HOW TEACHERS MAKE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS WHEN IMPLEMENTING

A NEW CORE READING PROGRAM

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2007

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study examined the extent to which content knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies, knowledge of the five Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) components, and knowledge of the student learner were factors associated with teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program. Twenty six kindergarten through third grade teachers responded to a detailed questionnaire regarding use and perceptions. Twelve teachers were interviewed to further investigate factors that influenced teacher instructional decision making.

Analysis of data showed that teachers made meaningful and thoughtful instructional decisions for reading instruction when implementing a new core reading program. Teachers most often based their instructional decision making on their knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies emphasizing differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, comprehension strategy instruction, and guided reading. Teachers made instructional decisions based on students' need to develop critical thinking skills, be engaged and motivated to learn, and acquire necessary skills for future success. Teachers' level of experience instructing at their present grade level, the amount and quality of professional development, and the support of the school administrator were found to influence implementation and instructional decision making when using a new core reading program.

Acknowledgement

Completing this dissertation would not have been possible if it weren't for the love and support of many people. First, thank you to my advisor Dr. Rita Bean for her guidance and encouragement throughout this process. Your confidence in me allowed me to strive to complete this dissertation in my needed time frame.

I would like to give a special thank you to my colleagues at Gannon University, Dr. Patricia Pollifrone and Dr. Marge Clark. They provided continuous support and hours of time reading my dissertation for edits and revisions. It would not have been completed with out them.

A very special thank you goes to my husband, Chad. Thank you for all of your support, encouragement, love and endless hours of assistance. Thank you for your computer knowledge and editing abilities. You are the best husband and my best friend.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandates have led educators to examine carefully the reading instruction provided in today's elementary classrooms. NCLB Act of 2001 emphasizes the importance of teachers knowing the subjects they teach because teacher knowledge is critical to students achieving high standards. Employing teachers who know their content well, especially in the area of reading, is good practice and leads to improved student learning (USDE, 2002).

The Reading First component of NCLB Act of 2001 has provided significant amounts of federal monies to school districts for the purpose of implementing Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) to improve reading achievement. The intention of Reading First not only is to spend more money for reading, but also to spend more money wisely, by providing teachers with curricula, materials, methods, on-going assessment tools, and professional development to support SBRR instruction. To do this, school districts seem to be relying more heavily on the core reading programs developed by the major publishing companies. This reliance is evident by the need to provide teachers with a comprehensive reading program based on SBRR (Otaiba, Kosanovich-Grek, Torgesen, Hassler, & Wahl, 2005)

Historically, a basal reading program, now often referred to in the literature as a core reading program, has been the main approach to teaching reading in the United States (Gunning, 2003). According to the Council for Educational Development (1997), a core reading program accounts for 75% to 90% of reading instruction in elementary classrooms. A core reading program developed by well-known publishing companies

typically includes a series of readers or anthologies and supplemental materials that gradually increase in difficulty as students progress through the grade levels. An accompanying teacher's manual is usually included with a core reading program to provide teachers with directives and suggestions on activities and instructional strategies to lead students through the reading instructional process (Gunning, 2003).

One criticism of implementing any core reading program is the belief that the materials provided (a) limit a teacher's academic freedom and (b) diminish teacher control and responsibility for teaching reading through a process called *deskilling* (Shannon, 1987; Baumann & Heubach, 1996). The deskilling perception posits that the curricular and instructional decisions made for reading instruction are controlled by the materials and often do not go beyond what is recommended in the teacher's manual of a core reading program (Shannon, 1987; Baumann & Heuback, 1996). Core reading programs have been criticized for teaching reading as a fragmented series of discrete skills. According to Shannon and Crawford (1997), using a core reading program is the presentation of core reading materials according to directives found in the teacher's manual. Effective teaching of reading is viewed as (a) student compliance in finishing the designated part of the scope and sequence during an allotted time period and (b) obtaining high student scores on the assessments that accompany the core reading program (Shannon & Crawford, 1997). However, proponents of the core reading program believe that students benefit from the sequential organization of the reading curriculum (Council for Educational Development, 1997).

With (a) the changing climate of reading instruction, (b) the predominant use of a core reading program in the elementary classroom, and (c) the significant role of the

teacher in implementing reading instruction, the proposed study represents a convergence of queries into the factors that influence a teacher's instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program.

1.1   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is firmly grounded in the theories of Dewey (1933), Schon (1983), and Shulman (1987) regarding teachers as knowledgeable and reflective practitioners and in the perception of the deskilling of teachers when utilizing basal reading programs as proposed by the work of Shannon (1987) and Baumann and Heubach (1996).

1.1.1   Teacher Decision Making

The concept of the teacher as decision maker is quite similar to the model of teacher as reflective-practitioner. Reflective practitioners are able to inquire into their teaching and to think critically about their work by using skills related to observation, analysis, interpretation and decision making. These reflective practices allow teachers to apply their knowledge and skills in new situations (Dewey, 1933).

These beliefs relate to the theories of previous well-known researchers such as Donald Schon (1983) and John Dewey (1933). Schon's (1983) work emphasized that theoretical and empirical knowledge, along with teaching skills, permit teachers to be deliberate about teaching practices. Teachers as quality decision makers follow theoretical and empirical knowledge along with knowledge about themselves and

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knowledge from other skilled teachers, to arrive at decisions that make sense for their students and their learning environment. Schon (1983) emphasizes that practitioners cannot follow closely established ideas and techniques. Rather, they have to conceptualize and rationalize concepts, because every situation is unique. Schon (1983) suggests that practitioners draw on what they have learned before. Schon (1983) states:

> The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (p. 68).

The influential educational philosopher John Dewey (1933) described teacher reflective decision making as a holistic approach of examining and responding to problems. True reflection and quality decision making by teachers involves the affect-emotion, feelings and intuition. According to Dewey (1933), teachers who are unreflective about their teaching accept, without examination, the everyday reality of their schools. Emphasis is often placed on the most efficient way to practice the craft of teaching, without questioning the commonly accepted views or practices.

A teacher's knowledge, experiences, and teaching skills are significant when considering a teacher's abilities to make quality decisions about reading instructional practices. Decision making abilities can be influenced by teacher's variation and duration of teaching experiences. The ability of a teacher to be a reflective practitioner is

significant, considering the dominant use of a core reading program historically and in contemporary classrooms. Teacher decision making in the implementation of a new core reading program can occur when teachers decide on (a) materials, (b) instructional approaches, and (c) assessments when attempting to meet the instructional needs of all students.

1.1.2 Teacher Knowledge

According to Shulman (1987), teacher knowledge in the areas of content, pedagogy and knowledge of the learners and their characteristics is the foundation for teaching reform and is the essences of how teachers comprehend, reason, transform, and reflect on instructional practices.   More emphatic is pedagogical content knowledge which is the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners and presented for instruction (Shulman, 1987).

This framework of the varied knowledge base is necessary to provide quality instruction for students, especially in the area of reading instruction, and provides the grounds or reasons for teachers' decisions.

1.1.3 Deskilling of Teachers

Research into the dominant use of commercial or basal reading programs by Shannon (1987) revealed that teachers relinquished technical control of reading instruction in order

to render it more predictable and more productive. This concept has been defined as *deskilling*. Both teachers and administrators surveyed by Shannon (1987) reified reading instruction as commercial reading materials. Administrators believed a basal reading program allowed for a more economical and less confrontational means for instructional accountability by having teachers completing sections of a scope and sequence and assessing students upon its completion utilizing the materials provided in the program. Teachers found basal reading programs to be the source and tool of reading instruction and accepted that the use of the materials was the way to teach reading (Shannon, 1987).

Depending on the type of materials and administrative perspective, Shannon (1987) found that teachers relinquish some or most of the control over their actions during lessons. Since the materials supply the goals, directions, practices and evaluation and because instruction was defined as managing students through the materials, Shannon (1987) found that teachers had little incentive to improve their knowledge of reading instruction or their students. Teachers had little need to reconsider goals of instruction or reflect on their work.

A commentary article by Baumann (1992) found Shannon's findings controversial and argued that the *deskilling* concept fails to credit teachers with the intelligence and decision-making capabilities they possess. This led Baumann and Heubach (1996) to further investigate the concept of basal reading programs *deskilling* teachers. They surveyed elementary teachers from around the country and found that most educators were discriminating consumers and in charge of their curricular and instructional decision making (Baumann & Heubach, 1996). The researchers argued that rather than *deskilling* teachers, basal or core reading programs and their materials

empower teachers by providing them with instructional suggestions to draw from, adapt and utilize as they deemed necessary in order to provide quality reading instruction.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, and (c) knowledge of the student learner are factors associated with instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program. Further investigation will analyze if teacher educational background, teaching experiences, and the requirements of the school administrator are factors associated with how teachers make decisions when implementing a new core reading program.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that will be examined are:

1. What is the nature of teacher instructional decision making in the implementation of a new core reading program?

   a. In what ways does teacher knowledge of the content related to Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR) influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

 b. In what ways does teacher knowledge of learner needs in the classroom influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

 c. In what ways does teacher knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies related to SBRR influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

2. What are the similarities and differences, if any, on how novice teachers, experienced teachers, and veteran teachers make instructional decisions to implement a new core reading program?

3. What are the similarities and differences, if any, on how kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade teachers make instructional decisions to implement a new core reading program?

4. In what ways does the on-site school administrator influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

1.4 DELIMITATIONS

There are three delimitations to this study:

<u>Hawthorne Effect</u>

1. Along the lines of ecological validity, the teachers and administrator will know they are being studied. There is a risk that teachers will complete the survey or provide answers to the interview questions that differ from than what actually took place.

2. Since the study focuses on the decision making in implementing a new core reading program, the timeframe of the study focuses on only the first year of implementation.

Population Validity

3. The small, focused sample size reduces the ability to generalize the results to a larger population, but one of the researcher's goals is to focus on factors that could influence the successful implementation of a new core reading program.

1.5   DEFINITION OF TERMS

ANTHOLOGY- A variety of rich children's literature that is collected in commercially published textbooks. All students at a particular grade level experience the same reading selection (Gunning, 2003).

COMPREHENSION- One of the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research Instruction which should be included in daily early reading instruction. The ability to read and gain meaning to understand text (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement , CIERA, 2003).

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE – Knowledge of the concepts that needs to be taught (Shulman, 1987).

