving their academics as students score better on the FCAT. They are just taking more time to teach to the test and, unfortunately away from real learning. We aren't getting smarter students; we are getting smarter test takers. That is NOT what we are here for! The schools that score well are focusing on teaching to the test at a very high cost to their students. (Jones & Egley, 2004, p. 17)

Negative effects on the curriculum were also noted by 18.9% of the teachers, including a narrowing of the curriculum and the use of a curriculum that is broad and shallow.

To understand how teacher's perceptions of how the Florida's high-stakes test had affected learning, Jones and Egley (2008) examined additional data from the survey described above. The full survey used in the larger study included 23 questions on a Likert scale that ranged from one to seven. Data from the 23 Likert scale questions were analyzed in this report using descriptive statistics, t-tests and ANOVAS. Of the teachers surveyed, 35.2% indicated that testing had negative effects on teaching and learning, and 90% believed that their students would learn the same or more if the FCAT was not required. One-sample t-tests were used to compare means of survey questions to a null hypothesis that was equal to the median Likert value of four (*does not influence me*). When asked if the FCAT influenced teaching practices and affected the teacher's ability to use what they considered to be effective reading practices, the mean value was statistically significant ($t =3.39$, $p =.001$, $d =-0.13$). The results for writing and math, though, were not statistically significant ($p =.05$). When asked about the effect of testing on developmentally appropriate practices, almost half of the teachers indicated that testing had a

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negative effect. When comparing the mean value for this question with the null hypothesis that testing had no effect, a significant difference was found for reading (t = -10.11, p < .001, d = -0.38), writing (t = -8.00, p < .001, d = -0.30) and math (t = -8.21, p < .001, d = -0.31).

The study also queried teachers about the inclusion of test-taking instruction. An average of 38% of reading instructional time was spent on teaching test-taking strategies (Jones & Egley, 2008). Teachers (23.3%) also indicated that testing forces them to teach to the test. Teachers feel pressure to improve test scores with 96.7% of the teachers reporting that they felt between "some pressure" and "a lot of pressure" to improve scores (Jones & Egley, 2008, p. 242). One teacher commented "Teachers I know, including myself, have simply begun teaching to the test due to the pressure from the administration and the county" (Jones & Egley, 2008, p. 242).

Jones and Egley further examined the feelings of pressure by dividing the respondents that indicated a pressure to perform into two groups. Teachers who responded that they felt the greatest pressure by selecting a value of 6 or 7 on the scale (n = 535) were compared with teachers who chose a value of 4 or 5 (n = 141). Teachers who felt more pressure spent more time teaching test taking strategies than teachers who only felt some pressure (t = 6.05, p < .001, d = 0.54). Grade levels varied in respect to the amount of time spent on test preparation activities, but no differences were found in time spent in test preparation based upon the school's grade, a practice in which Florida schools are assigned a grade based upon test performance.

Through ethnographic interviews, Palmer and Rangel (2011) examined how testing affected the instruction of children by bilingual teachers in Texas. Six schools were selected through purposive sampling. Schools were selected based upon the level of support provided by the building level principals. Using guidance from the district's director of bilingual education

and a bilingual principal in the district, two schools that had principals that were supportive of

bilingual instruction, two schools with principals neutral to bilingual education, and two schools

with principals considered unsupportive of bilingual education were identified. Teachers from

grades three ($n = 9$) and five ($n = 6$) were chosen to participate in the study due to the

importance place on academic and bilingual testing in those grades. One fourth-grade teacher

was selected to participate since a third-grade teacher was not available at one of the sites.

Interviews were coded and analyzed for emerging themes.

Palmer and Rangel (2011) found that teachers experience explicit and implicit pressure

from both the district and the school to perform well on the high-stakes tests. Teachers

interviewed reported they felt pressure to alter their daily schedule to maximize time spent

preparing for the tests. Less time was spent on non-tested subjects, such as social studies.

Teachers also noted that they did not feel they have enough time to provide strong English as a

Second Language (ESL) instruction. Implicit pressures to choose or develop materials that

closely matched the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests were noted. The

use of sample TAKS passages to teach reading was reported by many of the teachers

interviewed. One teacher indicated, "I teach with the goal of getting the kids to pass the test

rather than to get them to be successful in reading, writing, and math in general" (Palmer &

Rangel, 2011, p. 628). In response to the pressures felt, bilingual teachers selected "highly

directive teaching" methods and felt "compelled to teach skills as isolated pieces of knowledge"

(Palmer & Rangel, 2011, p. 630). Palmer and Rangel (2011) did find that teachers tried to

balance the demands of high-stakes testing with practices they believed to be effective. They

noted that teachers tried to "take on a role of buffer, protecting their children from the emptiness they saw as 'teaching to the test'" (Palmer & Rangel, 2011, p. 634).

Plank and Condliffe (2013) used two years' worth of observations of second- and third-grade classrooms to compare instruction in a non-testing year (second grade) with instruction in a testing year (third grade). The data collected were part of a larger study of a cohort of students in Baltimore City Public Schools. Students in 23 classrooms across eight schools were observed in second grade (2008-09) and in third grade (2009-10). Students take standardized tests in both second and third grade, but the third-grade scores on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) count towards a school's accountability rating. A total of 348 observations were conducted over the two-year period. Observations were conducted in January and May in order to observe whether changes in instruction occurred prior to testing in May. Observational data were scored using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS measures quality of instruction on three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instruction support. Trained observers used a rating scale of one to seven for each dimension during each observation. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to identify any statistical differences.

Little difference was found between the classrooms in terms of emotional support (Plank & Condliffe, 2013). Most classrooms ($n = 17$) had levels of emotional support above the scale midpoint of four. The classrooms were generally organized, with a mean value of 4.48 for this dimension. When examining the instructional support domain, a mean rating of 2.88 was calculated, suggesting that low levels of support were offered to students. Only one classroom scored about a four, the scale midpoint, on this dimension. This mean was consistent with the

observation field notes that documented limited use of high-level thinking, rich language, teacher modeling, and quality feedback.

In addition to looking at trends across all 23 classrooms, data were analyzed to identify differences between second- and third-grade classrooms, and to look for seasonal differences between grades. When looking at the data for January, third grade scores for instructional support domain were lower than second grade scores (Plank & Condliffe, 2013). No statistically significant differences were noted for the other two domains. Plank and Condliffe (2013) surmised that as third-grade teachers prepare for testing, the quality of instruction, as measured by instructional support, decreases. Field notes from the observers documented a high prevalence of test preparation activities and noted that teachers were spending a significant amount of time on test preparation activities (Plank & Condliffe, 2013). One observer recorded that "the activities were almost all teacher-centered and rote in nature. There were very few opportunities in the lessons for students to express their opinions, problem-solve, or generate ideas in response to open-ended questions" (Plank & Condliffe, 2013, p. 1175). No differences on any of the three domains, though, were found between the second- and third-grade classes in May. Once testing was complete, the second- and third-grade classrooms were highly similar.

Diamond and Spillane (2004) compared two high performing and two probation schools from the Chicago Public School system. The data used for this study were part of a larger, four-year longitudinal study of elementary school leadership. The schools selected for this analysis were two of the highest and two of the lowest performing schools from the larger study. Data were collected through observations and interviews, and researchers spent between 50 and 70

days in each of the four schools. Data were analyzed through the use of a computer-based

qualitative data analysis program.

Instruction in the high-performing schools emphasized learning opportunities for all

students. Interventions were provided for all students. A balance between content areas was

also maintained at the higher performing schools, and one subject was not taught at the exclusion

of another subject. Schools on probation, though, focused on instruction in a way that was

designed to exit the probationary status. Instructional efforts were targeted at certain students,

grade levels, or subjects. Students close to proficiency received more instructional opportunities

than the lowest performing students. Reading was emphasized at the expense of other subjects in

the lower performing schools.

In another analysis of the data of the larger Chicago study, Diamond (2012) further

examined instructional practices in a high-stakes testing environment. While the larger study

collected data from 15 K-5 and K-8 schools in Chicago, this study only included data from four

case study schools. Researchers focused on the content of the tasks given to students and the

patterns of classroom discussions while observing language arts, mathematics, and science

lessons. Teachers were interviewed prior to the observations to discuss the content of the lesson

and after the lesson to reflect upon the pedagogic choices made during the lesson. Diamond

(2012) found that instruction was primarily teacher-centered with the teacher asking the majority

of the questions in 93% of the classrooms observed. Student responses to questions were

evaluated in terms of correctness 69% of the time, and in only 11% of the classrooms did the

teacher prompt the student to think further. Student interaction with each other was infrequent,

and in 78% of the classrooms, students interacted rarely or not at all.

Booher-Jennings (2005) used a case study design to study the effects of testing on one Texas elementary school. The school selected served an economically disadvantaged (90%) and high minority population. Data were collected through interviews and observations. Booher-Jennings (2005) noted that teachers devoted an increased amount of targeted instruction and resources to "bubble kids" (p. 233), students who are close to achieving the proficiency mark on the assessment (Booher-Jennings, 2005). One teacher lamented

> If you have a kid who is getting a 22, even if they improve to a 40, they won't be close - but if you have a kid with a 60, well, they're in shooting range. Bush says that no child should be left behind, but…the reality in American public schools is that some kids are always going to be left behind, especially in this district, where we have the emphasis on the bubble kids. Some are…they're just too low. (Booher-Jennings, 2005, p. 242)

The "bubble kids" (p. 233) benefit from a majority of resources, while the lowest-scoring students receive the least attention (Booher-Jennings, 2005).

High-stakes testing and reading instruction. While many studies could be found that investigate the effects of high stakes testing on general instructional practices, only two studies could be located that investigate how high stakes testing impacted reading instruction. In order to explore how instruction has changed, in light of high-stakes testing, Valli and Chambliss (2007) observed two reading lessons conducted by a fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Gabriel, deemed to be exemplary based upon predetermined criteria outlined in the study. Valli and Chambliss (2007) observed lessons in a regular reading block (90-minutes, 25 students) and an intervention lesson (15 students) that was designed to prepare students for the upcoming test. Both lessons occurred in May prior to the testing event. Data included qualitative information from Ms. Gabriel's

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lesson and subsequent interview, as well as time-sampling data from observations of other reading and intervention classes. A total of 56 intervention lessons and 143 reading lessons from the participant's school were used as a comparative base.

Ms. Gabriel chose text differently for the two lessons. For the regular reading lesson, text was chosen to build her students' literacy knowledge. Text was selected at an appropriate reading level and was of interest to the students. Background knowledge was activated and learning was connected to student experiences. Students interacted with the text in a meaningful way.

In contrast, the text used for the intervention group was selected based upon passage length and ability to provide testing practice (Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Students were observed having difficulty understanding the text, indicating the level might not have been appropriate. Instead of facilitating meaningful connections, Ms. Gabriel used a test-preparation script. The text was discussed in an indirect format that focused on primarily answers to questions. The intervention lesson was "test-centered" (p. 72) rather than child-centered (Valli & Chambliss, 2007).

Comparing the two reading lessons showed that students spent more time listening to the teacher in the intervention lesson (32%) than in the regular reading class (13%; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). The use of time-sampling observations from the larger sample indicated that the teachers in the intervention lessons were more likely to ask simple questions, whereas, in the regular reading classes, teachers encouraged connections, predictions, and asked students to explain.

Dooley and Assaf (2009), using an ethnographic model, examined the literacy practices of two fourth-grade reading specialists in Texas. One reading specialist worked in a suburban, affluent school that had consistently done well on the Texas high-stakes test (TAKS). The other reading specialist worked in an urban school that served low-income students and had not done well on the TAKS. While both teachers shared similar beliefs about reading instruction, Dooley and Assaf (2009) documented differences in instruction. The reading specialist at the urban school felt more pressure to perform on the test, and her instruction revolved around preparing students for testing. Short texts were used, instruction focused on specific skills, and activities were framed as relating to the TAKS test. In contrast, the teacher from the suburban setting used authentic literature with more discussion based literacy practices. Additionally, she did not focus on the test until the week prior to its administration. Dooley and Assaf (2009) documented disparity in literacy instructional practices due to the pressure of high-stakes testing.

Summary

Teachers feel a lot of pressure to perform well on high-stakes assessments (Jones & Egley, 2004, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Pedulla, et al. 2003). This pressure has impacted the pacing of curriculum, what is taught, how it is taught, and which students receive instruction (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond, 2012; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Jones & Egley, 2004, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Pedulla, et al. 2003; Plank & Condliffe, 2013; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). As a teacher surveyed by Jones and Egley (2004) stated, "I feel that the FCAT is taking the learning styles and teaching styles away from students and teachers. The flexibility to teach the best way to meet the needs of the student is eliminated" (p. 17).

High-stakes testing can lead to an increase in the inclusion of test preparation activities (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Jones & Egley, 2004, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Plank & Condliffe, 2013; Pedulla, et al. 2003; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). This takes time away from the authentic reading instruction (Afflerbach, 2005). Many commercial companies have joined in the "financial bonanza" of the testing world in which schools live (Taubman, 2009, p. 52). There is an abundance of commercially-made materials designed to mimic state tests, and now, the CCSS. Afflerbach (2005) also cautioned that reading materials might be selected or created merely because they mirror the format of high-stakes test. Valli et al. (2008) saw a trend toward "transforming teaching into test preparation and learning into improvement in test scores" (p. 3). The use of test preparation materials may artificially improve test scores rather than address the underlying instructional issues (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 2006). McGill-Franzen and Allington (2006) considered the use of "extensive test-preparation activity as a . . . sign that school and district personnel have little notion of how to actually improve reading proficiencies" (p. 765). While testing may ensure teachers cover the material on the test, accountability does not ensure high quality teaching practices ensue. In fact, schools chasing accreditation used more teacher-centered activities and focused more on exiting the probation status than improving instruction (Diamond, 2012; Diamond & Spillane, 2004).

Definition of Terms

The Virginia 2010 Standards of Learning (SOL) represents the framework for instruction in Virginia (Commonwealth of Virginia Board of Education, 2010). Each year, elementary students in grades three, four, and five take a standardized reading test in May that assesses reading knowledge based upon the Virginia SOL. This high-stakes test is often referred to as the SOL test.

Accreditation refers to a school's overall rating in four academic areas: English, history/social science, mathematics, and science. Scores on the previous year's test determine a school's accreditation. For example, scores achieved on the 2014-15 Virginia SOL tests determine the school's accreditation for the 2015-16 school year. In addition to being Fully Accredited or Denied Accreditation, new Partially Accredited ratings have been created to identify schools that are close to making accreditation or are making progress towards accreditation. These new accreditation labels went into effect for the 2015-2016 school year.

In Virginia, elementary schools can receive one of five accreditation labels:

Fully Accredited describes school where 75% of students met the English test and 70% of students met the benchmark for mathematics, science, and history.

Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Pass Rate describes schools that are within two points of achieving passing scores on the SOL tests in one or more subject areas.

Partially Accredited: Improving School-Pass Rate describes schools that are not fully accredited but are making acceptable progress towards accreditation.

Partially Accredited: Warned School-Pass Rate describes schools that are not making acceptable progress towards achieving fully accreditation.

Accreditation Denied is used to designate schools that failed to meet the full accreditation requirements for four consecutive years.

Annual measurable objectives (AMOs) replaced the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals that were in place from 2002 through 2011. Schools must meet annual measurable objectives in reading and math (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.). In an effort to reduce gaps in achievement between subgroups, AMOs represent the percentage of students in a specific subgroup that must pass the annual SOL tests in reading and math. Schools are expected to meet or exceed the AMO targets for each identified subgroup (such as economically disadvantaged, English language learners, students with disabilities, African American students, Hispanic students, Asian students).

Whole language is a "philosophy of language development" and an instructional approach that includes practices reflecting a belief in the use of real literature, writing for functional purposes, and learning through collaborative experiences (Bergeron, 1990, p. 319).

Direct instruction is teacher-led, explicit instruction (Duffy & Roehler, 1982). Direct instruction can be found in scripted programs that provide a specific sequence and context for instruction.

Balanced literacy is an instructional approach that combines whole language and skill instruction. Students are exposed to authentic literature and write for real purposes, but explicit skills are also taught (Pressley, 2006). Teachers use specific strategies and grouping practices to scaffold and differentiate instruction, and students are grouped homogenously for some activities, and heterogeneously for others (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2011).

Chapter 3: Methodology

A growing body of literature examines the impact high-stakes testing has on teacher motivation, perceptions, and general teaching practices and beliefs. Few research studies, though, could be located that examine how testing has impacted the daily instructional practices of upper elementary teachers during reading instruction. Through a partial replication and extension of Baumann et al. (2000), this study sought to investigate how third- through fifth-grade elementary teachers deliver reading instruction in a high-stakes testing context. The study addressed the following questions:

1. How does current reading instruction in upper elementary classrooms compare to the instructional practices identified in the Baumann et al. (2000) study?

    Specifically:

    a. How is time for reading instruction allocated in upper elementary classrooms?

    b. What kinds of materials are used to teach reading in upper elementary classrooms?

    c. How are students grouped for reading instruction in upper elementary reading classrooms?

2. Do schools of varying socio-economic status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

3. Do schools of varying accreditation status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

Design

This study was a partial replication and extension of a study conducted by Baumann et al. in 2000. Similar to Baumann et al.'s (2000) study, this study relied on self-reports collected through a survey. This partial replication, though, differed from the Baumann study in several ways. First, a change in the methodology was made to distribute the survey via email. In the Baumann et al. (2000) study, a paper version of the survey was distributed via the United States Postal Service to participants. In order to allow for efficient distribution of the survey, an electronic survey was disseminated through email. The use of an electronic survey allowed for effective distribution of the initial survey, provided a means to send follow-up reminders, and allowed for electronic capture of data.

Second, the population was narrowed. While the Baumann et al. (2000) study included a national representation of classroom teachers, the current study included only teachers from Virginia. In contrast to many states that use the CCSS, the Commonwealth of Virginia is the only state that uses the Virginia SOL Reading test. The current study focused on teachers in Virginia to situate the data within the context of the Virginia SOL Reading test. Focusing on teachers from one state allowed this study to examine the effects of Virginia's Reading SOL Reading test on instructional practices.

The Baumann et al. (2000) study surveyed K-5 teachers, building level administrators, and district level administrators. The current study narrowed its focus to classroom teachers since the purpose of this study was to compare classroom practices in light of the current high-

stakes testing environment with the classrooms analyzed in the Baumann et al. (2000) study. Classroom teachers are best positioned, as compared to building or district administrators, to report on the practices used during reading instruction. Additionally, given the size of the sample, there were too few building and district administrators represented within the participating school systems to provide enough power for analysis.

The population was further narrowed to include only upper elementary teachers. The choice to include only upper elementary teachers was based upon two key elements: a) students in these grades are required to take an annual high-stakes reading assessment, and b) reading instruction in grades 3-5 differs from beginning reading instruction found in early elementary classrooms. All third, fourth, and fifth-grade students in Virginia are required to take the Virginia SOL Reading test each May. Teachers in primary grades, while accountable for teaching the Virginia SOL, do not participate in a high-stakes test. As a result, teachers in grades 3-5 differ from their early elementary counterparts because they must prepare students to meet the expectations of this annual test.

Reading instruction differs between the K-2 and the 3-5 classrooms; students in early elementary grades (K-2) are learning to read, so early reading skills comprise a large portion of the classroom instruction. By third grade, though, most students are shifting from learning to read to reading to learn. Reading instruction in the upper elementary grades focuses less on early reading skills and more on extracting understanding from text (Chall et al., 1990). Focusing on only upper elementary grades to examine the effect high-stakes testing has had on daily instructional practices only deviated from the Baumann et al. (2000) study.

In addition to replicating the Baumann et al. (2000) study, this study also extended the work. The Baumann et al. (2000) study was conducted prior to the shift in reliance on high-stakes testing as a means of evaluating teaching and learning. This study extended Baumann et al.'s (2000) work by examining differences in instructional practices used by upper elementary teachers in light of the current high-stakes testing environment. Accreditation status and SES status were two variables added to the current study to investigate whether instructional practices differ for these groups.

Accreditation, defined as meeting the proficiency benchmark on the 2015-16 Virginia SOL Reading test, was used as an independent variable in the current study. Diamond (2012) and Diamond and Spillane (2004) found differences in instructional practices between schools that met proficiency benchmarks and schools that did not meet the benchmark targets. Schools working towards achieving accreditation were more teacher-centered, had fewer opportunities for students to interact with each other, relied on teacher questions during instruction, and focused intervention on students close to achieving proficiency rather than on the lowest performing students (Diamond, 2012; Diamond & Spillane, 2004). Pressure to meet accreditation benchmarks has impacted the pacing of curriculum, what is taught, how it is taught, and which students receive instruction (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond, 2012; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Jones & Egley, 2004, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Pedulla, et al. 2003; Plank & Condliffe, 2013; Valli & Chambliss, 2007).

A meta-analysis covering two decades of research conducted by Camburn and Han (2011) showed the students from low SES families are less likely to receive authentic instruction, including opportunities for meta-cognition and problem solving. Additionally, low-income

students were less likely to read trade books (Camburn & Han, 2011). Students from lower income schools typically have less qualified teachers, more limited curricula, and less challenging instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2010). SES has also been shown to correlate with school achievement, and success in school is "greatly influenced" by family's SES (Sirin, 2005, p. 445). Two measures of SES, the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch and Title 1 status, were used separately in this study to examine difference in instructional practices or materials. The percentage of students that receive free and reduced lunch, using four 25% intervals, is commonly used to measure SES. While the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch may provide a more precise picture of SES, teachers are sometimes unaware of this figure. Also, this variable included five possible choices (0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100%, and *do not know)* which divided the data into five groups. Since smaller group size might impact the analysis, an additional measure for SES was also collected. Title 1 status is awarded to schools with a lower SES base, and Title 1 status is more widely known by teachers. While two measures of SES are used as variables in the current study, analysis was conducted with each variable independently.

Population and Sampling

Upper elementary teachers (grades 3-5) from 11 school districts in a metropolitan area of central Virginia were asked to participate in this study. These school districts were chosen due to geographic proximity and include representation of suburban, urban, and rural schools. Of the 11 selected school districts, seven districts agreed to participate. While five of the school districts agreed to participate as a district, two school districts deferred final consent to building principals. Six out of 17 principals in District B agreed to participate and eight out of 15

principals from District C agreed to participate. The participating districts varied in size and
ranged from the smallest district serving 573 students in 3 schools to the largest district serving
over 11,000 students in 46 elementary schools. Table 2 outlines the number of elementary
students, the number of elementary schools, the number of classroom teachers in grades 3-5, and
the numbers of schools designated as Title 1 schools for each participating school district. Table
3 displays the accreditation status for the participating schools. Descriptions of each
accreditation status are provided in the Definition of Terms (see Chapter 2). Surveying teachers
in multiple districts allowed for a larger potential sample and incorporated more opportunities for
diversity in SES and accreditation status than sampling from a single district.

Table 2

Participant School Districts

District	Students in Grades 3-5	Number of 3rd-5th Teachers	Elementary Schools	Title 1 Schools
A	11,776	536	46	20
B	1,164	63	6	5
C	2,192	99	8	4
D	3,905	161	15	3
E	926	45	3	2
F	719	33	2	2
G	570	32	3	3

Note. Districts B and C reflect the participating schools rather than
the entire district. Virginia Department of Education (n.d.).

Table 3

Virginia Accreditation Status, 2015-2016

| District | Fully Accredited | Partially Accredited | | | Reconstituted School | Denied Accreditation |
		Warned School-Pass Rate	Improving School-Pass Rate	Approaching Benchmark-Pass Rate		
A	32	2	1	3	5	3
B	2	0	0	0	1	3
C	8	0	1	0	0	0
D	15	0	0	0	0	0
E	3	0	0	0	0	0
F	2	0	0	0	0	0
G	3	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Virginia Department of Education (n.d.).

Instrument

The Baumann et al. (2000) survey instrument was used in this study with minor modifications and expansions. A total of nine questions were eliminated from the original survey due to lack of relevance to the current study. This included four questions that focused on grades K-2, three questions that addressed overall school maintenance and library facilities, and two open-ended questions that asked teachers about school-wide literacy innovations initiated at their schools. These questions were eliminated since they did not directly relate to the research questions in this study.

Only two questions were added to the survey. The first new question queried teachers about the accreditation status of their school. The original survey was conducted prior to the use of high-stakes testing to determine accreditation in Virginia. Since accreditation is addressed by research question 3, this survey question was added. The second question added asked teachers if their school is designated as a Title 1 school. Since a Title 1 designation is based upon SES of

the students, adding this question allowed for a second independent variable, in addition to the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, to measure SES for data analysis.

The wording of two questions was also modified. The original Baumann et al. (2000) survey question that addressed SES (original question 18) asked teachers to specify the percentage of students in their class that were at a *low-income level*, *a middle-income level*, or a *high-income level*. A decision was made to amend this question to ask for the percentage of students in the school that receive free and reduced lunch. Free and reduced lunch is a commonly recognized measure of SES in schools. Using specific intervals based upon this measure of SES allowed for more precise analysis of this variable. Question 44 from the original survey was also reworded. Instead of asking teachers to estimate the amount of time spent in test preparation activities over a year, the time interval was changed from a year to a week in order to make it easier for teachers to estimate.

In addition to the deletion and rewording of questions, response choices were expanded in some questions to include instructional practices or materials that are found in today's classrooms and to broaden the choices for assessments used. For example, guided reading, test preparation activities, and reading websites were added to the possible responses for instructional activities present in the classroom for question 12. The choices for types of assessments were expanded in question 29 to include district-created benchmark assessments and the Virginia SOL Reading test. Table 4 provides a summary of changes made to questions and answer choices.

Table 4

Changes To The Original Survey Questions

Question Number			
Current	Original	Type of Change	Change
-	15	Deleted question	Eliminated question about school facilities
-	31	Deleted question	Eliminated question about library facilities
-	32	Deleted question	Eliminated question about central library
-	49	Deleted question	Eliminated question focusing on K-2 instruction
-	50	Deleted question	Eliminated question focusing on K-2 instruction
-	51	Deleted question	Eliminated question focusing on K-2 instruction
-	52	Deleted question	Eliminated question focusing on K-2 instruction
-	54	Deleted question	Eliminated open ended responses
-	55	Deleted question	Eliminated open ended responses
6	18	Modification	Changed qualitative labels to include percentage intervals measured by free and reduce lunch
7	-	New question	Accreditation question added to survey
10	24	Modification	Added to response choice: • *Time spent preparing for, practicing, or taking assessments*
11	25	Modification	Added to response choice: • *Guided reading* • *Testing preparation and practice*
12	26	Modification	Added to response choice: • *Scripted or direct instruction programs* Response choice change: • *Reading software or websites* replaced *computer hardware and software*
15	29	Modification	Added to response choice: • *I follow a school or district required pacing guide*

23	53	Modification	Added to response choice:
			• *Independent reading time (DEAR, SSR)*
			• *Guided reading groups*
			• *Direct Instruction/scripted programs*
			• *Use of technology (websites, iPads, etc.)*
28	42	Modification	Added to response choice:
			• *District created reading tests*
			• *Virginia Reading SOL test*
29	43	Modification	Added to response choice:
			• *School-required reading assessments*
30	44	Modification	Added to response choice:
			• Changed interval of time from year to week

Lastly, the question order was modified to position the content questions before the demographic questions. Placing questions that are relevant to all participants and are easy to understand at the beginning of the survey helped to "reduce the perceived burden of the questionnaire" (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014, p. 230). Dillman et al. (2014) suggest placing questions that could be sensitive or potentially objectionable at the end of the survey. This rearrangement allowed for the questions most pertinent to the study to appear prior to information that is less crucial.

An expert review was conducted to ensure that the survey reflected current instructional terms, materials, and practices. Five professors of literacy representing three universities reviewed the survey instrument. Based on the expert review, additional choices were added to some of the survey questions. For example, the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) was added to the list of possible assessments. This assessment is used to identify students in need of additional literacy instruction and provides teachers with information about

their students' literacy knowledge. It is given to K-3 students and is used, on a voluntary basis,

by 99% of the school districts in Virginia (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, n.d.). A

summary of the question modifications is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Changes To Response Choices Based Upon Expert Review

Question Number			
Current	Original	Type of Change	Change
11	25	Modification	Added to response choice: *Fluency instruction and practice*
12	26	Modification	Added to response choice: *Poetry* *Readers' Theater/Plays* *Word and/or picture sorts*
22	53	Modification	Added to response choice: *Teacher read-aloud* *Word study*
28	42	Modification	Added to response choice: *PALS assessment*
29	43	Modification	Added to response choice: *District-required benchmark reading assessments*

In order to test the functionality and clarity of the survey instrument, a pilot test was

conducted. Using a convenience sample of 13 third-, fourth- and fifth-grade teachers at one local

elementary school, teachers were provided with a paper copy of the survey and asked to

complete it. Teachers were asked to indicate any questions that were unclear or confusing. After

completing the survey, cognitive interviews were conducted to determine the time needed to

complete the survey and to identify any survey items that were unclear to the respondents.

Based upon the feedback received during the pilot test and cognitive interviews, additional

response choices were added to reflect current teaching practices. These response choices

included additions that reflected the use of guided reading materials and leveled text. A list of

changes made, based upon this pilot test, are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Changes to Response Choices Based on Pilot

Question Number			
Current	Original	Type of Change	Change
5	13	Modification	Added to response choice: *Not sure*
8	22	Modification	Added to response choice: *I believe in a guided reading approach that uses leveled text as instructional*
11	25	Modification	Added to response choice: *Journal writing* *Whole class mini-lesson*
12	26	Modification	Added to response choice: *Leveled books for guided reading*
13	27	Modification	Modified the question to include leveled guided reading materials as an option for the foundation for reading instructional materials
14	28	Modification	Added to response choice: *I do not know*
16	30	Modification	Added a response choice: *I don't teach*
22	53	Modification	Added a response choice: *Leveled guided reading books used instructionally*
28	42	Modification	Clarified informal reading inventories by including a parenthetical example
29	43	Modification	Clarified district-required informal reading inventories by including a parenthetical example

Finally, before the electronic survey was finalized, a convenience sample of upper

elementary classroom teachers and literacy teachers were asked to test the electronic version of

the survey. Specifically, a review of the electronic version of the survey was conducted to

identify potential errors, such as errors in branching logic, to test how responses were captured, and to ensure the survey flowed as intended. No content revisions were made following the survey test.