CORE READING PROGRAM- The primary instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to learn to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards. A core program should address the instructional needs of the majority of students in a respective school or district.   Historically, core reading programs have been referred to as basal reading programs in that they serve as the *base* for reading instruction. The core reading program often serves as the primary reading program for the school, and often are commercial textbook series. They include teacher guides, teaching materials, student workbooks or activities and student readers (Otaiba, et.al., 2005).   Terms in the literature synonymous with Core Reading Program include:

- BASAL READING PROGRAM- a collection of student texts and workbooks, teacher manuals, and supplemental materials for developmental reading and sometimes writing instruction, used primarily in the elementary and middle school grades.

- COMMERCIAL READING MATERIALS – Published reading materials (workbooks, kits, manuals) by well-known publishing companies sold to schools that provide teachers with directives and materials to teach reading. Also referred to as a basal reading program and/or core reading program (Shannon, 1987).

EXPERIENCED TEACHER- For this study, a teacher with 6 to12 years of experience teaching at his/her present primary grade level (K – 3), regardless of his or her total years of teaching experience.

FLUENCY- The ability to read text accurately and quickly to bridge word recognition and comprehension (CIERA, 2003). One of the five components of

Scientifically Based Reading Research Instruction which should be included in daily early reading instruction.

KNOWLEDGE OF LEARNER – Knowing the characteristics of what a learner needs to be successful at learning new concepts.

MCGRAW-HILL TREASURES- The new core reading program utilized by the selected school in this study that contains instructional practices focused around the Scientifically Based Reading Research components of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB)- The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is the principal federal law affecting K-12 educators.

NOVICE TEACHER- For this study, a teacher with 0 to 5 years of experience teaching at his/her present primary grade level (K – 3), regardless of his or her total years of teaching experience.

PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE - Knowledge of both teaching techniques and content knowledge that is specific to particular subject matter (Shulman, 1987).

PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE - Includes the general concepts, theories, and research instructional practices and strategies for effective instruction (Shulman, 1987)

PHONEMIC AWARENESS- The ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words (CIERA, 2003) One of the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research instruction which should be included in daily early reading instruction.

PHONICS- The connection between the sounds and the print (CIERA, 2003). One of the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research instruction which should be included in daily early reading instruction.

SCIENTIFICALLY BASED READING RESEARCH (SBRR)- Research that applies empirical methods and data analysis, and is accepted by peer-reviewed journals. Results are statistically significant. The components identified by the National Reading Panel as being SBRR for effective early reading instruction. These components include phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE- A curriculum plan, usually in chart form, in which a range of instructional objectives, skills, etc., is organized according to the successive levels at which they are taught.

VETERAN TEACHER- For this study, a teacher with 12 or more years of experience teaching at his/her present primary grade level (K – 3), irrespective of his or her total years of teaching experience.

VOCABULARY- The words students know and use to communicate in order to listen, speak, read and write effectively (CIERA, 2003). One of the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research Instruction which should be included in daily early reading instruction.

2.0   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of relevant literature provides background to support this qualitative study.
This review of research examines a) the evolution of the basal or core reading program
over the years, b) the alignment of core reading programs with SBRR, and c) teacher use
and views of core reading programs.   The research available on teacher knowledge and
decision making practices is also synthesized to provide a comprehensive review of the
literature.

2.1 BRIEF EVOLUTION OF BASAL [CORE] READING PROGRAMS

The basal reader has been a dominant entity in American schools for 170 years.
Basal readers have seen many publications and revisions over the course of time due to
changing political climates, research evidence in the area of reading instruction, and the
ever changing diversity of American culture. The roots of the modern basal can be traced
back to 1836 with the publication of the McGuffey Eclectic Readers (Smith, 2002).
William H. McGuffey, the creator of the set of readers, is given credit for being the first
author to produce specific pupil readers designed for use at each grade level. This series
of readers controlled the rate of the introduction to new vocabulary, which was different
than any previously published reading materials (Smith, 2002).

The use of McGuffey Readers in American public schools spanned from 1836
until 1920. The overwhelming use and popularity of the McGuffey Readers has been

identified as being the implementation of creative marketing practices, rather than noteworthy content or pedagogy in the area of reading instruction (Venezky, 1987).

In the 1930s, William Gray and Arthur Gates expanded the concept of basal readers to develop complete basal reading programs. The programs consisted of additional components beyond just a reader. For the first time, the basal readers were expanded and supplemented to include workbooks, teacher guides, and tests to provide a comprehensive reading program (Hoffman, McCarthey, Elliott, Bayles, Price, et.al., 1998; Smith, 2002;Venezky, 1987).

By the 1950s most basal reading programs looked very much alike. The content consisted of the extensive use of narrative text portraying life in the *typical* family and community. Common features of basal reading programs during this time, were their heavy reliance on controlled vocabulary and sight word teaching. A well recognized basal reading program of the 1950s, published by Scott Foresman, promoted a stereotyped homogeneity of the American family through their portrayal of the lifestyles and experiences of the characters Dick, Jane, Sally, and Spot (Hoffman, McCarthey, Bayles, Price, et.al., 1995; Hoffman, et.al., 1998).

Both Venezky (1987) and Hoffman, et.al. (1995, 1998) cite the 1950 and 1966 works of Flesch and Chall respectively, regarding their influential publications called *Why Johnny Can't Read* and *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. These publications brought significant changes in basal reading programs over the next three decades due to harsh criticism regarding the state of reading proficiency and reading instruction in this country. The basal reading programs of the 1960s gave way to an increased attention to

specific skills instruction that emphasized phonics instruction in combination with sight-word reading (Hoffman, et.al, 1998; Venezky, 1987).

The skills lessons in the teacher's manual of the 1960s were more elaborate and promoted the use of workbook pages in order for students to practice skills. By this time, basal reading program teacher's manuals had expanded to the point of having the number of pages in the teacher's manual actually exceed the number of pages in the student readers. The heavy emphasis on skill lessons, the use of workbook pages, and the elaborately developed teacher's manuals found in the basal reading programs of the 1960s, was a significant change from the basal reading programs of the 1930s, 40s or 50s (Pearson, 2002).

Reading instruction found in the basal reading programs of the 1960s was based on reading as a perceptual process where comprehension was the product of decoding and listening comprehension. Reading instruction was viewed as students gaining sight word knowledge and letter-sound knowledge through presentation, practice and testing in order to transfer graphic symbols on a page into an oral code (Pearson, 2002).

Chall's publication *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* as cited by Pearson (2002) continued to influence reading instruction and the basal reading programs during the 1970s and 1980s. The early 1970s basal reading programs continued a heavy emphasis on phonics and sight word knowledge. There was also a significant change in the content that young students were reading in the basal reader. Dick and Jane were being replaced with more adapted selections from children's literature rather than stories written to conform to vocabulary restrictions (Pearson, 2002). With the heavy emphasis on skills and phonics, the 1970s showed a significant change in testing students' reading

abilities. In the early 1970s through the late 1980s, each successive edition of basal

reading programs promoted the use of single component skills tests for phonics,

comprehension, and study skills at every grade level (e.g., beginning sounds, vowel

patterns, main idea, drawing conclusions, alphabetical order etc.) (Pearson, 2002).

In the early 1980s, the emphasis of phonics and skills-based lessons in basal

reading programs, the use of workbook pages, and multiple assessment measures were

continued. The teacher's manuals to the basal reading program became quite explicit in

terms of guiding teachers on how to manage pupils and to directly teach targeted skills

(Hoffman, et.al., 1998; Pearson, 2002). However, once again, the consensus of how to

teach reading, the components, and use of the basal reading program were challenged in

the mid-1980s from the advocates of a more holistic, language-based approach to

learning to read.

This time period saw an almost total abandonment of the basal reading program in

favor of a more authentic, literature-based approach where teachers were using

tradebooks and quality children's literature as a foundation for their reading instruction.

Publishers of basal reading programs in the late 1980s got the message, and responded to

the shifts in the market and to the change in the philosophical perspective of how to teach

reading (Hoffman, et. al., 1998; Pearson, 2002).

The pressure for change in the basal reading programs that dominated the 1970s

and 1980s continued into the early 1990s. The literature-based basal reading program

represented a significant departure from the skills-based programs of the earlier period.

The newer basal reading programs emphasized the literature experience much more than

isolated skills instruction. The traditional components of the basal reading program were

still evident with the use of pupil texts, teacher's manuals, practice books, and assessments, but followed a different focus due to the whole language philosophical shift. The change in focus in the 1990s was recognized by publishing companies by their incorporation of whole pieces of children's literature, a notable emphasis on comprehension with probing questions, and opportunities for children to respond to literature (Hoffman, et.al, 1998; Hoffman, et.al., 1995; Pearson, 2002).

The late 1980s and 1990s can be viewed as a turbulent time in reading instruction. The decade of the 1990s was encompassed with the controversy regarding the varying philosophical perspectives on teaching reading (Pearson, 2002). With many advocates promoting a whole language literature-based approach, and others in the field emphasizing the need for a phonics skills-based approach to teaching reading, the years ahead into the new century would find drastic changes in basal reading programs.

The year 2000 brought about significant change in the field of reading instruction due to the significant work of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) and the federal legislation act of 2001, No Child Left Behind (USDE, 2002). The work of the NRP (NICHD, 2000) emphasizes the need for all reading instruction to be based on Scientifically Based Reading Research found to be successful for teaching students how to read. The NCLB Act (USDE, 2002) emphasizes the need for all students to become proficient readers using evidence-based methodologies that produce results (Pearson, 2002). Even though there have been criticisms of the work of the National Reading Panel and their findings (Shanahan, 2004; Allington, 2005) publishing companies have responded to the shift in reading research and reading instructional practices to develop basal reading programs (now referred to as core reading programs).

The work of the NRP has been criticized for their neglect of sharing other relevant research regarding reading instruction such as the importance of integrating writing, using a variety of reading materials such as decodable texts, and considering the significance of motivation in learning to read (Shanahan, 2004; Allington, 2005). Many of the newer basal reading programs have changed to be more aligned with the recommendations of the NRP and have considered the research evidence perceived to be lacking in the report when considering revisions and additions to core reading programs. Many core reading programs have incorporated the five SBRR components by providing explicit teaching strategies and activities to develop phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary (Otaiba, et.al., 2005).

As seen through this brief evolution of the basal reading program, commercially published materials dominate the field of reading education. It is a large money making business which continues to adapt and change based on policies, mandates, and research. Through it all, the end goal will be children becoming proficient readers with the assistance of a quality basal reading program.