Data Collection

Data collection took place during a four-week window in October 2016. A proposal for research was submitted to each school district, and seven school districts agreed to participate in the study. After receiving study approval from the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Internal Review Board (IRB), an electronic invitation to participate and a link to the online survey were distributed via the predetermined procedures in each of the participating districts. For five of the districts, the survey link was sent to a designated individual in the district's central office who distributed the survey request to all third through fifth-grade teachers in that school district. In two districts, the decisions to participate rested upon each school's principal. Once a principal agreed to participate, the email invitation and survey link were sent to the principal to distribute to the teachers in that school. A total of 15 principals from these two districts agreed to participate. A reminder email was sent one week into the data collection period and a final reminder was sent after two weeks.

Participating teachers completed the survey by clicking a link in the email that opened an electronic survey. REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture), a secure web application for building surveys, was used to create the survey and to collect participant responses. No identifying information about the participants was collected or stored. Respondents that select a grade level other than third, fourth, or fifth on question one were thanked for their time and exited from the survey.

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In order to thank the teachers for completing the survey, two $25 Amazon gift cards were awarded in a random drawing. Amazon was selected due to the availability of electronic gift cards and the wide breadth of products offered. Since an electronic gift card can be sent via email, no other form of identification was needed to award this reward. Participants had an option of submitting an email address at the conclusion of their survey if they wished to participate in the random drawing. At the conclusion of the data collection, two email addresses were randomly selected from the email addresses submitted. A gift card was forwarded electronically to the two winning email addresses.

Data Analysis

Three questions guided this study:

1. How does current reading instruction in upper elementary classrooms compare to the instructional practices identified in the Baumann et al. (2000) study?
   Specifically:
   a. How is time for reading instruction allocated in upper elementary classrooms?
   b. What kinds of materials are used to teach reading in upper elementary classrooms?
   c. How are students grouped for reading instruction in upper elementary reading classrooms?
2. Do schools of varying socio-economic status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?
3. Do schools of varying accreditation status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

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The first research question of this study sought to compare current reading instructional practices with those documented through the Bauman at al. (2000) study, and descriptive statistics were used to address this question. The second and third questions focused on identifying differences. A nonparametric statistical test, Kruskal-Wallis *H* test, and a chi-square analysis were used to address these research questions. Table 7 provides a list of variables to be explored through this study.

Table 7

Variables Of Interest And Hypothesized Relationships

Variable	Variable Type	Survey Question	Hypothesis
Socio-economic status	Independent	5	Title 1 schools will use materials that emphasize direct teaching of skills, utilize a small group instructional format, and will differ from non-Title 1 schools in time allocated to specific reading practices.
Socio-economic status	Independent	6	Schools with higher percentages of students receiving free or reduce lunch will use materials that emphasize the direct teaching of skills, utilize a small group instructional format, and may differ from higher SES schools in time allocated to reading instructional practices.
Accreditation status	Independent	7	Schools that did not reach the proficiency benchmark will use materials that emphasize the direct teaching of skills, utilize a small group instructional format, spend more time in test preparation activities, and feel more pressure to modify instruction to match assessments.
Time	Dependent	11	Average time spent on reading instructional practices will be similar to the findings of the Baumann et al. (2000) study, but differences among the current sample may be found based upon SES or accreditation status.
Materials	Dependent	12, 13	Similar to the Baumann et al. (2000) study, a balance of trade books and basal materials will be used, but differences among the current sample may be found based upon SES or accreditation status.
Grouping	Dependent	22	Small group instruction will be used more than whole group instruction.
Assessment	Dependent	29, 31	Schools with higher percentages of students receiving free or reduce lunch or that did not meet the accreditation benchmark will use assessments differently than other groups and will feel more pressure to modify instruction to match assessments.

Descriptive statistics were used to identify the reading instructional practices used in the contemporary upper elementary classrooms. Research Question 1 involved comparing the reading instructional practices identified through this study to the instructional practices described in the Baumann et al. (2000) study. Direct comparisons, though, were not possible due to the difference in population surveyed. Since Baumann et al. (2000)'s data included responses from K-5 teachers and the current study focused on grade 3-5 teachers, only general similarities and differences can be discussed. Indirect comparisons were made to identify general trends and changes in practices. Specifically, the Bauman et al. (2000) study provided a frame of reference with which to compare time allotted to reading instructional practices, the kinds of materials used to teach reading, and the grouping of students for instruction reported by contemporary upper elementary classroom teachers.

Baumann et al., (2000) found that K-5 teachers used a balance of trade books with basal reading programs, contrasting a more basal approach identified in the Austin and Morrison (1963) study. It was hypothesized that, similar to Baumann et al. (2000), current upper elementary teachers use a combination of materials in the contemporary classroom and a *moderate* or *considerable* amount of instructional time is spent on comprehension. Given the increased focus on accountability, as measured by performance on the Virginia SOL Reading test, it was also possible that this study would find an increase in the use of skill-focused materials, including more emphasis on a basal series, and as well as an increase in time spent on comprehension-based instructional activities. Baumann et al. (2000) found that K-5 teachers utilized a whole group instructional format more than a small group instruction. As teachers prepare students for success with the Virginia SOLs, it was hypothesized that small group

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instruction might be more prevalent than whole group instruction. Small group instruction allows teachers to provide targeted instruction to students in anticipation of performance on the Virginia Reading SOL.

While the Baumann et al. (2000) study sought to replicate the Austin and Morrison (1963) study, the exact instrument from the Austin and Morrison study was not available. Baumann et al. (2000) used notes provided by Austin and Morrison, a copy of a similar survey used in an unpublished dissertation by Morrison, and data provided in the published study to reconstruct a survey instrument that was similar in nature. Due to the use of a slightly different survey instrument, a direct comparison between the present study and the Austin and Morrison (1963) study could not be made. When possible, though, general comparisons, based upon the results published for the Austin and Morrison (1963) study were made.

Additionally, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to investigate the differences in practices between teachers working in schools of varying SES and accreditation status (research questions 2 and 3). This nonparametric statistical test allows for the study of differences between groups. In this case, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to examine the differences in practices between schools of varying SES and accreditation statuses. It was hypothesized that schools with lower SES and schools that did not meet the previous year's proficiency benchmarks would differ in the types of materials used for instruction, time allocated to specific reading instructional practices, and instructional grouping. Specifically, schools with lower SES and schools that did not meet the state proficiency benchmark would use materials that focus more on direct teaching of skills, would spend more instructional time on practices that reinforce skill work needed to

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achieve proficiency on the Virginia SOL Reading test, and would use a small group format to target the needs of specific students.

Delimitations

While this study extended the research to include daily instructional practices used by upper elementary teachers in light of high-stakes testing, it is important to delimit the results to the population in this study. Virginia is not part of the CCSS and administers its own assessments. Since Virginia is the only state to administer the Virginia SOL Reading test, the data gained from this study best represents upper elementary teachers in the state of Virginia. While Virginia maintains its own curriculum standards, the commonwealth has created a crosswalk document that shows the alignment of the SOL with the CCSS; therefore, some findings from this study could be applicable for teachers in other states (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). The population is also delimited to upper elementary teachers from school districts in a metropolitan region of central Virginia.

Chapter 4: Findings

Data for the study were collected during a four-week window from third, fourth, and fifth-grade teachers in seven school districts. A total of 176 surveys were opened by participants. Twenty-three surveys were blank; participants clicked through the survey without answering any questions. These 23 surveys were deleted. Additionally, completed and partially completed surveys were reviewed to ensure that respondents taught in a classroom setting in grades three, four, or five. Survey questions 1 and 20 were used to screen the surveys; any surveys that did not reflect the targeted grade levels or indicated a teaching placement other than as a classroom teacher of reading were eliminated from the sample pool. This review of data resulted in a total of 113 useable surveys. Approximately 969 potential respondents received the survey yielding a response rate of 18% overall and 12% for useable surveys.

The data gained through this study were analyzed to address the following questions:

1. How does current reading instruction in upper elementary classrooms compare to the instructional practices identified in the Baumann et al. (2000) study? Specifically:

    a. How is time for reading instruction allocated in upper elementary classrooms?

    b. What kinds of materials are used to teach reading in upper elementary classrooms?

c. How are students grouped for reading instruction in upper elementary reading classrooms?

2. Do schools of varying socio-economic status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

3. Do schools of varying accreditation status differ in grouping practices, types of materials used, and how time is allocated to reading activities?

Descriptive Analysis

School and classroom demographics. Descriptive statistics were used to compare current reading instructional practices with those of the Baumann et al. (2000) study to address research question 1 and to identify general trends. While direct comparisons with the Baumann et al. (2000) study were not possible since the 2000 study included a wider population of kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers, the Baumann study did serve as a frame of reference for the current study. Descriptive information gained in the current study was compared to the Baumann et al. (2000) data to discuss possible similarities and differences between trends in reading instructional practices and materials.

Classrooms in the current study included a diverse population with an average of 23 students in each classroom ($M = 23.21$, $SD = 6.09$). While 39% of the teachers reported having no special education students in their classroom, 8% of teachers indicated that there was at least one student receiving special education services, and 34% of teachers indicated that there were between four and seven students receiving special education services in their classrooms. In terms of ethnic and cultural diversity, 8% of teachers reported having no African American students and 18% indicated they had a least one African American student. Eleven percent of

the teachers reported having no Caucasian students. Additionally, 23% of teachers reported

having at least one Hispanic student and 18% of teachers also had at least one student of another

racial or ethnic group. Table 8 includes additional information on the racial or ethnic

background of the participants' students.

Table 8

Population Subgroups of Participants' Students

	N	M	SD
Special Education Students	103	2.84	3.09
African American	103	6.98	8.20
White or European	101	13.22	12.24
Hispanic or Latino	96	2.21	3.20
Other Racial Groups	95	2.28	3.24

The majority of the participating teachers work in a suburban school ($n = 78$), but urban

($n = 19$) and rural ($n = 16$) communities were also represented. Most of the participants ($n = 93$)

indicated that their schools achieved the proficiency benchmark on the Virginia SOL Reading

assessment for the 2015-16 school year. Just under half of the participating teachers ($n = 46$)

taught in a Title 1 school. Each interval depicting the percentage of students receiving free and

reduced lunch (see Table 9) also was represented in the study. Grades 3, 4 and 5 teachers are

fairly equally represented in the study, with 29%, 37%, and 34% of participants, respectively.

Table 9 includes additional details about the participants' schools. Years of teaching experience

for participants in the current study ranged from zero (new teachers) to 40 years, with a mean of

13.2 years. Sixty-nine percent of the participants indicated they had a Master's degree and 9%

noted they had a Specialist degree.

Table 9

Demographics For Participant's Schools

	N	%
Grade Taught		
3rd Grade	33	29.2
4th Grade	42	37.2
5th Grade	38	33.6
Total	113	100.0
School Community		
Urban	19	16.8
Suburban	78	69.0
Rural	16	14.2
Total	113	100.0
Title 1 Status		
Yes	46	40.7
No	67	59.3
Total	100	100.0
Percentage of Free and reduced Lunch		
0-25%	38	33.9
26-50%	20	17.9
51-75%	11	9.8
76-100%	21	18.8
Not sure	22	19.6
Total	113	100.0
Met accreditation benchmark		
Yes	93	82.3
No	17	15.0
Not sure	3	2.7
Total	113	100.0

Reading instructional beliefs and goals. Two survey questions addressed beliefs about teaching reading and goals for reading instruction. In these questions, teachers were presented with multiple possible responses and were able to check all of the responses that applied to their own beliefs. Most teachers (88%) believed in a balanced approach to instruction which was the most selected response. Other key beliefs that were revealed included beliefs that students should be immersed in literature (81%), and in guided reading (77%). Balanced instruction was

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a primary instructional belief of teachers, and this response is supported by other survey data, such as the use of authentic text, use of ability groups, and time spent on comprehension instruction.

When asked about reading goals, 96% of the participants indicated that one goal of reading instruction is to develop readers who are independent and motivated to choose, appreciate, and enjoy literature. Teachers indicated that other goals include developing skillful and strategic readers (82%) and readers who are critical and use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live (82%). Current upper elementary teachers appear to be slightly more focused on developing independent readers (96%) than skillful readers (82%).

Instructional time spent on reading activities. Teachers were asked to indicate how much instructional time, *considerable (4), moderate (3), little (2),* or *none (1),* was spent on reading activities. Almost all teachers (99%) stated that a *considerable* or *moderate* amount of instructional time was spent on reading comprehension, and 92% of teachers indicated they spent a *considerable* or *moderate* amount of instructional time on guided reading. At least 50% of the teachers indicated that a *moderate* amount of time was spent on critical reading, silent reading, journal writing, reading aloud to students, reading in the content areas, whole class mini-lessons, fluency practice, independent reading, responses to literature, and word study. Close reading, a relatively new instructional practice, was represented in the current study, and 44.5% of teachers indicated that a *moderate* amount of instructional time is spent on close reading. As Fisher and Frey (2012) noted, it is important for teachers to use many instructional tools rather than relying on a single practice, such as close reading. Teachers in the current study spend a moderate amount of instruction time on many instructional practices. *Little* instructional time was spent on

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study skills, phonics, literature circles, and language experience stories. Most teachers (91%) stated that little or no time was allocated for handwriting instruction. Table 10 includes descriptive information for all of the instructional practices listed in question 10 and Table 11 includes the frequency of each response.