2.2 CORE READING PROGRAM ALIGNMENT WITH SCIENTIFICALLY-BASED READING RESEARCH (SBRR)

To determine the alignment of core reading programs in providing SBRR instructional practices, it is important to review the available research concerning how core reading programs address the key instructional areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency.

In a very recent study evaluating core reading programs, Otaiba and colleagues (2005) reviewed the six most popular core reading programs to determine if and how they

address the five SBRR components of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. The research team consisted of five members of the Florida Center of Reading Research (FCRR). The researchers created a Guidance Document to assist in the review of core reading programs that correlated with the essential work of the National Reading Panel (NRP) (NICHD,2000) and followed criteria outlined in the Reading First legislation. The Guidance Document was used to assist in identifying key elements of an effective reading program based on SBRR. The researchers used a coding sheet to document whether all five SBRR components were present and prominent and whether the quality of the instructional design of each of the five SBRR components was acceptable based on the FCRR Guidance Document. When determining the quality of the instructional design the researchers analyzed if the programs included explicit instructional strategies that coordinated with the instructional sequence, and provided ample practice opportunities that aligned with student materials (Otaiba, et.al., 2005).

The research reviewers also recorded field notes to document their findings and to provide supportive examples or disconfirming data in regards to the quality and characteristics of each core reading program. Through the analysis of the coding sheets and field notes, the researchers determined the quality of each core reading program as acceptable or not acceptable with regard to alignment with SBRR (Otaiba, et. al., 2005).

When analyzing core reading programs for their alignment of SBRR in the area of phonemic awareness and phonics, the researchers (Otaiba, et. al, 2005) found that many of the most recent core reading programs offered teachers strategies for providing daily phonological awareness instruction for differentiating instruction for struggling readers. Strategies for phonemic awareness instruction were introduced in the appropriate

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sequence of phonological levels, starting with rhyming and moving towards blending and segmenting.

Otaiba and colleagues (2005) found that phonics instruction in several of the examined new core reading programs provided clear instructional routines with explicit teaching in sound blending and decoding words. Teachers were often provided materials and manipulatives within the core programs to practice the making and breaking of words.

In contrast, this analysis of the most recent core reading programs indicated there was a concern that several programs overemphasized rhyming as a phonological awareness activity, with little emphasis on progressing to the blending and segmenting of sounds (Otaiba, et.al, 2005). The researchers found opportunities to practice phonemic awareness and phonics skills often relegated to supplementary materials, or suggested that teachers create student materials on their own for practice. This direction is a concern if school districts do not purchase additional supplementary materials due to budgetary constraints or because they assume all aspects of effective reading instruction will be incorporated into the core materials provided.

The review of vocabulary instruction in new core reading programs revealed some programs demonstrated effective vocabulary instruction while others did not. The programs that did provide effective vocabulary instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners provided graphic organizers and word webs to demonstrate word relationships, utilized beginning dictionary skills through the use of the glossary, provided a consistent routine for oral language development and additionally taught word meanings during phonics and word work lessons (Otaiba, et. al, 2005). The core reading

programs reviewed that lacked effective vocabulary instruction had most vocabulary

instruction at this early stage of reading limited to sight word or high-frequency word

instruction, and vocabulary instruction took a more embedded approach instead of being

taught explicitly or systematically. Several of the core reading programs did not include

daily vocabulary instruction at all.

When the researchers (Otaiba, et. al, 2005) reviewed the core reading programs

concerning how they addressed the SBRR component of comprehension, several of the

core reading programs were found to provide explicit, systematic instructional routines to

develop reading comprehension. The identified programs that aligned with SBRR

provided teacher modeling for when and why to utilize strategies, provided a wide range

of interesting text for students to practice comprehension strategies, and provided

teachers with examples of questions beyond literal recall. Comprehension strategies were

introduced one at a time and were reinforced and reviewed through multiple opportunities

(Otaiba, et. al., 2005).

Some core reading programs that did not align with SBRR for comprehension

strategy instruction did not provide specific and sequential steps to show students how to

draw meaning from text (Otaiba, et.al., 2005). There were often too many strategies

introduced in a single lesson and a lack of a variety of texts and levels in order to provide

opportunities for students to practice comprehension strategies.

Otaiba, et. al. (2005) found that in some reviewed core reading programs there

was little or no guidance provided for the appropriate readability level of text for fluency

lessons. The researchers also identified that in several core reading programs, entire

fluency lessons were dedicated to punctuation without explaining the connection between

reading fluently and reading with expression.

Otaiba and colleagues (2005) found that core reading programs addressing the research based component of fluency provided teachers strategies to implement echo reading, shared reading and repeated reading. The programs gave suggestions on increasing oral reading fluency time using techniques such as modeling, partner reading and peer tutoring.

Through this detailed analysis of new core reading programs, the researchers (Otaiba, et.al., 2005) developed a rating rubric for core reading programs to assist Reading First schools with criteria to consider when selecting a new core reading program. The researchers assumed that a well-designed and organized reading program could support teachers in the mission of helping all children become successful readers by enhancing teachers' knowledge about quality instruction in all 5 SBRR components. Therefore, teachers would use that knowledge to improve their teaching practices and in turn, improve children's reading proficiency.

With the large discrepancies found between the core reading programs regarding if and how they addressed the five SBRR components, the results of this study indicate the need for consumers to carefully analyze programs, using thoughtful decision making about program purchases and program implementation. Little additional research prior to Otaiba and colleagues (2005) was found to address how or if core reading programs provide quality instructional suggestions to teachers regarding fluency.

The study conducted by Otaiba, et. al, (2005) lacked inter-rater reliability with respect to how the researchers consistently rated each of the reviewed core reading programs for their alignment to the five SBRR components. The rating rubric used to

guide the evaluation of the core reading programs lacked specificity in regards to specific criteria to examine within each core reading program. The study neglected to reveal and name which specific core reading programs reviewed aligned most strongly with the five SBRR components. The researchers did not provide specific recommendations for consumers. The findings of the study merely suggest for consumers to utilize a similar rating scale when selecting a new core reading program.

2.2.1 Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction in Core Reading Programs

There have been several research studies investigating how the core reading program addresses the research based instructional areas of phonics and phonemic awareness, such as Stein, Johnson and Gutlohn (1999), and Smith, Simmons, Gleason, Kame'enu, Baker, Sprik, et al., (2001). According to the NRP (2001), phonemic awareness instruction improves children's word reading, comprehension and spelling abilities. Phonemic awareness can be developed through a number of activities that include identifying, categorizing, blending, segmenting and manipulating phonemes or the sounds of spoken language. Phonics instruction allows readers to learn the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. Research has indicated that phonics instruction should be taught systematically and explicitly, with ample opportunities for children to apply what they are learning about letters and sounds to the decoding of words in sentences and stories (NRP, 2000).

Stein, Johnson and Gutlohn (1999) examined how first grade basal reading programs address phonics instruction and its relationship to the text provided for students

to read. The analysis of seven first grade basals revealed a significant gap between research and practice due to few basal reading programs embracing an explicit phonics approach or incorporating decodable text (Stein, et.al., 1999).

According to Smith, et al., (2001), an analysis of phonological awareness instruction in four kindergarten basal reading programs also indicated a gap between research and practice. Phonological awareness activities were present in all of the basals analyzed; however, variability was found in each program on the number and range of phonological examples. The phonological activities addressed more recognition level phonemes rather than production of phonemes and did not provide explicit instruction, sufficient tasks, materials, and opportunity for teacher scaffolding (Smith, et al., 2001). Although these findings are significant, these studies reviewed a limited number of basal reading programs, and often did not include looking at the supplemental materials, which could have addressed the examined areas more in-depth.

2.2.2 Vocabulary Instruction in Core Reading Programs

The importance of fostering oral language proficiency and enhancing vocabulary acquisition is a necessary key component of reading success for all students, but is often overlooked in instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006; NICHD, 2000; Council for Educational Development and Research, 1997). Students need opportunities to talk and utilize language in a meaningful manner in order for them to transfer it to other literacy situations. According to the NRP (NICHD, 2000), vocabulary instruction can be developed indirectly by (a) engaging students in daily oral language, (b) listening to

adults read aloud, and (c) providing opportunities for independent reading. Vocabulary

can be developed when words and word learning strategies are taught directly and

explicitly.

To develop vocabulary, research has indicated that multiple exposures to new

vocabulary through a wide variety of text are essential for both English and Non-English

speaking students (Otaiba, et.al., 2005).   In a basal [core] reading program, vocabulary

instruction often utilizes a whole word method by providing students with new words

from the text and recording them visually on the chalkboard prior to the students' reading

of the text (Gunderson, 1985). Vocabulary activities for students need to redirect them to

vocabulary and content with multiple opportunities for use and practice.   Often follow-

up activities and practice are not significantly related to ongoing reading activities and

don't always allow for transfer of the vocabulary word to other contexts (Gunderson,

1985).

Ryder and Graves (1994) investigated how vocabulary instruction was presented

prior to reading in two widely used basal [core] reading programs. The researchers

looked at six aspects of vocabulary instruction within the basal or core reading program

which included (a) description of vocabulary instruction, (b) importance of words taught,

(c) difficulty of words taught and not taught, (d) frequency of vocabulary words, (e)

methods of instruction, and (f) teachers' ability to predict students' word knowledge.

Brief descriptions of vocabulary instruction were provided in the two basal programs

reviewed. Students already knew many of the words targeted for instruction and the

vocabulary instruction provided was not sufficient to improve comprehension of

selections. Vocabulary instruction provided for designated words was not always

connected to the context in which the words occurred within a selection (Ryder & Graves, 1994). The basal [core] reading programs analyzed did not provide activities requiring students to relate their prior knowledge to the words being taught, and also failed to provide activities to use new words in a variety of rich contexts (Ryder & Graves, 1994).

In an analysis of the variability of text features in six grade one core reading programs, researchers found that the pacing of the introduction of new vocabulary words was extensive, with one program introducing 992 new words in the first six weeks of school while other programs introduced between 600-700 words (Foorman, Francis, Davidson, Harm, & Griffin, 2004). Additionally, few opportunities for extended practice with the previously introduced words existed, and the majority of vocabulary words in text selections were above the understanding of most first graders (Foorman, et.al., 2004).