Table 10

Time Spent in Instructional Practices/Activities

	N	Min (1)	Max (5)	Mean	SD
Comprehension	113	2	4	3.83	.40
Guided reading	113	1	4	3.55	.69
Reading strategies instruction	113	1	4	3.35	.67
Whole class mini-lessons	113	1	4	3.22	.69
Critical reading	112	1	4	3.21	.69
Silent reading	113	2	4	3.19	.63
Reading in the content area	112	2	4	3.15	.62
Students reading independently	113	1	4	3.13	.71
Reading vocabulary	113	2	4	3.01	.58
Oral or written responses to literature	111	2	4	2.98	.65
Reading aloud to students	113	2	4	2.91	.65
Journal writing	113	1	4	2.88	.64
Process writing or writing workshop	111	2	4	2.85	.70
Fluency instruction and practice	113	1	4	2.81	.73
Word study activities	113	1	4	2.74	.72
Oral reading	113	1	4	2.69	.67
Close reading	110	1	4	2.66	.82
Technological applications to literacy (websites, videos, multimedia, etc.)	112	1	4	2.64	.72
Literature circles, book clubs, literature discussion groups	112	1	4	2.63	.85
Test preparation and practice	111	1	4	2.60	.73
Study skills	113	1	4	2.46	.68
Spelling lists, activities, or games	111	1	4	2.41	.71
Phonics/decoding	112	1	4	2.28	.73
Language experience stories or charts	111	1	4	2.28	.75
Handwriting instruction and practice	111	1	4	1.59	.65

Table 11

Instructional Time Allocated to Reading Practices

	Considerable		Moderate		Little		None	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Comprehension	95	84.1	17	15.0	1	.9	-	-
Guided reading	73	64.6	31	27.4	7	6.2	2	1.8
Reading strategies instruction	50	44.2	53	46.0	9	8.0	1	.9
Whole class mini-lessons	40	35.4	60	53.1	11	9.7	2	1.8
Critical reading	39	34.8	60	53.6	11	9.8	2	1.8
Students reading independently	36	31.9	57	50.4	19	16.8	1	.9
Silent reading	35	31.0	65	57.5	13	11.5	-	-
Reading in the content area	31	27.7	67	59.8	14	12.5	-	-
Literature circles, book clubs, literature discussion groups	23	20.5	29	25.9	56	50.0	4	3.6
Oral or written responses to literature	22	19.8	65	58.6	24	21.6	-	-
Process writing or writing workshop	20	17.7	54	48.6	37	33.3	-	-
Reading vocabulary	19	16.8	76	67.3	18	15.9	-	-
Reading aloud to students	19	16.8	65	57.5	29	25.7	-	-
Fluency instruction and practice	18	15.9	58	51.3	34	30.1	3	2.7
Close reading	16	14.5	49	44.5	37	33.6	8	7.3
Journal writing	16	14.2	68	60.2	28	24.8	1	.9
Test preparation and practice	14	12.6	41	36.9	54	48.6	2	1.8
Word study activities	14	12.4	60	53.1	35	31.0	4	3.5
Oral reading	12	10.6	55	48.7	45	39.8	1	.9
Technological applications to literacy (websites, videos, multimedia, etc.)	11	9.8	55	49.1	41	36.6	5	4.5
Study skills	8	7.1	40	35.4	61	54.0	4	3.5
Phonics/decoding	8	7.1	25	22.3	69	61.6	10	8.9
Language experience stories	6	5.4	33	29.7	58	52.3	14	12.6
Spelling lists, activities, or games	6	5.4	42	37.8	55	49.5	8	7.2
Handwriting instruction and practice	1	.9	7	6.3	49	44.1	54	48.6

Materials used for instruction. The use of reading materials was addressed through survey question 12. This question asked teachers to indicate if materials were used *exclusively (5), predominantly (4), moderately (3), infrequently (2),* or *never (1)*. Leveled books for guided reading (64.6%), fiction trade books (51%), and nonfiction trade books (51%) were used *predominately* by over 50% of the respondents. In contrast, a single or multiple basal series was used *predominately* by 1% and 6% of respondents, respectively. Additionally, 83% of teachers reported they use a single basal *infrequently* or *never* and 87% of the teachers indicated they use a multiple basal series *infrequently* or *never*. When asked to select one material as the foundation for instruction, 69% of the teachers reported that leveled guided reading materials provide the basis for instruction, and 26% indicated that trade books serve as the foundation. Only 5% indicated that a basal is the primary vehicle for instruction. Table 12 includes a complete list of responses for this survey question. This study indicated that current upper elementary teachers primarily use leveled books and trade books for instruction.

Table 12

Frequency of Instructional Materials Use

	Exclusively		Predominantly		Moderately		Infrequently		Never			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	M	SD
Leveled books for guided reading	11	9.7	73	64.6	20	17.7	8	7.1	1	.9	3.75	.76
Fiction trade books	4	4.5	57	51.4	40	36.0	5	4.5	4	3.6	3.63	.75
Nonfiction trade books	4	4.5	57	51.4	37	33.3	8	7.2	4	3.6	3.49	.81
Chapter books	12	10.7	53	47.3	41	36.6	6	5.4	-	-	3.46	.84
Picture trade books	2	1.8	30	27.3	29	26.4	32	29.1	17	15.5	2.99	.94
Commercial classroom libraries	2	1.8	26	23.6	41	37.3	24	21.8	17	15.5	2.75	1.04
Reading software or websites	6	5.4	25	22.3	49	43.8	26	23.2	6	5.4	2.71	.68
Word and/or picture sorts	2	1.8	20	17.7	33	29.2	43	38.1	15	13.3	2.71	1.09
Magazines & newspapers	1	.9	19	16.8	37	32.7	48	42.5	8	7.1	2.62	.88
Other instructional materials (e.g. videos/audiotapes, etc.)	3	2.8	15	13.9	28	25.9	50	46.3	12	11.1	2.61	.80
Test preparation materials	3	2.7	15	13.3	35	31.0	52	46.0	8	7.1	2.58	.90
Readers theater/plays	1	.9	11	9.7	52	46.0	41	36.3	8	7.1	2.57	.99
Poetry	1	.9	10	8.8	58	51.3	43	38.1	1	.9	1.89	.89
Scripted direct instruction	1	.9	9	8.1	17	15.3	31	27.9	53	47.7	1.86	1.01
Multiple basal reading series	-	-	7	6.4	7	6.4	23	20.9	73	66.4	1.79	.93
Literature anthologies	-	-	7	6.4	16	14.7	44	40.4	42	38.5	1.59	.84
General reading skills workbooks	1	.9	6	5.4	15	13.4	36	32.1	54	48.2	1.53	.88
Big books	-	-	2	1.8	7	6.3	26	23.4	76	68.5	1.51	.76
A single basal reading series	1	.9	1	.9	17	15.2	25	22.3	68	60.7	1.41	.69
Phonics workbooks	1	.9	1	.9	9	8.0	33	29.2	69	61.1	3.75	.76

Teaching reading skills and strategies. Teachers were asked how reading skills and strategies were taught in survey question 15 and were provided with nine choices ranging from teaching skills as presented in a basal to not teaching reading skills at all. Teachers could select multiple responses that reflected their instructional planning. Teachers reported that the teaching of skills and strategies is based upon a required pacing guide (79%) or from ongoing informal observations and assessments (66%). Table 13 includes additional information for this question. Only 7% indicated that skills are taught as presented in a basal series, further supporting the information from this study that basal series are not used as a primary material for instruction.

Table 13

Teaching of Reading Skills and Strategies

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I plan the skills and strategies to teach based upon a school or district pacing guide	113	0	1	.79	.41
I teach skills and strategies based upon ongoing informal assessments	113	0	1	.65	.48
I have constructed my own skills program, which I teach in the context of trade books	113	0	1	.38	.49
I supplement the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered	113	0	1	.22	.42
I use the basal as a general guide for teaching skills and strategies	113	0	1	.16	.37
I use the basal to identify reading skills, but I teach them in the context of trade books	113	0	1	.12	.32
I teach the skills and strategies as presented in the basal program	113	0	1	.07	.26
I select skills and strategies from the basal program	113	0	1	.07	.26
I teach reading skills very little or not at all - either from the basal or through trade books	113	0	1	.04	.21

Note: *Participants could select multiple responses.*

Organizing for instruction. To determine how teachers organize for instruction, teachers were asked to select grouping strategies regularly used in the classroom. Teachers could select all of the responses that applied to their classroom. Teachers indicated that ability grouping (78%) and flexible grouping (60%) were used most frequently, with 25% of the teachers reporting that they regularly used a whole-class teaching strategy. When asked which grouping strategy is the primary strategy used for reading instruction, 69% of the teachers

selected ability grouping, 26% chose flexible groups, and only 5% noted that whole-class instruction was the main way of grouping for instruction. The use of ability groups as a primary organizational structure for current instruction is supported through other survey data collected, such as the use of leveled text for instruction and a belief in guided reading instruction. Guided reading instruction using leveled text is typically delivered in small, ability-based groups. Table 14 displays additional information about grouping for instruction.

Table 14

Instructional Groupings

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I use ability groupings to teach reading	113	0	1	.78	.42
I use flexible reading groups in my classroom	113	0	1	.60	.49
I teach reading as a whole-class	113	0	1	.25	.43
I teach reading as an individualized activity	113	0	1	.13	.34
I use another organizational plan	113	0	1	.01	.09

Note: Participants could select multiple responses.

Materials and practices used regularly. Teachers in the current study were also asked to indicate materials, techniques or activities used regularly, defined as at least three times a week. Multiple responses could be selected. The five responses selected by the most participants were comprehension strategy instruction (92%), guided reading groups (86%), teacher read-aloud (84%), leveled guided reading books (81%), and independent reading time (80%). Basal materials were identified by only 9% of the teachers as being used regularly for instruction. Table 15 includes additional information about practices used to teach reading. The data collected for this question further indicate that teachers in upper elementary grades focus on

comprehension instruction, use ability grouping to organize for instruction, believe in guided

reading instruction, and do not rely on basal materials.

Table 15

Materials and Practices Used at Least Three Times a Week

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Comprehension strategy instruction	113	0	1	.92	.27
Guided reading groups	113	0	1	.86	.35
Teacher read-aloud	113	0	1	.84	.37
Leveled guided reading books used instructionally	113	0	1	.81	.39
Independent reading time	113	0	1	.80	.40
Word study	113	0	1	.78	.42
Instruction in comprehension monitoring	113	0	1	.76	.43
Literature response activities	113	0	1	.70	.46
Vocabulary lessons or activities	113	0	1	.69	.46
Use of technology	113	0	1	.65	.48
Instruction in literary elements	113	0	1	.64	.48
Teaching reading strategies with content	113	0	1	.58	.50
Writing workshop time	113	0	1	.58	.50
Trade books used instruction	113	0	1	.56	.50
Reading nonfiction trade books to learn about expository genre	113	0	1	.51	.50
Word identification instruction	113	0	1	.48	.50
Reading workshop time	113	0	1	.48	.50
Literature discussion groups	113	0	1	.29	.46
Test preparation materials	113	0	1	.29	.46
Critical reading lessons	113	0	1	.28	.45
Direct instruction or scripted programs	113	0	1	.18	.38
Basal readers used instructionally	113	0	1	.09	.29

Note: Participants could select multiple responses.

Assessments. Fifty-six percent of teachers in the current study, when asked about their overall approach to assessments, indicated that they use a mix of conventional and informal assessments. When asked which assessments are administered in their classroom, 97% of the participants indicated that they are required to administer a state-mandated competency test. Additionally, 87% of teachers are required to administer district-required informal reading assessments and 86% of teachers give district-required benchmark assessments. Table 16 includes additional information about required assessments.

Table 16

Required Assessments

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
State-mandated competency tests in reading	107	0	1	.97	.17
District-required informal reading tests	107	0	1	.87	.34
District-required benchmark reading assessments	107	0	1	.86	.35
School-required reading assessments	107	0	1	.51	.50
District-required standardized test	107	0	1	.43	.50
Additional required or mandated assessments	107	0	1	.10	.31

When asked to identify how much an assessment influences instructional decisions, based on a scale that includes *considerable (4), moderate (3), little (2),* and *none (1)*, 61% of the teachers indicated that informal reading inventories were used a *considerable* amount for instructional decisions. Basal reader tests were *not* used for instructional decision-making by 73% of the respondents. Teachers reported that informal reading inventories (88.6%), district benchmark tests (70.9%), and running records (70.5%) were of *considerable* or *moderate* help in instructional decision-making. Use of the Virginia Reading SOL test was split between *considerable* (28.8%), *moderate* (36.5%), and *little* (22.1%) help in regard to use for instructional decision-making. The current study saw a majority of upper elementary teachers reporting use of a mix of formal and informal assessments, but many teachers did note that alternative assessments were of *moderate* or *considerable* help for instructional decision-making. Table 17 includes additional information about the usefulness of required assessments for instructional decision-making.

Table 17

Usefulness of Required Assessments for Instructional Decision-Making

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Informal reading inventories	105	1	4	3.47	.77
Running records	105	1	4	2.95	1.00
District created reading benchmarks	103	1	4	2.89	.84
Virginia SOL Reading test	104	1	4	2.82	.99
Individual standardized reading tests	103	1	4	2.74	.93
Observational checklist/anecdotal records	100	1	4	2.67	.93
Student interviews or conferences	103	1	4	2.47	.96
Reading/writing portfolios	104	1	4	2.39	.95
Group standardized reading tests	104	1	4	2.19	1.04
Reading miscue analysis	96	1	4	2.17	1.05
Informal phonics/decoding assessments	100	1	4	1.96	.90
PALS assessment	104	1	4	1.88	1.09
Basal reader unit/level skills test	99	1	4	1.37	.68

A three-point scale was used to rate the amount of pressure participants felt to modify instruction based upon required assessments: *not modified at all* (1), *somewhat* (2), and *very much* (3). When asked about pressure felt to modify instruction (*M* = 2.3, *SD* = 5.7), 35% of the participants indicated that they modified instruction *very much,* over half of the teachers (59%) indicated that they *somewhat* modified instruction, and only 6% noted that instructional was *not modified at all*. Current upper elementary teachers frequently feel pressure to modify instruction in light of mandated assessments.

Adapting instruction for gifted or struggling readers. Many surveyed teachers indicated that they adapt instruction for both gifted (66%) and struggling readers (65%). More teachers stated that there is a pullout program for struggling readers (58%) as compared to

pullout programs for gifted readers (43%). Teachers indicated that the quality of the pullout

program for struggling readers (*M* = 3.81, *SD* = .772) was *exceptional* (19%), *very good* (45%)

or *adequate* (34%), and the quality of the pullout program for gifted readers (*M* = 3.95, *SD* =

.803) was exceptional (23%), very good (42%), or adequate (29%). Table 18 displays additional

data about services for gifted or struggling readers.

Table 18

Additional Help for Gifted or Struggling Readers

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
There is a pullout program for gifted readers	113	0	1	.42	.50
A special teacher for gifted students comes to my classroom	113	0	1	.15	.36
I adapt my classroom instruction for gifted readers	113	0	1	.65	.48
There is a pullout program for struggling readers	113	0	1	.58	.50
A special teacher comes to the classroom to work with struggling readers	113	0	1	.35	.48
I adapt my classroom instruction to meet the needs of students who struggle with reading	113	0	1	.65	.48

Key components of reading instruction. While two of the key components of reading

instruction, comprehension and vocabulary, have been addressed through the comparison with

the Baumann et al. (2000) study, phonics, fluency, and writing can also be examined through this

study. Phonics, a key element of early reading, was not a prevalent instructional practice in the

upper elementary classrooms in the current study. Teachers reported spending a *little* amount of

instructional time on phonics (61.6%) and spelling (49.5%). A *moderate* amount of instructional

time was spent on phonics and spelling by only 22.3% and 37.5% of the teachers, respectively.

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Word sorts, which can support spelling and phonics principles, were used *infrequently* by 38.1% of teachers and *moderately* by 29.2%. While teachers are not spending a large amount of instructional time in activities that address phonics, some instruction is still evident in an upper elementary classroom. Table 11 includes more information on the time spent in all instructional practices included in the survey.