2.2.3 Comprehension Instruction in Core Reading Programs

In order for all students to become proficient readers, they need not only to decode text successfully, but also they need to comprehend. The National Reading Panel (NICHD,2000) cited that text comprehension is important because it is the primary reason for reading and it is an active and purposeful act. Comprehension needs to be taught explicitly through direct explanation, modeling and opportunities to practice a variety of comprehension strategies (NICHD, 2000). To this end, commercial publishers of core reading programs have continually attempted to revise and update their programs

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to meet the various instructional needs of diverse learners, and to focus more on research-based components especially in the area of comprehension strategy instruction.

An analysis of core reading programs in the 1980s revealed that instructional directives in seven basal [core] reading programs were only presented 33% of the time for stories or texts read by students. Most teacher manuals failed to connect comprehension skill instruction to the text or to make explicit the relation between learning a skill and its application in reading a different text (Reutzel & Cooter, 1988). This disjoint between what skills and strategies that are being introduced and taught in a core reading program and what students are asked to read can be detrimental to the reading success of many students.

To comprehend text a reader must access, build, and connect to prior knowledge. Many students often need opportunities to build background knowledge to make connections to comprehend text. The gap between background knowledge and connections to new information is often due to a lack of a broad vocabulary, inexperience with certain English phrases and expressions, and issues of cultural diversity (August & Shanahan, 2006; Gunderson, 1985).

Walsh (2003) examined five of the most widely used basal [core] reading programs and found the teacher editions often instructed the teacher to build background knowledge about story content before reading. However, the suggestions offered in the teacher's edition to build background knowledge were limited to asking children one or two convergent questions prior to reading the selection. Also, most of the stories' content dealt with issues and concepts more familiar to the American child (Walsh, 2003). According to Allington and Cunningham (2002), newer basal [core] reading programs

have incorporated stories representing the diversity of American culture by depicting characters and issues of minorities.

The importance of building a student's broad knowledge as the primary means to improve reading comprehension was not evident in the basal [core] reading programs reviewed. However, extensive time was allocated to practicing comprehension skills in an isolated context. Students later had difficulty applying comprehension skills to new and unfamiliar texts and situations (Walsh, 2003).

A similar study done by Afflerbach and Walker (1990) looked at how basal [core] reading programs provided prediction instruction in order to enhance comprehension. They reviewed three basal reading programs at grades 1, 3, and 5 for differences in prediction instruction within and between the programs. The programs investigated appeared to make the implicit assumption that students have the appropriate prior knowledge and the capabilities to utilize appropriate existing knowledge, in order to make predictions to assist in comprehension monitoring (Afflerbach & Walker, 1990).

There is evidence that some core reading programs do not provide teachers with instructional practices to sufficiently build background knowledge. These programs make assumptions that all students already possess the necessary prior knowledge and abilities to apply skills in order to comprehend successfully.

Two basal [core] reading programs were also examined by Miller and Blumenfield (1993) for their use of comprehension strategies, specifically main idea and cause and effect. They found the programs did not follow research based recommendations about the sequencing of skills for guided and independent practice. The teachers either were not always advised in the basal program how to model higher

level cognitive processes to develop and enhance comprehension, or there was an uneven distribution of tasks to develop higher cognitive skills. Also, researchers found the programs did not provide opportunities to apply reading skills to complex and varied texts (Miller & Blumenfield, 1993).

In a more recent study done analyzing four core reading programs published in the late 1990s, Jitendra, Chard, Hoppes, Renouf and Gardill (2001) analyzed how the programs addressed main idea strategy instruction and the implications for learning disabled students. The researchers indicated that all four programs included explicit instruction of strategies for identifying the main idea of a reading selection. The researchers found this instruction to be favorable progress from the research of core reading programs from the 1980s. However, the review of the four core reading programs indicated that objectives of what aspect of a main idea strategy should be a focus, and how to implement the strategy, with the text or the students were not clear in the teacher's manuals. Also, there were limited opportunities within the analyzed core reading programs to implement the strategy of identifying the main idea of a text. There were few lessons found across grade levels and across programs (Jitendra, et. al., 2001). The limited opportunities provided in core reading programs to apply main idea strategies to comprehend text successfully can be problematic for students with diverse learning needs who need frequent exposure and repetition of skills and strategies to be successful.

2.2.4   Conclusions

The review of literature on the alignment of core reading programs to SBRR practices indicates that there are certain characteristics that core reading programs should possess when providing instructional activities and guidance in addressing phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. This synthesis of characteristics includes:

- High correlation between reading strategies and concepts taught linked to appropriate texts and follow-up activities (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Jitendra, et. al,, 2001; Walsh, 2003; Ryder & Graves, 1994)

- Daily instructional opportunities in SBRR components provided with a clear scope and sequence (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Miller & Blumenfield, 1993)

- Strategy instruction introduced and reinforced systematically (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Gunderson, 1985; Walsh, 2003; Afflerbach & Walker, 1990)

- Explicit teaching of SBRR components (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Stein, et.al., 1999; Smith, et.al., 2001; Foorman, et.al., 2004)

- Use of a variety of appropriate materials to implement instruction (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Foorman, et.al., 2004)

- Questions and activities that promote high level thinking (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Ryder & Graves, 1994; Miller & Blumenfield, 1993)

- Teacher modeling of strategies and concepts related to SBRR (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Jitendra, et.al., 2001; Miller & Blumenfield, 1993)

- Opportunities to apply reading strategies and concepts related to SBRR
  (Otaiba, et.al., 2005; Foorman, et.al., 2004; Jitendra, et. al., 2001; Miller &
  Blumenfield, 1993)

- Explanations on how and why to implement the five SBRR components
  (Otaiba, et.al., 2005)

- Instructional suggestions and groupings for differentiated instruction
  (Otaiba, et.al., 2005)

Teachers benefit from a set of tools, such as a core reading program, that is well designed and serves as a cohesive blueprint aligned with SBRR in order to provide reading instruction that meets the needs of all students (Otaiba, et. al., 2005).   The research reviewed provided evidence that core reading programs aligned with SBRR often provided a link between and across all of the five SBRR components in order for teachers and students to see connections and application of concepts.   The research synthesized in this paper indicates the evolution of the basal or core reading program in progressing with the times, and providing teachers with programs and materials that align with what research indicates is most effective when implementing reading instruction. With teachers having updated and contemporary core reading programs and materials based on research, the need arises to investigate if and how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing reading instruction to diverse groups of children using a core reading program.

2.3 TEACHERS AND CORE READING PROGRAMS

Teachers play a significant role in deciding how to implement a basal or core reading program (Otaiba, et. al., 2005). Research has shown there are varied perceptions regarding how teachers use a basal or core reading program (Shannon, (1983); Baumann and Heubach (1996); Smith and Saltz (1987); Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993); Turner (1988); Carney & Neuenfeldt (1993); and Valencia, Place, Martin and Grossman (2006). The studies reviewed will critique how professionals in the field of reading perceive teacher use of core reading programs, and how teachers themselves perceive their use of core reading programs.

2.3.1 Teacher Use of Core Reading Programs According to Shannon and Baumann

In a significant and controversial study examining the reification of teachers who utilize a basal reading program, Shannon (1983) proclaimed that the application of commercial or core reading programs alienates teachers from their reading instruction. Through a survey, interviews, observations and a review of published documents with one school district, Shannon (1983) wanted to determine the organization and procedures of the reading program, and compare the perceptions of teachers, reading specialists, and administrators concerning the use of the reading program for the implementation of reading instruction.

Shannon (1983) determined that the hierarchy of authority in the district dictated how reading instruction would be implemented at the classroom level. Interviews revealed that teachers believed that the goals for reading instruction were supplied by the commercial materials without addition or deletion. According to administrators, reading instruction without the use of workbooks, worksheets, and systematic pacing was unacceptable. Teachers were well aware that administrators expected them to use the core reading programs.

Shannon (1983) found that administrators treated reading instruction as the systematic application of one set of commercial materials and attempted to exclude all other forms of instruction. The core reading programs in this district were found to define reading and decide whether or not a student could read. The researcher found that the administrators played a significant role in the mandated use of the commercial or core reading programs. However, teachers never rejected the organization of the program, the materials, or their use. All teachers interviewed said that the core reading programs were necessary to supply the continuity of instruction among classrooms and grade levels and thought that the materials could teach reading.

Although Shannon (1983) cites limitations of this study that include the type of commercial or core reading program used by this district, influence of teacher training, and the size of the school district, the research evidence provided in this study is significant. This study has influenced additional research into teacher's use and implementation of core reading programs.

In a follow up of his previous work, Shannon (1987) extended his investigation of the role of commercial [core] reading materials and teacher implementation of reading

instruction. By examining results of previous studies and analyzing expert opinions in the field of reading and reading instruction, Shannon (1987) developed the notion of *deskilling*. The *deskilling* concept suggests that teachers willingly accept, without objection, that commercial or core reading programs control reading instruction. Depending on the type of materials and administrative perspective, teachers relinquish most of their control over their planning and implementation of lessons to the commercial or core reading program. The deskilling notion suggests that classrooms where reading instruction is taking place are very business-like, insinuating that the teacher tells students what to do based on directions and practices within the commercial or core reading programs and students dutifully comply (Shannon, 1987).

The assumptions made by Shannon (1987) regarding the deskilling of teachers when using core reading programs prompted controversy and commentary in the field of reading. Baumann (1992) scrutinized the work of Shannon (1987) by finding his assumptions on teacher use of core reading programs contradictory and not as easily simplified to a cause and effect relationship that the materials of reading instruction dictate reading instructional practices.

This controversial debate regarding the deskilling of teachers when using a core reading program led Baumann and Heubach (1996) to conduct their own study. The researchers decided to go to the source, meaning those directly involved in the use and implementation of core reading programs. Baumann and Heubach (1996) surveyed elementary teachers regarding their use of and opinions about basal reading programs. Baumann and Heubach (1996) quoted the work of Shannon (1983,1987) as defining deskilling as: "Teachers surrendering control of or responsibility for curricular and

instructional decisions in reading to the materials, thus revoking their previously acquired teaching skills and knowledge." (p. 512).

The results of the Baumann and Heubach (1996) study indicated that most teachers are discriminating consumers in charge of their instruction and curricular decisions. Most teachers viewed the basal reading program as one instructional tool available to them in planning appropriate reading instruction. Teachers were found to draw from multiple methods and materials when teaching reading (Baumann & Heubach, 1996). Through open-ended responses, teachers were quoted as saying "Books don't teach reading, teachers teach reading."(p. 522). The researchers concluded from their study that instead of "deskilling" teachers as was previously perceived in other studies, basal reading programs empower teachers by providing them instructional suggestions to draw from, adapt, or extend as needed (Baumann & Heubach, 1996).