Fluency is also an important component of reading instruction. A *moderate* or *considerable* amount of instructional time is devoted to fluency work by 67.2% of teachers. Materials that support fluency, such as readers' theater, are used *moderately* by 46.0% of teachers. Time spent reading relates to fluency, and teachers noted that a *considerable* or *moderate* amount of instructional time is spent orally (59.3%) or silently (88.5%) reading. Activities that promote fluency appear to be included in the upper elementary instructional practices.

In regard to writing, all teachers reported that some time was spent on the writing process; no teacher selected *none* when asked how much instructional time is devoted to the writing process. The amount of instructional time spent on the writing process varied with the majority of teachers (48.6%) spending a *moderate* amount of time. A *considerable* amount of time was spent by 17.7% of teachers, and a third of the teachers (33.3%) indicated that *little* time is spent on the writing process. Journal writing, a more informal type of writing, is used by 60.2% of teachers for a *moderate* amount of instructional time. Table 11 further details the frequency of instructional use for the writing process and journal writing. Writing, while not used as frequently as other reading instructional practices, is still a solid feature in the upper elementary classroom.

Comparisons Based on SES and Accreditation

Research questions two and three address differences in time allocated to instructional practices, types of materials used, and grouping practices based on SES and accreditation status. Two independent variables were selected to examine SES: Title 1 status and the percentage of free and reduced lunch at the respondent's school. The Title 1 independent variable allowed for three responses: yes, no, or unsure. The percentage of free or reduced lunch variable included four quartiles, at 25% intervals, and a response of unsure. The third independent variable was measured by the participant's indication if their school met the accreditation benchmark in the 2015-16 school year for the Virginia Reading SOL test and included three responses: yes, no, unsure.

Statistical tests that compare means to look for differences between groups were used to address these two research questions. Specifically, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was select to examine difference between groups, based upon each independent variable, for survey questions 11, 12, 29, and 31. The Kruskal-Wallis H test, a non-parametric test, was selected since the responses for these survey questions included nominal data on a scale rather than interval data. Additionally, the data for the independent and dependent variables violated the normal distribution assumption required for an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. The assumptions for this nonparametric test, though, were met.

Mann-Whitney U tests were used to follow up the findings of the Kruskal-Wallis H tests to identify the groups within the independent variable that differed. A Bonferroni correction was applied to reduce the likelihood of a type 1 error when conducting more than one Mann-Whitney U test on the same data. For each survey question analyzed with a Kruskal-

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Wallis H test, two Mann-Whitney *U* tests were conducted on the accreditation status data to compare the three groups (accredited, non-accredited, and *not sure*). Three Mann-Whitney *U* tests were used as follow-up for the percentage of free or free lunch variable since this variable included five groups (0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100%, and *not sure*). Rather than a significance level of .05, a Bonferroni correction was used to reduce the significance levels for the accreditation status and percentage of free and reduced lunch variables to .025 and .0167, respectively. The Title 1 status independent variable contained three possible responses, but no respondents selected the *not sure* response. This allowed for data to be compared over two groups; no Bonferroni correction was used for this variable since a single Mann-Whitney *U* test was needed to compare the two groups. Survey question 22 allowed for the participants to select categorical responses. A Pearson's chi-squared analysis was used to identify differences in responses based upon groups for this question. Table 19 displays the variables and statistical tests conducted in this study.

      Instructional practices. When comparing the instructional time spent on 25 specific reading practices or activities (see survey question 11 in Appendix C), differences were found for instruction in reading vocabulary based upon Title 1 status, $H(1) = 8.195$, $p = .004$, percentage of free and reduced lunch, $H(3) = 12.16$, $p = .016$, and SOL accreditation, $H(2) = 7.21$, $p = .027$. Time spent in test preparation activities was also significant based upon Title 1 status, $H(1) = 9.94$, $p = .002$, and use of language experience approach was significant based upon accreditation status, $H(2), = 6.05$, $p = .048$. Follow up Mann-Whitney *U* tests indicated that Title 1 schools spent more time on vocabulary instruction ($U = 1135$, $r = -.26$, $p = .004$) and test preparation ($U = 1014.5$, $r = -.30$, $p = .002$) than non-Title 1 schools. Schools with 0-25% free and reduced

lunch spent less time on vocabulary instruction than schools with 76-100% free and reduced lunch ($U = 227.5$, $r = -.42$, $p = .05$). There were no differences in vocabulary instruction between schools with 26-50% free and reduce lunch and schools with 76-100% ($U = 150.5$, $r = -.30$, $p = .06$) and between schools with 0-25% free and reduce lunch and schools and schools with 56-75% ($U = 142.50$, $r = -.28$, $p = .05$) with the significance level of .0167 given the Bonferroni correction. Schools that met the accreditation benchmark spent less time on vocabulary instruction than schools that did not meet the benchmark ($U = 520$, $r = -.26$, $p = .001$). Teaching reading vocabulary appears to occur more frequently in schools with Title 1 status, a higher percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, and in schools that did not meet the benchmark on the 2015-16 Virginia Reading SOL assessment. Title 1 schools also spent more time in test preparation activities, but no difference in time spent preparing for tests was noted between levels of free and reduced lunch or based upon accreditation status.

While a language experience approach was also statistically significant in the Kruskal-Wallis *H test*, based upon accreditation status, a Mann-Whitney follow-up test did not yield any significant differences between schools that met accreditation and schools that did not meet accreditation. The statistical difference detected through the Kruskal-Wallis *H test* was due to differences between the *not sure* group and the accredited group.

Materials used for instruction. A Kruskal-Wallis *H test* was also used to examine differences between groups for reading materials used by teachers (survey question 12). No differences were detected based upon accreditation status. Statistically significant differences were detected for 12 instructional materials based upon Title 1 status, and follow-up Mann-Whitney *U* tests noted effect sizes ranges from -.20 to -.31. Title 1 schools are more likely than

non-Title 1 schools to use literature anthologies, fiction and nonfiction trade books, commercial

libraries, phonics workbooks, general reading skill workbooks, test preparation materials,

scripted programs, word sorts, big books, picture books, and reading software. Tables 19 and 20

summarize the findings for survey question 12 in relationship to Title 1 status.

Table 19

Instructional Materials Use Based Upon Title 1 Status

	Kruskal-Wallis (H)	df	Mann-Whitney (U)	r
General reading skill workbooks	11.09*	1	989.5**	-.31
Phonics workbooks	10.19*	1	1069.0**	-.30
Commercial libraries	9.045	1	988.0**	-.29
Word or picture sorts	8.60*	1	1061.5**	-.28
Nonfiction trade books	7.00*	1	1075.0**	-.25
Test preparation	7.26*	1	1111.0**	-.25
Literature Anthology	5.86*	1	1063.5**	-.23
Big books	6.03*	1	1160.0**	-.23
Fiction trade books	5.60*	1	1119.0**	-.22
Scripted/Direct Instruction	5.52*	1	1121.0**	-.22
Picture trade books	4.83*	1	321.5*	-.21
Reading software	4.55*	1	237.5*	-.20

$* p < .05, ** p < .025$

Table 20

Mean Ranks for Instructional Materials Use

	Title 1 Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Literature anthologies	yes	44	63.33	2786.50
	no	65	49.36	3208.50
Fiction trade books	yes	44	64.07	2819.00
	no	67	50.70	3397.00
Phonics workbooks	yes	46	67.26	3094.00
	no	67	49.26	3347.00
General reading skills workbooks	yes	45	44.99	2024.50
	no	67	64.23	4303.50
Test preparation materials	yes	46	66.35	3052.00
	no	67	50.58	3389.00
Scripted direct instruction program	yes	45	64.09	2884.00
	no	66	50.48	3332.00
Word and/or picture sorts	yes	46	67.42	3102.50
	no	67	49.84	3339.50
Big books	yes	46	63.28	2911.00
	no	65	50.85	3305.00
Nonfiction trade books	yes	44	65.07	2863.00
	no	67	50.04	3353.00
Commercial classroom libraries	yes	45	66.04	2972.00
	no	65	48.20	3133.00
Picture trade books	yes	45	63.27	2847.00
	no	65	50.12	3258.00
Reading software or websites	yes	45	64.04	2412.50
	no	67	51.43	3473.50

Based upon the percentage of free and reduced lunch, a statistical difference was found for the use of direct instruction/scripted materials, $H(4) = 9.58$, $p = .048$, commercial classroom libraries, $H(4) = 12.16$, $p = .02$, and reading software, $H(4) = 13.23$, $p = .01$. Follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were used to compare the data based upon the specific intervals of free and reduced lunch. A significant difference in the use of direct instruction materials was found

between schools with 0-25% free and reduced lunch and schools with 76%-100% ($U = 219.5$, $r =$ -.376, $p = 005$). Schools with 0-25% free and reduced lunch and schools with 76-100% also significantly differed in the use of reading software ($U = 312.5$, $r = -.32$, $p = .015$), and in the use of commercial classroom libraries ($U = 78.5$, $r = -.46$, $p = .001$). No statistical differences were found when comparing other intervals of free and reduced lunch for these three instructional materials. Schools with the highest percentage of free and reduced lunch were more likely to use direct instruction or scripted programs and reading software than schools with the lowest percentage of free and reduced lunch. Additionally, schools with the highest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch are more likely to use a commercial classroom library than schools with 26-50% free and reduced lunch.

Assessments. Participants were asked to rate the use of 14 specific assessments in terms of helpfulness for instructional decision-making on a four-point scale: *considerable (4), moderate (3), little (2), none (1)*. A Kruskal-Wallis *H test* was used to look for difference in use of assessment information for instructional decision-making. Based upon Title 1 status, significant differences in the use of the Virginia SOL Reading test, $H(1) = 9.862$, $p = .002$, and the PALS assessment, $H(1) = 6.807$, $p = .009$, were found. Table 21 includes more information about the means for these groups. When looking for differences based upon the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, significant differences on use of the PALS assessment, $H(4) = 10.137$, $p = .038$, and informal reading inventories, $H(4) = 10.940$, $p = .027$, were found. No differences were found between groups based upon accreditation status. Mann-Whitney *U* tests were used to follow up the Kruskal-Wallis *H* tests and confirmed differences between groups based upon Title 1 status for use of SOL assessment information ($U = 840.0$, $r =$

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-.31, $p = .002$) and PALS information ($U = 936.0$, $r = -.26$, $p = .009$). Table 22 includes more

information about this data.

Table 21

Use of Assessments for Instructional Decision-Making

	Kruskal-Wallis		Mann-Whitney	
	(*H*)	df	(*U*)	*r*
Virginia SOL reading test	9.86*	1	840.00*	-.31
PALS	6.8*	1	936.00*	-.26

Note: * p < .01

Table 22

Mann-Whitney Ranks for Usefulness Of Assessments

	Title 1 status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Virginia SOL Reading test	yes	41	63.51	2604.00
	no	63	45.33	2856.00
PALS assessment	yes	41	61.17	2508.00
	no	63	46.86	2952.00

The Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to compare groups by the percentage of students

receiving free and reduced lunch for the helpfulness of the PALS assessment or informal reading

inventories. No statistically significant differences, based upon the percentage of students

receiving free and reduced lunch, were detected. Twenty-one respondents indicated they were

unsure of the percentage of free and reduced lunch students in their school. Any differences

found through the Kruskal-Wallis *H test* with this independent variable were related to

differences between the *not sure* group of respondents and group with 51-75% percent of

students receiving free and reduced lunch ($U = 42.5$, $r = -.55$, $p = .002$).

To understand how much pressure from required assessments impacts instruction, teachers were asked in question 32 to rate the degree to which their teaching was modified (*very much, somewhat, not at all*) based upon mandatory assessments. A Kruskal-Wallis *H test* was used to look for differences between groups for this test. No differences were detected based upon Title 1 status, $H(1) = .101$, $p = .751$, percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, $H(4) = 2.86$, $p =. 582$, or accreditation status, $H(2) = 3.61$, $p = .164$. Pressure to modify instruction is equally likely to be felt regardless of SES or accreditation.

Instructional grouping.

A chi-square analysis was used to investigate differences in the foundational reading materials and primary organizational structure, survey question 22. A Pearson's chi-squared calculation was used to create a table for the expected outcomes. The three foundational materials (basal, trade, and leveled books) were compared based on Title 1 status (yes, no) with a 2x3 table, the five choices for the percentage of free and reduced lunch (0-25, 26-50, 51-75, 76-100, not sure) with a 5x3 table, and accreditation status (yes, no, not sure) with a 3x3 table. Chi-squared analysis was followed up with a Fisher's Exact test since some of the expected values in the tables were less than five. No differences were detected based upon any of the independent variables on instructional grouping. A description of the analysis is located in Table 23.

Table 23

Chi-squared Analysis For Foundational Reading Materials

Survey Question	IV	DF	Pearson's Chi-squared	Fisher's Exact
13	Title 1 status	2	.455	.498
13	Free and reduced lunch	8	5.998	5.619
13	Accreditation status	4	5.098	5.070

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

A primary purpose of this study was to describe current reading instruction in upper elementary classrooms and to consider how the results compare with instruction described in a study conducted seventeen years ago. The second purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed between groups based upon social-economic status and accreditation status. Schools in seven districts, representing a variety of communities and SES, agreed to participate in the study with 113 educators providing useable survey responses.

Comparison with the Baumann et al. (2000) Study

Reading instructional beliefs and goals. While a direct comparison to data in the Baumann et al. (2000) study could not be made due to variations in the population surveyed, data in this study revealed some similarities and differences in reading instructional beliefs and goals. Pressley (2006) defined balanced literacy as instruction that includes both exposure to authentic literature and explicit skill instruction. Teachers in the current study (88%) indicated use of a balanced literacy approach. Similar to the teachers in the current study, 89% of the K-5 teachers in the Baumann et al. (2000) study believed in a balanced approach to instruction, and this was the most selected instructional belief in both studies. Support of a balanced approach to reading instruction also was evident in the current study by the reported use of materials, instructional strategies, and grouping practices. Authentic materials, such as fiction books, nonfiction books, and chapter books, were selected by respondents as frequently used instructional materials.

Explicit reading instruction was also evident through the use of ability-based groups, leveled text, reading strategy instruction, and mini-lessons. Data from the current study support the use of a balanced approach to reading instruction.

Teachers in the current study indicated a belief in guided reading as an instructional approach. Guided reading and the use of leveled books for instruction were not represented in the Baumann et al. (2000) study. This could be attributed to the newness of this instructional practice when data were collected. Fountas and Pinnell published their important work, *Guiding Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children,* in 1996, only four years prior to the Baumann et al. (2000) study. While guided reading, as an instructional practice, might have been present in K-5 classrooms during the Baumann et al. (2000) study, it was not included on the survey instrument. Even though participants of the Baumann et al. (2000) study could not select guided reading as a response, the collective data gathered did not reflect guided reading principles. Findings of the Baumann study, such as a focus on whole-class instruction and a use of basal materials in conjunction with trade books, did not fully align with a guided reading focus.

Guided reading allows teachers to be able to differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000). The use of this instructional approach was evident in many responses to the current study. Teachers indicated that a considerable amount of time was spent in a guided reading format, running records and informal reading inventories were noted as helpful for instructional decision-making and as mentioned earlier, leveled guided reading books were used as primary instructional material and ability groups were a primary grouping structure. In most cases, these instructional practices and materials were in the top three selected responses for each specific question.

The identified goals of reading instruction in the current study also coincided with the goals identified in the Baumann et al. (2000) K-5 study. The top two goals for reading instruction for K-5 teachers in the Baumann et al. (2000) study and 3-5 teachers in the current study were developing independent readers (94%) and developing skillful and strategic readers (88%). Teachers continue to want to develop independent readers who are skillful and strategic.

Instructional time spent on reading activities. When considering how time is allocated, many similarities exist between the Baumann et al. (2000) study and the current study. Both studies found that a considerable amount of time is spent on comprehension instruction, with 99% of current teachers reporting they spend a *considerable* or a *moderate* amount of time on this area. Two instructional practices that were not included in the Baumann et al. (2000) study, guided reading and reading strategy instruction, were in the top three practices that received a *considerable* or a *moderate* amount of instructional time in the current study. Teacher read-aloud and vocabulary instruction completed the top three instructional practices used by K-5 teachers in the Baumann et al. (2000) study. While these two instructional practices were not in the top three responses for the current study, upper elementary teachers in the current study indicated that they spend a *considerable* or a *moderate* amount of time on teacher read-aloud (74.3%) and vocabulary instruction (84.1%).

Interestingly, previous research studies documented that while teachers valued comprehension and strategy instruction, little time was spent delivering instruction in comprehension (Durkin, 1978-1979; Ness, 2011; Pressley, 2006; and Pressley et al., 1998). While this survey does not have the means to verify if comprehension instruction was present in classrooms, current teachers perceived comprehension instruction as a valuable instructional

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practice and self-reported that a large amount of instructional time was devoted to it. Ninety-nine percent of the teachers in the current study reported that a *moderate* to *considerable* amount of instructional time was spent on reading comprehension instruction, and 91% of the teachers said they spend a *moderate* to *considerable* amount of time on reading strategy instruction. Additionally, previous research identified reading instructional practices used by effective teachers, such as read-aloud, use of trade books, reading in content areas, and time spent reading silently (Allington, 2002; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Morrow et al., 2002; Pressley et al., 2007; and Pressley et al., 1997). Teachers in the current study self-reported that *moderate* to *considerable* instructional time was spent on these key aspects of reading instruction. It appears that contemporary teachers use instructional practices that have been shown to be effective practices.

Materials used for instruction. The teachers in the current study indicated that a basal is used infrequently for instruction. This differs from the Baumann et al. (2000) study, which saw that 83% of the K-5 teachers surveyed used a combination of a basal series with fiction and non-fiction trade books. Basal instruction was also a key focus for instruction as indicated in the Austin and Morrison (1963) study. Current upper elementary teachers appear to rely on leveled guided reading materials as the foundation for instruction supplemented with fiction and nonfiction trade books. When asked about the frequency of use, 64.6% of teachers indicated that leveled guided reading books were used *predominantly* for instruction and 51.4% noted that fiction and non-fiction trade books were used *predominantly*. Basal readers, on the other hand, were *never* used by 60.7% of teachers. A move towards leveled books as a primary material for

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instruction is supported by the use of ability grouping and marks a point of change from the instruction described in the 1963 and 2000 studies.

Teaching reading skills and strategies. Valli and Buese (2007) found that pacing guides played an important part in guiding instruction. Pacing guides provide the roadmaps for ensuring the curriculum is taught in order to prepare students for state reading tests. District-created pacing guides appear to be a guide for the teaching of skills and strategies for teachers in the current study, and 78.8% of the respondents stated these guides are used to identify skills and strategies to teach. Approximately two-thirds of respondents (65.5%) indicated that skills and strategies to teach are identified through informal assessments, and one-third (38.1%) of teachers surveyed construct their own skills program. Teachers also reported that a basal series was not used as a guide for teaching skills and strategies. While a majority of the teachers in the current study follow a district pacing guide, teachers are also using assessments and instructional materials to identify skills to teach.

Organizing for instruction. The Baumann et al. (2000) study indicated that a whole-class instructional format was prevalent among K-5 teachers, and 52% of the teachers surveyed indicated this was the primary organization structure for instruction. The current study, though, found that upper elementary teachers favored ability grouping as a primary organizational pattern and only 5% of the teachers in the current student use whole-class instruction as the primary organizational strategy. While this differs from the Baumann et al. (2000) study, it does resemble what was found in the Austin and Morrison (1963) study. Teachers in the 1963 study indicated that they used ability grouping within the classroom. The findings of the current study

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show a shift back from a whole-class instructional perspective to instruction based upon homogeneous ability groups.

While ability groups were identified as the primary organizational structure, teachers in the current study indicated that multiple grouping structures are used for instruction. When asked to select all grouping structures used for instruction, ability groups, flexible groups, and whole-class lessons were used for instruction by 77.9%, 60.2%, and 24.8% of teachers, respectively. Interestingly, while whole-class lessons were used by fewer teachers than ability and flexible groups, 88.5% of the teachers indicated a *considerable* or *moderate* amount of instructional time is spent on whole-class mini-lessons. While instruction appears to be delivered using ability-based groups, teachers still present some content in whole groups. Previous research findings showed that more effective teachers used multiple grouping structures for instruction (Allington & Johnson, 2002; Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2011). The use of a variety of grouping structures by teachers in the current study shows that teachers are varying the grouping structures for instructional purposes rather than relying on one main method of delivering instruction.

Assessments. Teachers in the Baumann et al. (2000) study were moving towards the use of alternative assessments and identified reading and writing portfolios, observational checklists, running records, and student conferences as the most helpful assessments for instructional decisions among K-5 teachers. Current upper elementary teachers used a variety of assessments and found many informal assessments, such as running records and informal reading inventories, helpful for instructional decision-making. While some current teachers also used

reading and writing portfolios, observational checklists, and student conferences, these were not indicated as being as helpful as other assessments.

Differing from the Baumann et al. (2000) study, upper elementary teachers in the current study reported district benchmark tests and informal reading inventories as helpful for instructional decision-making. Additionally, district-created benchmark assessments were required by 82% of the current teachers surveyed. This is a relatively new form of assessment designed to help schools improve performance on high-stakes tests and was not included in the Baumann et al. (2000) study (Perie, et al., 2009; Olson, 2005). Benchmark assessments are diagnostic tests designed to help schools improve performance on high-stakes tests and are increasing in usage (Perie, et al., 2009; Olson, 2005). While this is a mandated assessment, 71% of teachers did indicate that this was of *moderate* to *considerable* help when planning for instruction.

Given the emphasis on accreditation measured through a high-stake assessment, such as the Virginia Reading SOL test, it was hypothesized that teachers might modify instruction to reflect this test. Teachers in the current study indicated that they modified instruction *somewhat* to *very much* based upon assessment pressure. This is an increase from the Baumann et al. (2000) study that indicated K-5 teachers "did not report feeling particularly affected by mandated assessments," and reported a mean of 1.8 (range: 1-3) for this question (p. 353). This finding is supported by previous studies that showed teachers modify instruction to match high-stakes assessment (Jones & Egley, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Pedulla, et al., 2003; Plank & Condliffe, 2013; Valli & Buese, 2007; and Valli & Chambliss, 2007).

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While teachers indicated a pressure to modify instruction to match assessments, 31.0% of the teachers said that test preparation materials were *moderately* used and 46% indicated that they were used *infrequently*. This aligns with the amount of instructional time spent on test preparation. A *little* amount of instructional time was devoted to test preparation by 48.6% of teachers, 36.9% spent a *moderate* amount of time, and only 12.6% spent a *considerable* amount of time. It appears that while teachers do feel pressure to modify instruction, test preparation practice does not constitute a large portion of the reading instructional block. It is important to note, though, that Title 1 classrooms were more likely to spend time on test preparation activities than non-Title 1 classrooms. This suggests that lower income students may be exposed to test preparation activities more than high income peers. Since Allington (2002) found that exemplary teachers spent less time in test preparation activities, it is encouraging that teachers self-reported spending more instructional time teaching reading rather than test-taking skills in many classrooms. It is not so promising that lower income students spend more time in test preparation since this could reduce time spent in authentic reading practices.

Adapting instruction for gifted or struggling readers. Current teachers adapted instruction to meet the needs of struggling (66%) and gifted readers (65%). Slightly more than half of the respondents (58%) indicated that there was a pull-out program for struggling readers, and 35.4% of the teachers surveyed reported that a special teacher came to the classroom to work with students. Less than half of the participants (43%), responded that there was a pull-out program for gifted students, and only 15.4% of the teachers noted that a special teacher came to the classroom to work with gifted students. This aligns with the Baumann et al. (2000) study that found the support programs were available for struggling readers more than for gifted

readers. Upper elementary classroom teachers continue to be presented with a range of readers and many teachers are responsible for adapting instruction to meet their needs. It appears that there is support for struggling readers through a pull-out program or a special teacher that visits the classroom. Support for gifted readers, in addition to the classroom teacher, is less readily available.

Key Components of reading instruction. Phonics is one key component of reading instruction. While more emphasis is placed on phonics instruction in early elementary classrooms, upper elementary teachers in the current study reported that some phonics instruction did occur. While 61.6% stated that *little* instructional time was spent on phonics, 22.3% of the respondents reported that a *moderate* amount of time was spent on phonics. Spelling and word study are two activities that support letter-sound relationships. Very few teachers indicated that a *considerable* amount of time was spent on spelling (5.4%) or word study (12.4%) activities. Teachers reported, though, that *moderate* time was spent on spelling (37.8%,) or word study (53.1%). Word study, activities that allow for the manipulation or examination of word parts, appear to be used more than traditional spelling activities. Kieffer & Lesaux (2007) found that morphological understanding was a predictor of comprehension. Phonics, or letter-sound knowledge instruction, is still present in some activities in an upper elementary classroom, and having strong phonics and morphological knowledge will help students decode unfamiliar words while reading to access the meaning of the text.

Fluency, another key component, of reading instruction was also represented in the current study. While only 15.9% of the teachers reported spending a considerable amount of time on fluency, over half (51.3%) indicated that a moderate amount of time was spent in this

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area. Fluent readers are able to read the text accurately, at a good pace, and with expression.

Fluency can affect comprehension, and disfluent students use more cognitive capacity decoding

words at the expense of comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston,

2009). Silent reading, one way to build fluency in an upper elementary classroom, was used a

considerable or *moderate* amount of time by 88.5% of the teachers. Time spent reading has been

shown to increase achievement (Allington, 1983; Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Taylor,

Frye & Maruyama, 1990). Teachers in the current study appear to incorporate fluency

instruction and provide students with time to build fluency through silent reading.

Writing instruction was represented in the study through the use of the writing process or

writing workshop, journal writing, and responses to reading. Just under half (48.6%) of the

teachers reported spending a moderate amount of time on the writing process or writing

workshop, and 17.5% of the respondents indicated a considerable amount of time was spent on

these activities. Surprisingly, almost a third (33.3%) of the respondents reported that little time

was spent on writing. Writing is a key component of reading instruction and has a synchronistic

relationship with reading development (Bear, 1991).

This study did not investigate the reasons for not spending more instructional time on

writing, but it is concerning that more time is not devoted to developing writing skills through

the writing process or writing workshop model. It is possible that schools are sacrificing writing

instruction to focus on reading instruction in order to prepare students for the Virginia SOL

Reading test. The Virginia SOL writing test was recently eliminated, and it is possible that less

time is spent writing since it is not a tested subject. Reading has been found to be taught at the

expense of other subject areas in the extant research (Afflerbach, 2005; Coburn et al., 2011;

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Hamilton, 2003; Jones & Egley, 2004; Valli et al., 2008; White, Sturtevant & Dunlap, 2002). While the current study did not find any statistical differences in the use of the writing process/writing workshop as an instructional practice, based upon SES or accreditation status, it is possible that pressure from assessments impacts the instructional focus placed on this area.

Summary. In the last seventeen years, it appears that reading instruction has moved from whole-group instruction to ability-based grouping. Teachers identify with a balanced literacy philosophy, but guided reading is also a prevalent instructional belief. The rise of district benchmark assessments and district-created pacing guides are noted, marking new territory for reading instruction and assessment. Considerable instructional time is still spent on reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction, but a considerable amount of time is also spent on reading strategy instruction and guided reading instruction. Guided reading, independent reading and content area reading, practices identified by Allington (2000) as instructional practices used by effective teachers, are also present in the current study. A comparison of trends from the Baumann et al. (2000) study, the Austin and Morrison (1963) study and the current study are presented in Table 24.

Table 24

Comparison with Baumann et al. (2000) and Austin and Morrison (1963)

Category	Current Study	2000 Baumann et. al findings	1963 Austin and Morrison findings
Philosophy and Goals	• Balanced perspective with belief in guided reading • More reliance on leveled books and trade books than on a basal program • Common goal to develop independent, motivated, skillful readers who use literacy to positively affect the world	• Balanced, eclectic perspective pervaded • Major theme of systematic instruction in decoding along with a literature-rich environment • Common goal was to produce skillful, fluent, motivated, independent readers	• Heavy reliance on basal materials suggested a skills-based perspective • Teachers promoted independent, self-selected reading • Phonics taught along with other word identification skills
Instructional Time and Materials	• Use of leveled guided reading materials • Considerable time dedicated to comprehension, strategy instruction, and guided reading • Little use of basal materials	• Considerable time dedicated to reading and language arts instruction and activities • Basal and trade books used in combination	• Considerable time dedicated to teaching reading skills • High reliance on basal readers, with infrequent use of trade books
Organizing for Instruction	• Ability grouping is primary organizational structure	• Whole-class reading instruction common with some flexible groups	• Ability groups predominate for reading instruction

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Reading Assessment	• Teachers use alternative assessments • Standardized tests still mandated and administered • Running records, informal reading inventories, and district benchmarks are identified as helpful assessments.	• Teachers commonly used alternative assessment measures and procedures • Standardized tests still mandated and administered • Teachers report alternative assessments useful; administration reported standardized tests useful	• Standardized tests administered almost universally but utilized little • Basal tests used occasionally • Informal tests used infrequently

Note. Adapted from "The first R yesterday and today: U.S. elementary reading instructional practices reported by teachers and administrators," by Baumann, J.F, Hoffman, J.V., Duffy-Hester, A.M., and Ro, J.M., 2000, *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(3), p. 346-347. Copyright 2000 by International Reading Association. Reprinted with permission.

Comparisons Based upon SES and Accreditation

A second purpose of this study was to examine differences in materials, practices, and grouping patterns based upon SES and accreditation status. Two measures of SES, the percentage of free and reduced lunch and Title 1 status, were used. Accreditation status was determined based upon achieving the proficiency benchmark on the 2015-16 Virginia Reading SOL test.