2.3.2 Teacher Use and Perspectives on Core Reading Programs

Teacher reactions to the basal reading program and the typical use of the basal vary among teachers and programs. Smith and Saltz (1987) surveyed teachers on their perceptions of the basal reading program. Some teachers surveyed believed their basal reading program lacked certain phonics, language and comprehension skills. Several teachers commented on the difficulty of meeting all students' reading needs using a basal reading program. Other teachers felt that a basal program provided a good balance between the teaching of skills and opportunities for practicing reading skills through varied activities.

Smith and Saltz's (1987) study revealed an overall consensus that a basal reading program provides a good foundation in reading skills and a wide variety of activities. Teachers believed that a basal reading program was a beneficial tool to beginning reading teachers. Overall, according to most teachers surveyed, a basal reading program served as the core of reading instruction, but it was often enriched with other instructional approaches for teaching reading (Smith & Saltz, 1987).

The issue of teachers' reliance on and use of basal or core reading programs has been investigated by other researchers. Turner (1988) conducted a survey of teachers' perceptions and uses of basal reading programs. Most teachers responding believed quality reading programs should provide reading instruction that give children solid skill development while fostering a love for reading. Many teachers believed the use of a basal reading program could enhance or hinder their reading instructional efforts. Teachers from Turner's (1988) survey indicated that sequential skill reinforcement was one of the most important benefits of a basal reading program followed by a variety of provided reading materials. Teachers liked the variety of activities to choose from, but often went beyond the basal reading program to develop critical thinking skills and foster the enjoyment of reading through other literature selections. Many shortcomings and drawbacks of the basal reading program were offered by teachers with their recommendations for improvement (Turner, 1988). With the variance of responses to the use and perception of the basal, one teacher was quoted as saying, "Teachers are the professionals and are the ones who should decide which pieces to use in a basal reading program." (p.63).

The issue of basal or core reading programs and their use by teachers was prevalent in additional research done in the early 1990s. Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) continued the investigations on how teachers use basal or core reading programs and the perceived dependency of teachers on basal reading programs for the implementation of reading instruction (Shannon, 1983,1987; Baumann, 1992). The researchers conducted a qualitative study based on interviews with eight elementary teachers concerning their beliefs or knowledge, perceptions, and feelings about the role of the basal reading program in their implementation of reading instruction.

This study further investigated how the teachers' beliefs, based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, related to reading instructional practices by trying to fulfill the varying needs of students, teachers, parents and school administrators (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993).

Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) reported a conflict between teachers' beliefs and teachers' reported methods of teaching reading. Teachers believed and acknowledged that the use of the basal reading program for reading instruction was not the best way to teach reading, but continued to rely heavily on the use of the basal reading program. Teachers' feelings and opinions regarding the strict adherence to the basal or core reading program for the implementation of reading instruction indicated that teachers felt regimented and in a rut due to the lack of flexibility when delivering reading instruction with the basal reading program. The process to implement reading instruction was the same day to day, and this routine concerned teachers. However, the teachers commented that they liked the structure, organization and guidance provided by the basal or core reading materials (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993).

Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) further probed teachers to determine why there was this conflict between what they believed and thought about reading instruction and what they actually did during implementation. Several teachers indicated that they had concerns and lacked confidence about teaching reading without the basal. Several teachers acknowledged that using a basal reading program was how they were taught to read, and using the basal reading program was what they were taught to do in their teacher preparation programs; therefore, that is how they implemented reading instruction (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993). Additional concerns of the eight teachers interviewed revealed that teachers felt pressure to teach reading using the basal or core reading program. Interestingly, the teachers said they put pressure on themselves, and that the pressure did not come directly or explicitly from the principal. This finding is contradictory to the finding of Shannon (1983,1987) where his research revealed that teachers felt tremendous stress to implement and adhere to the basal or core reading program due to pressure and mandates by the school administration.

The pressures that teachers put on themselves to adhere strictly to the basal reading program dealt with the need to cover certain material in a designated period of time to better prepare the student for the next grade level. The teachers indicated that covering a designated amount of material in the basal or core reading program made them feel competent and successful as a reading teacher (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993).

The research findings of Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) create a disturbing concept that teachers deliver instruction that they believe is not in the best interest of students. The researchers pose that this cognitive dissonance may be due to the conflict between what teachers believe about reading instruction and their thinking when planning

and delivering instruction. The results of this study imply that teachers' anxiety to do the perceived right thing to satisfy the needs of others (teachers, administrators, parents and students) leads to pedagogical dependency on the basal or core reading program and their lack of empowerment as a decision maker for instruction.

The findings proposed here by Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) also highly correlate with the initial findings of Shannon (1983,1987) related to teacher reliance on basal reading programs, as well as, the perceived control that the commercial materials have on how teachers implement reading instruction. However, Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) further probe possible rationales regarding why teachers allow materials to control their reading instruction. This more in-depth insight into teachers' beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions provides opportunities to further investigate ways to assist teachers in the future to make sound instructional decisions based on knowledge and the learner for the implementation of reading instruction.

Other researchers prompted by the previous studies wanted to acquire additional insight into the teachers' perspective regarding their preference and use of the basal or core reading program. Carney and Neuenfeldt (1993) surveyed 639 teachers in 11 school districts, rural and urban, from five different states. The researchers used a four-part, 19 item, self evaluation survey with both multiple choice and open ended questions that addressed teacher training, years of classroom experience, beliefs about teaching reading, and materials used to teach reading.   The results of this study indicated that again, teacher use of a basal reading program was the dominant method for the implementation of reading instruction. The preferential use of the basal reading program by teachers was found to be most often in conjunction with tradebooks for the teaching of reading. Sixty-

five percent of the teachers surveyed indicated that they used the basal or core reading program combined with tradebooks, while 18.4% indicated heavy reliance on just the basal reading program for reading instruction (Carney & Neuenfeldt, 1993).

Teachers commented on the need for additional training in other methods of teaching reading, if they were to move away from reliance on the basal reading program. Also, there was the perception by teachers that they would miss covering the necessary skills and concepts needed at a particular grade level if they relinquished total use of the basal reading program. Other teachers felt they must *obey* and use what the district-adopted programs were as the primary method of teaching reading, and that the basal reading program provided a sense of accountability to ensure that all students received adequate reading instruction (Carney & Neuenfeldt, 1993).

The results of this study support the findings of previous work regarding teacher reliance on the use of a basal or core reading program as the primary means of implementing reading instruction. However, Carney and Neuenfeldt (1993) offer insight into a varying perception on how teachers use basal or core reading programs. Teacher preference to use a combination of basal reading programs and tradebooks for their reading instruction as compared to sole reliance on the basal reading program and materials, demonstrates progress by teachers to not allow the teaching of reading to be controlled by materials.

Much of the research evidence reviewed so far, except for the work of Baumann (1992,1996), support Shannon's (1983,1987) notion that teachers rely mostly on the use of basal or core reading programs, and allow those programs to control how they implement reading instruction. A study conducted through the National Reading

Research Center (Hoffman, McCarthey, Bayles, Price, Elliot, et.al., 1995) contradicts the findings of Shannon (1987) and correlates with the findings of Baumann (1996). The researchers (Hoffman, et.al., 1995) conducted case studies with sixteen first grade teachers from varying school districts in south-central Texas. The teachers were observed and interviewed over the course of a school year regarding their reading instructional practices and materials, and beliefs about reading. A questionnaire was also used with 269 first grade teachers from the varying school districts to collect additional data regarding teacher experiences, beliefs, and instructional practices. The questionnaire followed a closed-response format and was similar in focus to items asked in the interview for the case-study teachers.

This study by Hoffman, et.al., (1995) revealed significant findings that suggest that there is great diversity in teaching and learning in the area of reading among teachers from the same district, school, and even grade level. This lack of homogeneity in the teaching of reading suggests that teachers are not blindly following the traditional basal reading programs as a script or recipe for reading instructional practices.

A distinguishing trait found through the questionnaires and the case-studies was the varied use of the teacher's manual and pupil texts. Most teachers used the pupil texts in their instruction, but most did not follow the teacher's manual in a proceduralized way. Instead, they drew from manuals only as needed, and designed flexible literacy routines around the pupil texts and other instructional materials. The researchers found the basal reading program was not totally controlling teachers when implementing reading instruction (Hoffman, et.al., 1995).

This study challenges the deskilling hypothesis as posed by Shannon (1983,1987).

The research reviewed regarding how teachers use basal or core reading programs provides evidence that there were varying perspectives by teachers during the mid 1980s and 1990s. This difference of opinions could be due to the controversial rhetoric during that time period of the perceived best way to teach reading as advocated by the whole language theorists (Baumann, 1992). A review of the research indicated a significant hiatus from the controversial issue of the deskilling of teachers when using a basal or core reading program.

However, a recent study examined how beginning teachers understood and used curriculum materials, such as a core reading program, for teaching reading and how their uses shaped their future reading instructional practices. In a longitudinal study by Valencia, Place, Martin and Grossman (2006), the researchers followed four beginning elementary teachers over a three year period to determine their use of reading curriculum materials and how these materials shaped their reading instructional practices. Through teacher interviews and observations, this study revealed at the beginning of the study that all four elementary teachers referred to their need as a reading teacher to provide a complete reading program, which included instruction in comprehension, word identification, vocabulary, writing, motivation and responses to literature.

All of the teachers also were concerned about meeting the needs of a wide range of students. The teachers in this study, who were mandated to use core reading programs, were found to take a more procedural approach to teaching reading, rather than a conceptual approach to the use of the materials. These teachers followed the teacher's manuals explicitly, even though they were provided opportunities for teacher choices within the program. One teacher was quoted as saying that daily and weekly

implementation was "almost a little brainless for me." Another teacher was found to not

know why she was doing the activities she was doing, and failed to provide coherent

learning experiences for students(Valencia, et.al., 2006).

The researchers in this study (Valencia, et.al., 2006) determined that the use of

mandated curriculum materials and programs both fostered and inhibited teachers'

progression as reading teachers. Those teachers who used mandated curriculum materials

such as a core reading program were found to have grown the least in their professional

development and in their abilities to adapt instruction to meet the needs of their students,

when compared to the teachers using other materials and programs (Valencia, et. al,

2006).

Although the findings of this study are significant, it would be difficult to

generalize to all teachers or all beginning teachers that how they use and implement

commercial reading materials and programs early in their career influences their further

development as a reading teacher.