Instructional practices. Some differences in instructional practices were found, based upon SES or accreditation status. It appears that schools with higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch, Title 1 schools, and schools that did not pass the proficiency benchmark spend more time in vocabulary instruction, possibly seeking to teach explicit vocabulary to help students achieve success on the SOL test. Diamond and Spillane (2004) found that schools on probationary status focus on testing areas that would directly lead to passing, such as spending more time on vocabulary, in order to do well on the assessment. Additionally, research has indicated that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds begin school with fewer words in their vocabulary, and the discrepancy in the amount of time spent on vocabulary instruction, based upon Title 1 status and the percentage of free and reduced lunch, could be influencing teachers as they try to overcome this deficit (Hart & Risley, 2003). Schools with higher SES and those that meet proficiency do not spend as must time on vocabulary instruction providing more time for other literacy instruction.

Materials used for instruction. When looking at instructional materials, the highest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch (76% to 100%) were more likely to use a direct instruction or scripted literacy program than schools with the lowest percentage of students

receiving free and reduced lunch (0-25%). Other instructional materials, such as a literature anthology, fiction and nonfiction trade books, commercial libraries, phonics workbooks, reading skill workbooks, test preparation materials, scripted programs, picture sorts, big books, picture books, and reading software, were more likely to be used by Title 1 schools than by non-Title 1 schools. Since no differences were found based upon accreditation status, schools that did not meet the proficiency benchmark were equally likely to use the same instructional materials as the schools that did meet the benchmark. Differences in reading materials used for instruction appears to differ based upon SES, and use of some materials could be tied to the increased funds available for the purchase of instructional materials in Title 1 schools.

Instructional grouping. Grouping practices were also examined as part of this study. No differences were found based upon SES or accreditation status; each group was equally likely to use ability groups, flexible groups, or whole-class instruction. In fact, most of the participants indicated that ability grouping is the preferred organizational structure used for reading instruction. The use of ability grouping as a primary organizational structure supports the belief in guided reading instruction reflected through other survey data related to the use of leveled reading materials.

Assessments. The perceived helpfulness of assessments for instructional decision-making also differed based upon SES. Title 1 schools are more likely than non-Title 1 schools to use the Virginia Reading SOL test and the PALS assessment for instructional decision-making. No differences were found based upon the percentage of free and reduced lunch or accreditation status. Previous research has found that teachers often feel pressure to modify instruction to match assessments (Jones & Egley, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Pedulla et al., 2003). While

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94% of the teachers in the current study indicated that they felt *somewhat* to *very much* pressure, no differences in the amount of pressure felt were noted based upon SES or accreditation status. From this study, it appears that teachers in Title 1 schools may seek to match instructional materials to assessments, such as the Virginia Reading SOL test.

Previous studies also found that teachers required to give high-stakes tests spent time in test preparation activities (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Jones & Egley, 2008; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Pedulla, et al. 2003; Valli & Buese, 2007; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Very few teachers in the current study reported that a *considerable* amount of time was spent on test preparation. Only 36.9% spent a *moderate* and 48.6% of the teachers spent a *little* instructional time. While test preparation activities are taught, they do not seem to be relied on heavily and teachers appear to spend more time in other instructional activities. No differences were found in the time spent on test preparation activities based upon accreditation status. Title 1 teachers, though, were more likely to spend time in test preparation activities than teachers in non-Title 1 schools.

Summary. While some differences were found based upon SES and accreditation status, for the most part, many areas of reading instruction reflected no differences. This is encouraging in that current reading instruction, regardless of SES or accreditation status, appears to be similar in grouping practices and most reading instructional practices and materials used. Many of the differences found are attributed to materials used for instruction on a regular basis, which could be a function of increased funds available for material purchase in Title 1 schools. While Title 1 schools were more likely to use test preparation activities, no differences were found in the amount of pressure teachers feel to modify instruction.

In summary, this study sought to describe current reading instruction and to identify

differences in practices, materials, and instructional groupings in upper elementary classrooms

between teachers working in schools with various SES and accreditation statuses. Reading

instruction still tends to reflect a balanced literacy perspective, but an emphasis on guided

reading instruction is noted in current classrooms. Some differences were noted in the types of

materials used on a regular basis, but schools, regardless of SES or accreditation status, were

equally likely to use the majority of reading instructional or assessment practices investigated

through this study.

Limitations

Several limitations are present in this study. First, data were self-reported and could

reflect a social-bias towards instructional practices that are considered best practices rather than

what occurs in the classroom. Survey questions were not required and teachers could elect not to

answer a question. This resulted in an uneven number of responses for some questions and

unanswered questions could have impacted the analysis. While every attempt was made to

ensure the data collected reflect the beliefs of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade classroom teachers,

a teacher from another placement could have participated. Additionally, surveys were completed

anonymously. While this decision was made to encourage honesty in reporting, there is no way

to determine if a participant completed the survey multiple times. Since no identifiers were

collected to determine the participant's school or school district, it is not possible to determine if

responses reflect the use of mandated practices or materials. Lastly, the overall sample reflects

the beliefs of teachers of three distinct grade levels from seven school districts in central

Virginia. The findings of this study cannot be extrapolated to other states or grades, and findings cannot be directly compared to the Baumann et al. (2000) study of K-5 teachers.

Implications for Future Research

Many opportunities for future research stem from the current study. While this study described instructional practices and materials used in an upper elementary classroom, the nature of the survey instrument did not allow for the collection of more in-depth information. Information about writing instruction, time allocated to other subject areas, how instruction is modified to match assessments, how guided reading is taught, and how comprehension is taught in the upper elementary classroom are avenues for future research.

Teachers in the current student indicated that a considerable (27.7%) or moderate (59.8%) of time is spent reading in the content area. Other studies have found that, in light of high stakes testing, more time is spent on reading instruction at the expense of other subjects (Afflerbach, 2005; Coburn et al., 2011; Hamilton, 2003; Jones & Egley, 2004; Valli et al., 2008; White, Sturtevant, & Dunlap, 2002). The current study, though, did not include questions to explore this area. Future research investigating how teachers balance reading instruction with other content areas could be valuable since integrating reading into the content areas could help to allocate time more efficiently between reading instruction and other content areas.

An attempt was made in this study to determine the amount of time teachers spend in different types of reading instruction during the elementary day. Teachers were prompted to enter the number of minutes spent in different activities throughout the language arts block. Data collected through these questions were unusable since it was difficult to determine if answers were plausible in a school day and if the participants followed the correct scale (minutes). As a

result, the data for this question were not included in the analysis. An important extension of the current study would be to explore how much time is allocated to specific reading instructional practices in the upper elementary classroom.

Teachers also indicated that they feel pressure to modify instruction to match the required assessments. This study did not address how instruction is modified or to what extent instruction is modified based upon pressures to perform on assessments. Future research that investigates how teachers modify instruction logically extends the current study.

Guided reading is reported to be a prevalent instructional practice, based upon the data collected through this survey. While this study found that teachers believed in a guided reading approach, used leveled texts for instruction, and employ an ability-based grouping structure, more information is needed to understand what happens in guided reading group. Future research that documents the instructional practices used by teachers in a guided reading group would be a valuable extension.

Writing instruction was only cursorily included in the study with the writing process represented as a response choice in one question. McCarthey (2008) found that teachers in higher SES schools had more flexibility with writing instruction, including the format of instruction. While the current study did not find any statistical differences in the use of the writing process as an instructional practice, based upon SES or accreditation status, future research could explore the flexibility teachers feel in regard to delivering writing instruction.

Lastly, comprehension instruction is identified through this study as an important instructional practice and teachers indicated that they allocate a large amount of instruction time to comprehension instruction. Previous research, though, has documented that although teachers

value comprehension instruction, it isn't often directly taught (Durkin, 1978-79; Ness, 2011;

Pressley, 2006; Pressley et al., 1998). Since teachers self-reported the instructional time

allocated to comprehension instruction, exploring how teachers teach comprehension would be

an important addition to the literature base.

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Appendix A

Email Invitation to Participate

Dear fellow Virginia educator,

I am a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University, and I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. Last week you received an email invitation to participate in my project. If you have not yet completed the survey, this is a reminder that the survey will be open until October 17, 2016. As a 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade teacher in a central Virginia elementary school, I would like to have your thoughts represented in my study. If you have already completed the survey, please disregard this reminder.

My study is entitled *Upper Elementary Reading Instruction in the Age of Accountability.* The purpose of this study is to collect information about current instructional practices, materials, and activities used to teach reading in a modern upper elementary classroom. The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. As a thank-you for participating in this study, you will have the option to be entered into a raffle for one of two Amazon $25 gift certificates. At the conclusion of the survey, you will be prompted to enter an email address if you wish to participate in the raffle. All email addresses entered will be kept separate from the survey data and will only be used as a raffle entry and for raffle notification purposes. Within

two weeks of the survey's conclusion, raffle winners will be notified and an electronic gift certificate will be delivered via email to the winner's address.

Participating in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

By agreeing to participate in the study, you will be giving your consent for the researcher to include your responses in her data analysis. No identifying information, such as your name, school, or school district, will be collected.

If you decide to participate after reading this letter, you can access the survey by clicking on this link: <insert link to survey>. An informational letter regarding consent will appear on the first screen of the survey.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me with my doctoral research. The data collected will provide useful information regarding current reading instructional practices in upper elementary classrooms.

If you have any questions, please contact me at saundersch2@vcu.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Joan A. Rhodes, at jarhodes2@vcu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the VCU Office of Research at 804.827.2157.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christina Saunders

Appendix B

Informational Sheet – First Page of Survey

This survey is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Purpose: The title of this study is *Upper Elementary Reading Instruction in the Age of Accountability*. The purpose of this research study is to collect information about current instructional practices, materials, and activities used to teach reading in an upper elementary classroom. You are asked to participate in this research study because you teach 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade in central Virginia.

Description of your involvement: If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. You will spend approximately 20-30 minutes completing the questionnaire at a place and time that is convenient for you.

Risks and discomforts: There are no known risks related with your participation in this study.

Benefits to you and others: Your participation can provide information about current instructional practices in an upper elementary classroom. This information will help to identify current instructional trends.

Costs and compensation: There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend completing the online survey. At the conclusion of the survey, you will be prompted to enter an email address if you wish to participate in a raffle for one of two $25 Amazon gift certificates. All email addresses entered will be kept separate from the survey data and will only be used as a raffle entry and for raffle notification purposes. Within two weeks of the survey's conclusion, raffle winners will be notified and an electronic gift certificate will be delivered via email to the winner's address.

Alternatives: The alternative to participating in this study is to not participate in this study.

Confidentiality: No identifying information (e.g., names, schools, or school districts) will be collected during the survey completion. Electronic data files will be secured using password protection. If you choose to participate in the voluntary raffle your email address will be kept separate from your survey responses. The information collected will be used in a doctoral defense and may be published in scientific journals or presented at professional meetings, but the data will not identify any individual, school, or school district.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal: Your participation in this study is your choice. You are free to decide not to participate at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the survey. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your relationship with your school, district, or Virginia Commonwealth University.

Questions: You may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about this research, contact Christina Saunders at

saundersch2@vcu.edu or Joan Rhodes at jarhodes@vcu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the VCU Office of Research at 804.827.2157. You may also contact the VCU Office of Research for general questions, concerns, or complaints about this research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else. Additional information about participation in research studies can be found at http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm.

Consent: By clicking the next button to enter the questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in this study. You are also indicating that you have read and understood this informational letter about consent. Please print a copy of this informational letter for your records if you so desire.

Survey

This study is intended for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers. If you select a teaching position other than as a 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade classroom teacher, you will be prompted to end the survey.

Thank you for taking the time to take this survey.

1. What is your **current teaching position**?
   ☐ K-5 classroom teacher of just one grade level

   ☐ K-5 classroom teacher in a multi-grade class

   ☐ Special reading teacher (e.g., Title 1)

   ☐ Special education teacher

   ☐ other

   I teach
   ☐ PK
   ☐ K
   ☐ 1
   ☐ 2
   ☐ 3
   ☐ 4
   ☐ 5
   ☐ 6

   Please specify your other teaching position.   ☐

School Information

2. What **grades** are included in your school?

          PK   K   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

3. Approximately how many **students** are enrolled in your school?

4. In what kind of **community** is your school located?
- [ ] an urban community
- [ ] a suburban community
- [ ] a rural community

5. Is your school a **Title 1** school?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

6. What **percentage** of your school receives free and reduced lunch?
- [ ] 0-25%
- [ ] 26% -50%
- [ ] 51% -75%
- [ ] 76% -100%
- [ ] Not sure

7. Did your school **meet the passing benchmark on the Virginia Reading SOL test** for the 2014-2015 school year?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

Teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation

8. The following statements represent various **perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs** toward the teaching and learning of reading.

Check all of the following statements that apply to you personally.

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☐ I would describe myself as a "**traditionalist**" when it comes to reading methods and materials.

☐ I have an "**eclectic**" attitude toward reading instruction, which means that I would draw from multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching reading.

☐ I would describe myself as a **whole language** teacher.

☐ I believe in a **balanced** approach to reading instruction, which combines skills development with literature and language-rich activities.

☐ I believe that teaching students to **decode** words is one of the most important goals for early reading instruction.

☐ I believe that **phonics** needs to be **taught directly** to beginning readers in order for students to become fluent, skillful readers.

☐ I believe in a **literature-based** approach to reading instruction in which trade books (i.e., children's books or library books) would be used exclusively or heavily.

☐ I believe that **basal reading materials** are useful tools for teaching students to read, either as the primary instructional material or along with trade books (i.e., children's books or library books).

☐ I believe students need to be **immersed in literature** and literacy experiences in order to become fluent readers.

☐ I believe in a **guided reading** approach that uses leveled text as instructional materials.

9. The following statements represent various **goals** or **objectives** that teachers might have for a reading instructional program.

   Check **all** of the following statements that apply to you personally.

   ☐ It is my goal to develop readers who are **skillful and strategic** in word identification, fluency, and reading comprehension.

   ☐ It is my goal to develop readers who are **critical** and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.

   ☐ It is my goal to develop readers who are **independent and motivated** to choose, appreciate, and enjoy literature.

   ☐ It is my goal to develop readers who are **knowledgeable** about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.

   ☐ Additional goal(s)

Please specify the additional goal(s).
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   │
└─────────────────────────┘

Instructional Time and Materials

10. Estimate the **total average time** (in minutes) you spend **on a typical school day** for the following reading and language arts activities.

    Note: These four numbers should reflect an estimate of the total amount of time you spend each day for literacy-related instruction and activities.

    _____ Minutes daily specifically for **reading instruction** (e.g., reading groups, skill or strategy lessons, teacher-guided reading of selections)

    _____ Minutes daily for **applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction** (e.g., reading aloud to children, students' independent reading or DEAR periods, student-led response groups, cooperative reading activities)

    _____ Minutes daily for **language arts instruction and practice** (e.g., writing workshop, response journals, spelling, oral language activities)

    _____ Minutes spent **preparing for, practicing or taking reading assessments**

    ┌─────────┐
    │   │ **Total time spend for reading and language arts activities.**
    └─────────┘

11. How much **instructional time** do you devote to the development of the following components or activities within your classroom reading and language arts program?