2.3.3   Conclusions

The studies reviewed regarding teachers' use and perceptions of core reading

programs indicate that the issue remains controversial and debatable within the field of

reading instruction. The deskilling notion of Shannon (1987) suggests that teachers have

little or no decision making abilities or power when using a core reading program.

However, teachers seem to be cognizant that basal or core reading programs vary and that

they have decision making power in their use of the program (Baumann, 1996; Hoffman,

et. al., 1995). Through surveys, teachers revealed their abilities to identify what they believed were the strengths and weaknesses of basal or core reading programs, and shared that they often supplement the core reading program when implementing it in order to better meet the needs of students (Turner, 1988; Carney & Neuenfeldt, 1993).

Baumann's study (1992) proposes that teachers are independent, thoughtful people who are quite capable of making professional judgments about their workplace and the nature of their work, including the implementation of a core reading program. Baumann (1992) emphasizes in his work that basal or core reading programs are one instructional tool at a teacher's disposal and that materials do not teach, teachers teach. However, these findings do elicit queries into how or why teachers make instructional decisions and the factors that may influence those decisions.

2.4 TEACHERS' DECISION MAKING PRACTICES

Decision making refers to individuals or groups making mental choices in order to affect outcomes. The decision maker uses available information and applies a reasoning process in order to make choices. This choice, either an action or an opinion, influences the results of whatever is being reviewed (Dewey, 1933).

The concept of decision making by teachers is paramount to student outcomes. There are various research studies that focus on teacher decision making and its intended or unintended outcomes.

2.4.1 Overview of Teacher Decision Making

Research has examined the decision making process, how researchers measure decision making by teachers, and how decision making influences outcomes, particularly student achievement and results. Specific studies reviewed here will analyze:

- Teachers' decision making processes when implementing a reading program (Jinkins, 2001).

- Teachers' judgments and decision making in the classroom (Shavelson, 1983).

- Teachers' specific decisions made when teaching reading (Woolacott, 2002).

- Decision making by teachers concerning students with disabilities (Destefano, Shriner & Lloyd, 2001).

- General studies and analysis by Shulman (1987) and Vacca, Vacca and Bruneau (2005) regarding the importance of reflection and learning, and how these concepts affect decision making.

2.4.2 Teacher Decision Making Process and Measurement

Decision making is a cognitive process to determine the best possible outcome. Shavelson (1983) believes one unique feature of teacher decision making is that the majority of decision making is done in *real time* in front of the classroom while instructing. Shavelson (1983) characterizes such *in-flight* decision making as interactive decision making. Teachers usually don't have the luxury of time, when standing in front of the class actively instructing, to reflect or obtain information before making a decision. A similar observation is made by Jinkins (2001), who identifies a primary component of

teacher decision making as being *on-the-run*. Consequently, because such choices by teachers are done spontaneously in front of the classroom, the teacher must rely on his or her knowledge and experience to determine the appropriate path to take (Shavelson, 1983). The behaviors of teachers are driven by past experiences, likes and dislikes, and teaching judgments. These behaviors are used to make teaching choices (Shavelson, 1983).

Not all decision making done by teachers is spontaneous and at the moment. An effective teacher collects assessment data to determine student needs, and plans what to do next (Jinkins, 2001). Likewise, teacher behavior is driven by thoughts, judgments, and decisions that have previously occurred (Shavelson, 1983).

The methods used to measure teacher decision making vary greatly, but focus on a common element of measuring teacher judgments. Shavelson (1983) describes multiple methods of measuring decision making, which all aim to capture the process teachers use to analyze information and make decisions in various situations. All these measurement processes involve qualitative analysis of specific cognitive processes, based on the teachers' past experiences and beliefs about the process they are instructing (Shavelson, 1983). Qualitative research methods are linked to the overall goals of researching decision making, because to understand teaching, one must understand teachers' goals, judgments, and decisions, especially in relation to teacher behavior and classroom context (Shavelson, 1983). Other research methods focus on detailed case studies and ethnographic documentation, which provides rich detail on specific examples (Jinkins, 2001).

2.4.3   Teacher Decision Making in Addressing Student Needs

One of the main responsibilities of a teacher is to improve students' results and increase learning and understanding. Student populations are not homogeneous; rather, students have unique characteristics, strengths and weaknesses to which teachers must adapt their pedagogical style.

Jinkins (2001) studied multi-age classrooms in a charter school located in the Southwest. The researcher selected three teachers with varying educational experiences, and each teacher chose three six year-old students to participate in the study. The purpose was to determine how the teaching / learning cycle influenced each teacher's decisions regarding reading instruction to their group of students.

Before the study commenced, the teachers were provided training in professional development and literacy instruction, specifically the teaching / learning cycle. This cycle demonstrated to the teachers the steps of Planning, Teaching, Assessing and Evaluating. The main concept of this training was to develop the teachers' understanding of the decision making process, their student outcomes, and the ability to modify their instructional methods if necessary.

The 12 week study began with an assessment of the current reading level of each student. The methods used to determine their reading level were running records and writing samples. The same methods, as well as observations, were analyzed at the end of the study to develop comparison levels. Throughout the 12 weeks, samples of running records and writing samples were taken from the students. The student samples were

used to measure teacher proficiency in linking and planning instruction, based on student needs.

Jinkins (2001) discovered that when the teachers understood and applied the learning cycle, specifically with the goal of making decisions based on student needs, student learning was accelerated. Jinkins (2001) documented that the teachers observed student behaviors, and determined sequentially what needed to be taught next. At the conclusion of the study, it was noted that the ability of teachers to match their instructional methods to student needs resulted in 7 of the 9 students making twice the academic progress than was expected (Jinkins, 2001).

Although the study documented gains in student progress related to teacher decision making based on instructional needs, other variables could have influenced some of the gains made during the 12 week period. Other factors that may have contributed to student achievement that were not mentioned by the researcher could include parental involvement, student aptitude, and student motivation and engagement. In addition, one of the novice teachers utilized some data collection measurements incorrectly, which led to 2 students' inconsistent results. The study would have stronger significance if the researcher had been the sole person documenting before and after results, which would have strengthened reliability.

In a similar qualitative study on how two teachers approached reading instruction within their classroom, Woolacott (2002) identified specific situations when the teachers selected text with students' needs in mind. The goal of the study was to document the methods teachers used when teaching reading. The participants were two experienced teachers in the same school, one male and one female, with 20 and 16 years of

educational experience respectively. To gather data and discover instructional methods the teachers used, the researcher performed three semi-structured audiotaped interviews with the teachers in their classrooms after school. The researcher transcribed the interviews and an analysis was performed to determine certain beliefs and practices of each teacher. Both teachers used different methods to teach reading. One teacher taught based on a basal or core reading program, while the other employed a whole language approach. The choice in programs was largely driven from each teacher's personal preference (Woolacott, 2002). Despite the differences in reading instruction, both made instructional decisions based on student needs. The teachers in the study analyzed their students for strengths and weaknesses, and made instructional decisions on what they believed was most appropriate (Woolacott, 2002).

Both Jinkins' (2001) and Woolacott's (2002) research regarding teacher decision making addressing student needs are echoed in Shavelson's (1983) work on decision making. Referring to a decision making model, the researcher found that teachers were most affected by the concern for the pupil, and made decisions on what they decided was happening with the individual student (Shavelson, 1983). This concern for the students guides teachers to adapt their planning to satisfy their pupils' needs.

Decision making based on student needs is also necessary for students with special needs. Destefano, Shriner and Lloyd's (2001) study tested the effectiveness of intervention and training in decision making with teachers and administration for special needs students. Data were collected on teacher decision making by reviewing an individual student survey and analyzing each student's individualized education plan (IEP). Further analysis was done on what accommodations were being made for specific

students, based on teacher analysis and comparison to the documented IEP. After the initial data were gathered, the group of teachers went through seven training sessions, specifically focused on decision making regarding special needs students. These trainings were focused on the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and modifications on the student IEP.

A comparison of the accommodations required for special needs students was made after the completion of the study. There was a noted decrease in the number of accommodations that teachers needed to make to their students after implementing the training. The decrease was attributed to improved teacher decision making. The teachers were more likely to correctly identify student needs, instead of a blanket "all or none" mentality regarding accommodation (Destefano, et. al., 2001).

The amount of training involved with Destefano and colleagues study (2001) consisted of making appropriate instructional decisions for students with disabilities, as well as, adherence to the requirements for accommodations for students with disabilities based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The measurement techniques used to determine teacher accommodations did not separate whether teachers made better choices for students because of the decision making training, or more familiarity with the requirements of IDEA. In addition, Destefano, et.al., (2001) discussed that there likely existed some modest Hawthorne effect on the sample, as the teachers were more likely to make decisions regarding specialized accommodations post-training.

Shulman (1987) noted and reinforced other concepts of decision making, specifically adaptation, which is defined as a process of fitting the represented material to

the characteristics of the students. The process of an educator reflecting, or looking back

at the process and results for the purpose of improvement, enhances future decision

making. The review of Shulman's (1987) work is discussed in more detail in the

reflective teaching section, but the link between a teacher reflecting and improving

knowledge and effective decision making is important in the review of literature.

These reviews and studies all focused on understanding student needs, what

resources teachers have at their disposal (both knowledge and training, as well as

materials and resources), and most importantly, what approaches they will take to

optimize student outcomes (Shavelson, 1983). Teachers make decisions during planning

and actual instruction for many reasons, but the primary goal is to meet students'

instructional needs.

2.4.4   Improving Teacher Decision Making

Teachers possess a significant amount of information to make decisions regarding

instruction. As a practitioner, they need to apply their knowledge to make informed

decisions. There is specific research that focuses on what improves decision making, as

well as the characteristics and habits of successful decision makers.

In a review of literature by Shavelson (1983), it was noted that teachers with high

verbal and reasoning abilities (as measured by vocabulary tests) are more likely to use

more complex decision making strategies than teachers with lower abilities. Discussions

with colleagues to review teaching practices, as well as journaling ideas and reflections,

were found to lead to improved teacher decision making. Woolacott (2002) identified

interaction with colleagues as an important process in helping teachers with instructional dilemmas. In addition, logs, journals and diaries help teachers explore and grow from experience and reflection on practice (Vacca, Vacca & Bruneau, 2005). Group meetings and dialogue sessions, where important information is shared, improve teacher practice, and ultimately decision making. Since decision making is enhanced by reflecting on past self-experiences and experiences of others, the more frequent exposure to these types of learning methods improves teacher performance (Vacca, et. al, 2005).