	Considerable	Moderate	Little	None
Reading vocabulary	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comprehension	☐	☐	☐	☐
Critical reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
Close reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
Oral reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
Silent reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
Journal writing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Study skills	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading in the content areas	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whole class mini-lessons	☐	☐	☐	☐
Phonics/decoding	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading aloud to students	☐	☐	☐	☐
Guided reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fluency instruction and practice	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students reading independently (e.g., Drop Everything and Read)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Oral or written responses to literature	☐	☐	☐	☐
Literature circles, book clubs, literature discussion groups	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading strategies instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐
Process writing or Writing Workshop	☐	☐	☐	☐
Language experience stories or charts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spelling lists, activities, or games	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word Study activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Test preparation and practice	☐	☐	☐	☐
Handwriting instruction and practice	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technological applications to literacy (websites, videos, multimedia, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. What reading instructional materials do you use **in your classroom**?

	Exclusively	Predominantly	Moderately	Infrequently	Never
A single basal reading series	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multiple basal reading series	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Literature anthologies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fiction trade books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nonfiction trade books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Commercial classroom libraries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leveled books for guided reading	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poetry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Readers' Theater/Plays	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Phonics workbooks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
General reading skills workbooks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Test preparation materials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scripted direct instruction program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magazines & newspapers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word and/or picture sorts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Big Books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Picture trade books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chapter trade books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading software or websites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other instructional media (e.g., (video/audiotapes and recorders, listening centers, filmstrips, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for your patience. The survey is about one-third of the way complete.

13. How do you use **basal reading materials, leveled guided reading books,** and **trade books** (i.e., children's books or library books) in your classroom reading program)?

    Please indicate the material you use as the **foundation** for your reading instruction?
    ☐ Basal reading materials
    ☐ Leveled guided reading materials
    ☐ Trade books

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Please indicate any material(s) you use to **supplement** your reading instruction?
- ☐ Basal reading materials
- ☐ Leveled guided reading materials
- ☐ Trade books
- ☐ I do not use any supplemental reading materials

14. If basal reading materials are used in your school (whether you use them or not), when were they last adopted? If you do not know, type "do not know."

15. How, if at all, do you teach reading **skills and strategies** in relation to reading instructional materials?

    Check **all** of the following statements that apply to you personally. You may check multiple responses.

    ☐ I teach the skills and strategies **as presented** in the basal program.

    ☐ I **select** skills and strategies from the basal program, teaching only those skills that I feel my students need to learn.

    ☐ I use the basal as a **general guide** for teaching skills and strategies, but I adapt or extend instruction from the basal significantly.

    ☐ I **supplement** the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered well or at all in the basal.

    ☐ I use the basal to identify reading skills, but I teach them in the **context** of trade books we are using.

    ☐ I have **constructed** my own skills program, which I teach in conjunction with trade books we are reading.

    ☐ I teach skills and strategies based upon ongoing **informal observations and assessments** of my students' learning.

    ☐ I plan the skills and strategies to teach based upon a school or district required pacing guide.

    ☐ I teach reading skills **very little** or not at all—either from the basal or through trade books.

16. To what degree do you use **trade books** to support your **content area studies** in science, social studies, and mathematics; for example, using historical fiction and informational books in a social studies unit?

	Always	sometimes	seldom	hardly ever	I don't teach
in **science**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
in **social studies**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
in **math**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. If you have your own **classroom library**, please answer the following:

    I have about the following **number of books** in my classroom library:

    ☐ fewer than 50
    ☐ 51–100
    ☐ 101–300
    ☐ 301–500
    ☐ more than 500

18. Estimate the percentage of books in your classroom library **you have purchased** with your own money?   Please enter numbers only.

    ☐

19. Estimate how much of **your own money** you spend each school year on materials (books, supplies) to support your reading and language arts program?   Type the dollar amount below.

    ☐

Thank you for your time. Your input is valuable. The survey is about half-way complete.
Organizing for instruction

20. Which of the following structures comes closest to describing your classroom teaching situation?

☐ I teach in a totally **self-contained** classroom; that is, I teach all subjects and the same students all day long (with the possible exception of sending your students to "special teachers" for art, music, PE).

☐ I teach primarily in a self-contained environment, but I do **team teaching** with one or more other teachers for reading or language classes; that is, we group for reading instruction across several classrooms on the basis of reading ability or interest.

☐ I teach in a **departmentalized** environment; that is, I teach one or two specialized subjects all day long (e.g., reading, math, science, social studies), teaching students from other teachers' classrooms at my grade level.

☐ I teach in another environment

List the specific subjects you teach.

☐ Reading
☐ Math
☐ Science
☐ Social Studies
☐ Other subject

Please specific your other teaching environment.

21. The following statements describe various ways to **organize** classroom reading instruction.

Check **all** of the following statements that describe organizational plans you employ regularly in your classroom.

☐ I use **ability groupings** to teach reading; for example, placing all the "highest" readers in one group, all the "middle" readers in a second group, and all the "lowest" readers in a third group.

☐ I use **flexible** reading groups in my classroom; that is, students might be grouped according to interest, genre, or skill need, but these groupings are not fixed and change regularly (select this category if you use structures such as Book Clubs, cooperative-learning groups, and mixed-ability groups).

☐ I teach reading as an **individualized** activity, designing special programs for each of my students; therefore, I do not formally group children for instruction.

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☐ I teach reading as a **whole-class** activity; that is, I do not generally group students for reading instruction.

☐ I use another organizational plan

Which other organizational plan do you use?

Which of the organizational structures described in item 21 do you use as the **primary or most frequent structure** in your classroom reading program?

☐ Ability groupings

☐ Flexible groupings

☐ Individualized instruction

☐ Whole-class instruction

☐ Other organizational plan (specify)

22. Which of the following **materials, techniques, or activities** are likely to be used in your classroom regularly.

Define "regularly" as **three or more times** per week. Check **all** of the following statements that apply to you personally.

☐ Comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., making inferences, drawing conclusions)

☐ Instruction in comprehension monitoring (e.g., self-questioning, applying "fix-up" strategies such as rereading)

☐ Instruction in literary elements (e.g., characterization, mood, setting, narrative structure)

☐ Word identification instruction lessons (phonics, structural, or contextual analysis)

☐ Vocabulary lessons or activities to develop students' knowledge of word meanings

☐ Literature response activities (e.g., discussion, written responses to literature)

☐ Literature discussion groups (e.g., book clubs)

☐ Trade books used instructionally

☐ Leveled guided reading books used instructionally

☐ Basal readers used instructionally

☐ Reading nonfiction trade books in order to learn about expository genres

☐ Teaching reading strategies along with content subjects (e.g., teaching chronological text structure in the context of a social studies textbook lesson)

☐ Reading Workshop time

☐ Writing Workshop time

☐ Critical reading lessons or activities

☐ Independent reading time (DEAR, SSR, etc.)

☐ Guided reading groups

☐ Teacher Read-aloud

☐ Direct Instruction/scripted programs

☐ Test preparation materials

☐ Use of technology (websites, iPads, etc.)

☐ Word Study

Accommodating gifted and struggling readers

23. The following statements describe various ways to accommodate the needs of children in your classroom who may be **gifted, talented**, or accelerated readers. Check **all** of the following statements that apply to your teaching situation.

    ☐ There is a **pull-out** program for my gifted readers, which is taught by a special teacher for gifted and talented students.

    ☐ A special teacher for gifted and talented students comes to **my classroom** and works with me to accommodate my most capable readers.

    ☐ I **adapt** my classroom curriculum and my instruction to accommodate the special needs of my gifted and talented readers.

24. If you indicated that there are special support personnel who work with your **gifted readers** either in the classroom or in a pull-out program (i.e., you selected either of the first two options), how do you rate the **effectiveness of these support services** (check one box)?

    ☐ exceptional   ☐ very good   ☐ adequate   ☐ poor   ☐ totally inadequate

25. The following statements describe various ways to accommodate the needs of children in your classroom who may be **struggling readers** or experiencing reading difficulties.

    Check **all** of the following statements that apply to your teaching situation.

    ☐ There is a **pull-out** program for my struggling readers, which is taught by a special teacher for students experiencing difficulty in learning to read.

    ☐ A special teacher trained to work with children who experience reading difficulties comes to **my classroom** and works with me to accommodate my struggling readers.

    ☐ I **adapt** my classroom curriculum and my instruction to accommodate the special needs of my students who experience problems in learning to read.

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26. If you indicated that there are special support personnel who work with your **struggling readers** either in the classroom or in a pull-out program (i.e., you selected either of the first two options), how do you rate the **effectiveness of these support services** (mark one box)?

☐ exceptional   ☐ very good   ☐ adequate   ☐ poor   ☐ totally inadequate

Thank you for your time. The survey is about three-fourths of the way complete.

Assessment

27. Select the following statement that best characterizes your **overall approach** to classroom **reading assessment**:

☐ I rely primarily on **conventional assessment** measures, for example, basal reader tests and district-administered standardized reading tests.

☐ I use a **mix** of conventional assessment measures (e.g., basal and standardized tests) and some informal assessments (e.g., Informal Reading Inventory).

☐ I am **moving toward** adopting various forms of **alternative reading assessments** (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, informal inventories) and/or a portfolio approach to assessment in my classroom.

☐ I rely **extensively** on **alternative reading assessments** (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, informal inventories), and/or I am using a **portfolio approach** to assessment in my classroom.

☐ I basically don't engage in **any** conventional or alternative reading assessments.

28. To what degree do you use results from the following types of assessments to make **instructional decisions** in your classroom?

	Considerable	Moderate	Little	None
Group standardized reading tests (ex: ITBS)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Individual standardized reading tests	☐	☐	☐	☐
District created reading tests/benchmarks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Virginia SOL reading tests	☐	☐	☐	☐
PALS assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Basal reader program unit/level skills tests	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal reading inventories (such as the DRA or Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Running records	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading/writing portfolios	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student interviews or conferences	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading miscue analysis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Observational checklists/anecdotal records	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emergent literacy surveys/assessments	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal phonics/decoding assessments	☐	☐	☐	☐

29. The following statements describe various **standardized or formal assessments**. Check **all** of the following types of assessments that you are **required to administer** to your students each school year.

☐ District-required **standardized** tests (e.g., Iowa Test of Basic Skills) that include one or more reading subtests

☐ State-mandated **competency tests** in reading (e.g., The Virginia SOL reading test)

☐ District-required **informal** reading (e.g., DRA or Fountas &Pinnell Benchmark assessment) and/or writing (e.g., essay) assessments

☐ District-required **benchmark** reading assessments

☐ **School-required** reading assessments

☐ **Additional** required or mandated assessment

Which additional or required reading assessment do you administer to your students each year?

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30. About how many **total hours** do you and your students spend each week **preparing to take** (e.g., test-taking exercises or lessons) and **actually taking** the required assessments you checked in item 30?

_____ Hours (write total hours per week)

31. Some teachers report that they feel so pressured by the required assessments (i.e., those listed in the previous question) that they end up **modifying** their curriculum or instruction to conform to the mandatory assessments.

To what degree do you modify your teaching to conform to mandatory assessments (mark one box)?

☐ very much   ☐ somewhat   ☐ not at all

Home-school connections

32. The following statements describe activities or programs some teachers have initiated to involve parents and care givers in their children's literacy learning. Check **all** the statements below that describe home-school literacy initiatives you have established.

☐ I encourage parents/care givers to **read to** their children at home regularly.

☐ I encourage parents/care givers to **listen to** their children read at home regularly.

☐ I encourage parents/care givers to provide opportunities for their children to **write** in meaningful ways (e.g., write grocery lists, write down chores, write letter to relatives).

☐ I send home **notes** to parents/care givers that explain our classroom reading/literacy program and how they can support it at home.

☐ I **invite** parents/care givers or other relatives (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles) to come to school and help out in the classroom (e.g., listening to children read, reading to children).

☐ I regularly send home **books** from my classroom library for my students to practice reading with their parents/care givers.

☐ I invite parents/care givers to school for special **workshops** I conduct on how they can support literacy at home (e.g., reading aloud at home, writing opportunities at home).

☐ Other home-school initiative (specify) _____

Please specify the other home-school initiatives that you use. | |

Overall school and classroom reading program

33. How would you rate your overall **school** reading program on the following criteria, giving your school a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each?

    ___ Developing readers who are **skillful and strategic** in word identification, fluency, and reading comprehension.

    ___ Developing readers who are **critical** and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.

    ___ Developing readers who are **independent** in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature.

    ___ Developing readers who are **knowledgeable** about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.
    ___ **Additional** goal(s)

    Please specific the additional goal(s) for your school. | |

34. How would you rate your overall **classroom** reading program on the following criteria, giving yourself a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each?

    ___ Developing readers who are **skillful and strategic** in word identification, fluency, and reading comprehension.

    ___ Developing readers who are **critical** and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.

    ___ Developing readers who are **independent** in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature.

    ___ Developing readers who are **knowledgeable** about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.

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___ **Additional** goal(s)

Please specify your additional goal(s).

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Thank you for your patience. The survey is almost complete.

Classroom Demographics

35. How many **students** do you have in your classroom?

    ___ students (type the number of students)

36. How many children identified as **special education** are in your classroom on a full-time or part-time basis?

    ___ Children identified as special education students (type the number of students)

37. What is your assessment of the **racial or cultural make-up** of all students in your classroom? Write the number of students below. Write 0 if you do not have students within a particular classification.

    ___ Black or African American students

    ___ White or European American students

    ___ Hispanic or Latino students

    ___ Students of other racial or ethnic groups

    [   ] Total number of students.

38. What is your assessment of the **first language** or "**home language**" spoken by students in your classroom? Type the number of students below.

    ____ students speak English as their first language
    ____ students speak Spanish as their first language
    ____ students speak a language other than English or Spanish as their first language.

    [   ] Total number of students

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Teacher Education and Demographics

39. Check a box for **each education degree** you hold.

    ☐ Bachelor's ☐ Master's ☐ Specialist ☐ Doctorate

40. How many **total years** have you spent as an elementary teacher?

    _____ Years (type number of years)

41. What is your **gender?**

    ☐ female   ☐ male

42. What is your **racial** or **ethnic** identity?

    ☐ Black/African American   ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander   ☐ other racial or ethnic group
    ☐ White/European American   ☐ Native American/Eskimo
    ☐ Hispanic/Latino   ☐ multiracial

    Please specify your other racial or cultural identify.

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    │   │
    └──────────────────────┘

    Would you like to provide your email address to be entered into a raffle for one of two $25 Amazon gift certificates?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

    Please enter your email address.   ┌──────────────────────┐
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Vita

Christina Henry Saunders was born in Greenville, North Carolina in 1970 and graduated from the University of Virginia in 1992 with a Bachelor of Science degree in finance and marketing. She received a Master of Education from George Mason University in 1997 and an Education Specialist degree from the University of Virginia in 2004. She entered Virginia Commonwealth University in 2011 to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

Christina holds a Virginia teaching license with endorsements for English as a Second Language, Early Childhood Special Education, Early/Primary Education (PK-3), and as a Reading Specialist. She previously taught third grade and is currently working as a reading specialist in an upper elementary school. She has also served on several instructional and assessment committees for the Virginia Department of Education. In 2013, she was named the Teacher of the Year for Hanover County Public Schools.