Reflection on the part of teachers is an important part of decision making. This concept is grounded in Dewey's (1933) work; he comments that teachers must be thoughtful students of their own practice. Reflective teaching is the ability of teachers to function as professional problem solvers, because it allows teachers to interact and respond to student needs (Vacca, et. al., 2005).

As described above in the reviewed literature, the main goal of teacher decision making focuses on student needs. To become an effective teacher, however, requires reflective consideration of teaching practices, knowledge of successful teaching methods, and effective decision making. For example, Vacca, et. al., (2005) describes that effective teachers were considered to be good managers of prepared reading materials typically offered by basal (core) reading programs. Teachers' experience and decision making are more geared to the needs of the students, and not regimented by a specific program. This decision making analysis leads to the conclusion that an effective teacher modifies lessons and plans as needed, and makes decisions to satisfy student needs (Shavelson, 1983).

Shulman (1987) describes reflection as a set of processes where a teacher learns through experience. He elaborates on a specific model of pedagogical reasoning and action, which identifies six key areas of (a) comprehension; (b) transformation; (c) instruction; (d) evaluation; (e) reflection; and (f) new comprehensions. Specifically, the areas of evaluation and reflection link to interactive decision making on the part of teachers. Evaluation suggests checking for student understanding during interactive teaching as well as evaluating one's own performance and adjusting for experiences. Shulman (1987) identifies these components of evaluation to be effective qualities to improve instruction by making effective decisions in the classroom. Similarly, judgment is classified as a process of evaluating or categorizing a person or an object. Judgment also adds additional information to the analysis process because it is ongoing, and permeates every aspect of the teaching and learning process (Shavelson, 1983).

2.4.5   Summary of Decision Making Research

Effective teacher decision making is extremely important in determining student outcomes. Most notably, studies on teacher decision making showed that teachers make decisions based on students' needs. Teachers can influence their ability to make decisions by reflective journaling and interacting with professional colleagues for the purpose of improving knowledge. This strong knowledge is important, especially in teaching, as teachers frequently do not have the luxury of time when making decisions which affect instruction. They must rely on past experiences and knowledge of pedagogy to make the most beneficial decisions to foster student learning success.

2.5 SUMMARY

Research in the use of basal [core] reading programs and teacher decision making provides evidence that these two concepts have been prevalent in the literature for quite some time. However, limited research has investigated how the two concepts of the use of a basal [core] reading program and how teachers make instructional decisions influence reading instructional practices. The research reviewed here provides evidence that supports the following conclusions:

- The use of a basal [core] reading program has been, and continues to be, a dominant entity in the implementation of reading instruction in the elementary classroom (Pearson, 2002; Smith, 2002; Gunning, 2003).

- Basal [core] reading programs have evolved to stay current with the political climate and with what research has identified as effective reading instructional practices (Smith, 2002; Pearson, 2002; Otaiba, 2005).

- Teacher use of basal [core] reading programs is controversial due to the perspective that commercially published reading programs *deskill* teachers, presuming that materials guide reading instruction in the classroom, not teachers (Shannon, 1987; Barksdale-Ladd, 1993; Valencia, et.al, 2006). Other research provides evidence to support that teachers are competent consumers in charge of the reading instruction in their classroom (Baumann & Heubach, 1996; Turner, 1988).

- Teachers make instructional decisions often based on student needs (Jinkins, 2001; Woolacott, 2002; Shavelson, 1983).

- Effective teachers are reflective practitioners (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983).

With all that is known about basal reading programs and teacher decision making, gaps still remain in the literature. Concepts that remain unanswered include:

- Teacher use of the most recently published and adopted core reading programs that now include SBRR.

- The factors that influence teacher instructional decision making (experience, education, and administration).

- The influence of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge on teacher instructional decision making.

- Whether teachers implement new core reading programs strictly as prescribed, or use them as a quality resource that provides instructional suggestions and materials to choose from.

- Whether teachers recognize the significant role they play in the implementation of reading instruction in the classroom.

Further investigation into the use of basal [core] reading programs and how teachers make instructional decisions will provide additional evidence to determine if the instructional program, the teacher, or a combination of both is the most influential in providing effective reading instruction. This knowledge can provide guidance into needed areas of professional development, to promote the most effective reading instructional practices to meet the needs of all children.

3.0 METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

A mixed model research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods was chosen for this study, with the qualitative data more heavily weighted. "Qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realities, studied through sustained contact with people in their natural environments, generating rich, descriptive data that helps us to understand their experiences and attitudes" (Rees, 1996, p. 375). Qualitative studies are focused on examining the individuals being studied and evaluating their experiences on the topic. A quantitative analysis emphasized correlations or relationships that existed between the various data collected. A within-stage mixed model approach using quantitative data analysis was used to build on the findings of the qualitative research (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006).

Several data collecting instruments were used, including (a) a questionnaire administered to kindergarten through third grade teachers (See Appendix A), (b) in-depth interviews with kindergarten through third grade teachers in which they talked about how they planned daily literacy lessons (See Appendix B), and (c) an interview with the school administrator using open-ended questions (See Appendix C). The goal of this research was to investigate instructional decision making with a sample of teachers and administration when implementing a new core reading program. This research probed which factors such as content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and/or knowledge of the learners were most influential when teachers made instructional decisions.

3.1   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that were examined are:

1. What is the nature of teacher instructional decision making in the implementation of a new core reading program?

    a. In what ways does teacher knowledge of the content related to Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR) influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

    b. In what ways does teacher knowledge of learner needs in the classroom influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

    c. In what ways does teacher knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies related to SBRR influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

2. What are the similarities and differences, if any, on how novice teachers, experienced teachers, and veteran teachers make instructional decisions to implement a new core reading program?

3. What are the similarities and differences, if any, on how kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade teachers make instructional decisions to implement a new core reading program?

4. In what ways does the site-based school administrator influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?

Figure 1 graphically represents the connections between the research questions and data collecting instruments.

Figure 1

Research Questions and Data Collection Instruments
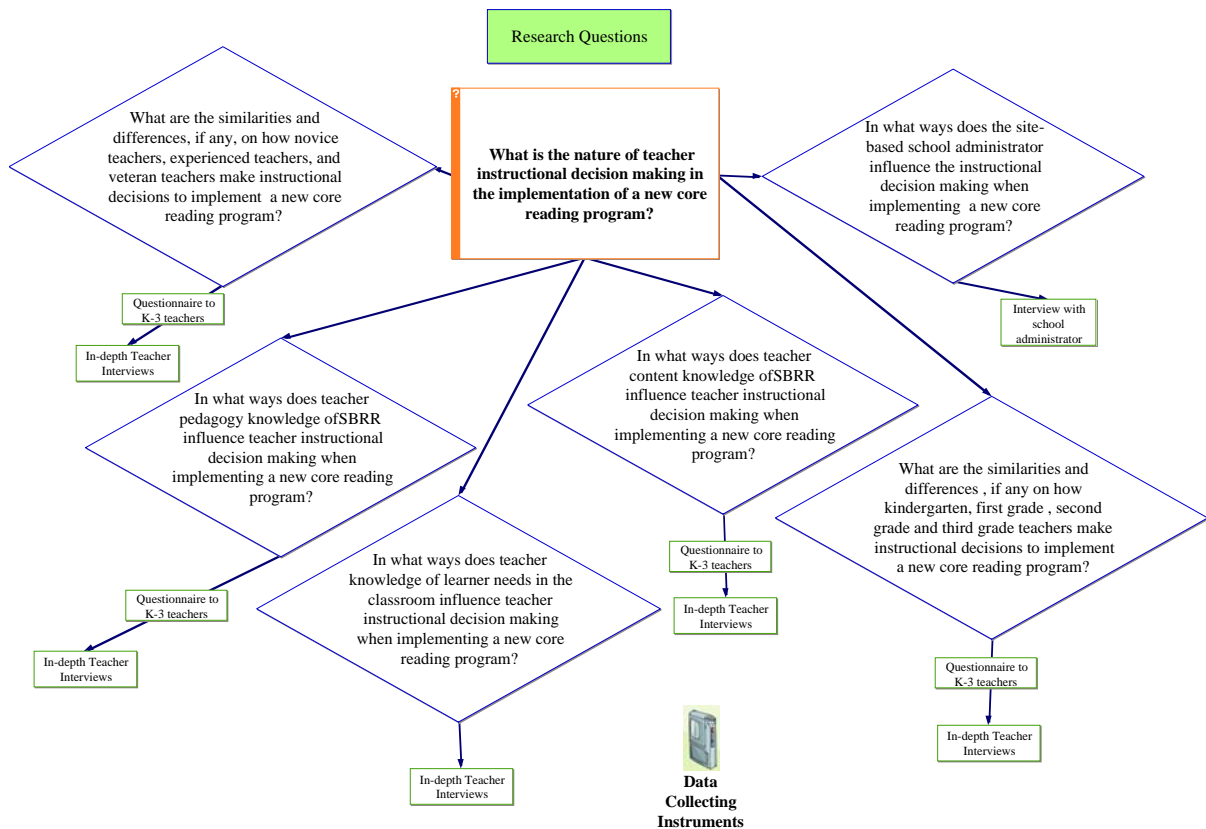
3.2   PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, and (c) knowledge of the student learner were factors associated with instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program.

Further investigation analyzed if teacher educational background, teaching experiences, and the requirements of the school administrator were factors associated with how teachers chose to implement a new core reading program.   This study allowed future teachers and administrators to better understand the factors that may influence instructional decision making. This knowledge enables schools to better assist teachers with more effective implementation of a new core reading program by identifying areas of possible future professional development.   These findings identify the need for teachers to develop a more thorough understanding of reading instructional content, pedagogy, or learner instructional needs.

Figure 2 graphically represents what is known from the literature about the use of core reading programs and teacher instructional decision making, and the areas of further research that were investigated in this study.

Figure 2

Current Literature and Information to be Investigated

How Teachers Make Instructional Decisions When Implementing a New Core Reading Program

Teachers often make instructional decisions based on student needs

Teacher use of new core reading programs and how they choose from instructional suggestions and materials

Effective teachers are reflective practitioners

Known information

Information to be researched

Teachers' role in the implementation of reading instruction in the classroom

Use of basal [core] reading program has been and continues to be predominant in the elementary classroom

Basal [core] reading programs have evolved to stay current with political climate and reading research

Teacher use of basal [core] reading programs is controversial

Teacher use of the most recently published and adopted core reading programs that include SBRR

The influence of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge on teacher instructional decision making when using a core reading program

Factors that influence teacher instructional decision ...

3.3   SETTING

The setting was an elementary school serving kindergarten through fourth grade students located in a small town (population 3,200) in northwestern Pennsylvania. The school district served kindergarten through grade 12, with one school building each for elementary, middle and high school students. Total district enrollment was

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approximately 2,000, and the elementary school's enrollment was about 750 students. The elementary school in this study was referred to as *EDES*. (See Appendix D).

At *EDES*, students' PSSA test scores in reading and math were modestly better than the state average in 2006. A total of 75% of third grade students scored at or above proficient in reading, compared to the state average of 69% proficient. In math, a total of 87% of third grade students scored at or above proficient, compared to the state average of 83%. The student to teacher ratio was 14:1, compared to a statewide average of 15:1. Approximately 98% of the 750 students were white, compared to the state average of 76% white. The remaining 2% of the student population at the selected school was either Black or Hispanic, compared to the state average of 22% Black or Hispanic. At this elementary school, a total of 43% of the students were eligible for a free or reduced lunch program, which is higher than the statewide average of 33% eligibility.

3.4   PARTICIPANTS

The possible participants in this study were 29 teachers who taught kindergarten through third grade, and the school administrator. Fourth grade teachers were not be included in this study because of the focus of the federal mandates (NCLB, 2002) emphasizing proficient reading by the end of third grade. The school administration consisted of a principal and a part-time assistant principal; however, for this study the principal was the only one interviewed (See Appendix E). The role of the assistant principal at *EDES* was focused on discipline and management of the school facility, with limited participation in school-wide instructional programming. The teachers at the selected school were implementing a newly adopted core reading program, McGraw-Hill *Treasures*.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize information on the teachers who participated in this study. The researcher will used numbers when referring to the teachers in the study to maintain anonymity. The tables group total teachers by grade level, gender, and average total years teaching, teaching in the primary grades, and years teaching in their present grade. Also summarized are the number of teachers based on years of experience, as well as educational degrees held and postgraduate hours taken.

Table 1 reveals that 26 of 29 total teachers were female, with an average of 14 years total teaching experience. The group's average years teaching in the primary grades was 13 years, with an average of 8 years teaching experience in their current grade level. Of the 29 teachers, 45% were considered novice, 31% were experienced, and 24% were considered veteran.

As shown in Table 2, 16 of 29 total teachers had Master's degrees, while 13 possessed just a Bachelor's degree. All 13 teachers holding just a Bachelors degree had greater than 15 post-graduate credit hours. Of the 16 teachers that had Masters degrees, there were an equal number of teachers that had less than 15 post-graduate credit hours, and greater than 15 post-graduate credit hours.

Figure 3 displays in detail a comparison of the teachers' total years of teaching experience, their years teaching in the primary grades, and their years of experience teaching in their present grade level. Figure 3 graphically represents that most of the teachers had been teaching in their current grade level for most of their career.

Table 1

Teacher Demographic and Experience Data

Grade	Total # of Teachers	Male	Female	Avg. Total Yrs. Teaching	Avg. Yrs. In Primary Grade	Avg. Yrs. Present Grade	N	E	V
K	8	2	6	9	9	7	5	2	1
1st	7	0	7	11	10	9	2	2	3
2nd	7	0	7	20	20	9	3	2	2
3rd	7	1	6	18	16	9	3	3	1
Total	29	3	26	14	13	8	13	9	7

Note. N = Novice Teacher; E = Experienced Teacher; V = Veteran Teacher.
(See definitions in Chapter 1 for criteria)

Table 2

Teacher Education and Post-Graduate Hours Earned

Grade	Number of Teachers Highest Degree Held		Number of Teachers Post-Graduate Credit Hours Beyond Bachelors Degree		Number of Teachers Post-Graduate Credit Hours Beyond Masters Degree	
	Bachelors	Masters	Less than 15	15 or greater	Less than 15	15 or greater
K	4	4	0	4	2	2
1st	5	2	0	5	1	1
2nd	2	5	0	2	2	3
3rd	2	5	0	2	3	2
Total	13	16	0	13	8	8

Figure 3

EDES Teacher Experience Chart
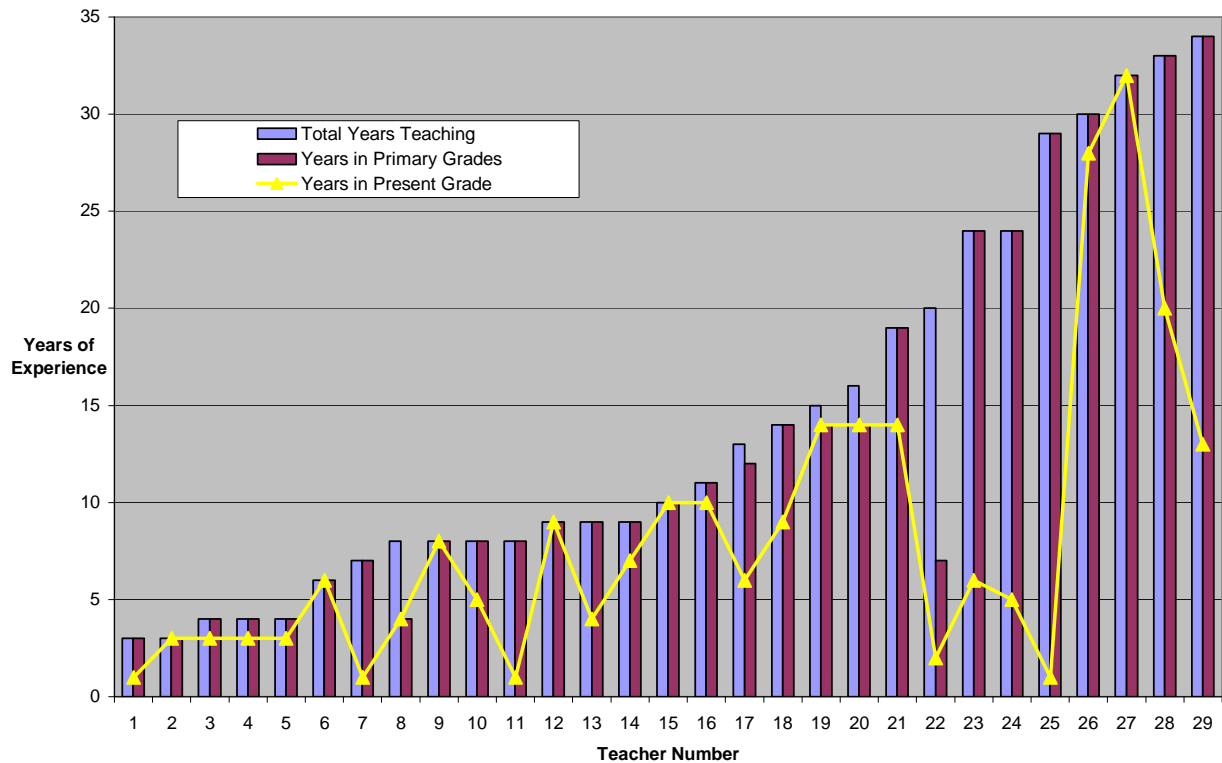
Although the 29 kindergarten through third grade teachers were asked to participate in an overview questionnaire regarding the implementation of a new core reading program, 12 teachers volunteered to participate in an in-depth interview which is discussed in more detail in the data collection section.

Two methods of sampling are available to researchers, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling assumes that the group selected for analysis will be representative of the whole universe, and that such findings can be logically extrapolated to draw conclusions. A non-probability sample was drawn from available

subjects, and may or may not represent a quantifiable extrapolation of the results (Patton, 2002). The non-randomness of the teacher selection was still valid, as Streubert and Carpenter (1995) stress that it is not required to randomly select participants, as manipulation and control of the results are not the purpose of this exercise. The selection of teacher participants in this study was non-random, due to the voluntary nature of the participants who were willing to share their more personal experiences with the new core reading program.

3.5   READING PROGRAM

During the previous school year, the selected school for this study engaged in the process of selecting a new core reading program that was research-based, assisted in meeting state standards, and addressed the learning needs of the student population they serve. Several months were spent reviewing and investigating six of the most recognized and utilized core reading programs. After hearing presentations from representatives from each publishing company, the school narrowed their selection down to their top three choices of possible core reading programs to adopt.

The teachers and administrators used Simmons and Kame'enui (2003) document, entitled *A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program, Grades K-3* to assist in reviewing the top three selected core reading programs. The guide provides specific criteria for teachers to analyze core reading programs on how they address each of the 5 SBRR components. Grade level teams of teachers reviewed each core reading program and completed the Simmons and Kame'enui (2003) checklists.

The school in this study selected the recently published (2007) core reading program called *Treasures* by the MacMillan/McGraw-Hill Company. *Treasures* was a comprehensive research-based K-6 reading program authored by some of the most well-known researchers in reading education which include but are not limited to: Donald Bear, Scott Paris, and Timothy Shanahan (McMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2007).

The *Treasures* core reading program offered a wealth of high quality literature to engage learners. This quality literature was provided to students in the form of a student anthology, leveled texts, read-aloud anthology, and a variety of narrative and expository text using Big Books for K-3. A variety of expository texts was also provided throughout the student anthology using excerpts from *TIME for Kids* for each grade level (MacMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2007).

A sequence of comprehensive teacher manuals were provided that contained five day plans that addressed instruction in the five SBRR components, with teaching suggestions for differentiated instruction. The program provided explicit instruction and ample practice to promote student growth in reading proficiency (MacMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2007). Each week's lessons integrated grammar, writing and spelling for a total language arts approach. The selected program highlighted how and where lessons correlated directly with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The *Treasures* core reading program provided supplemental and assessment materials to support and enhance instruction in the five SBRR components. The supplemental materials included: (a) alphabet sound and spell cards; (b) sound boxes; (c) workstation flip charts; (d) listening library; (e) retelling cards, (f) letter cards, (g) leveled

practice workbooks and (h) home/school connections books. Multiple forms of informal

and formal assessment measures were included and recommended for use throughout the

program. The assessment materials included: weekly and unit benchmark assessments

related to the format used in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA),

screening assessments, running records and periodic fluency assessments

(McMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2007).

The *Treasures* reading program provided teachers with a variety and wealth of

instructional materials and suggestions to implement reading instruction.

3.6 DATA SOURCES

This study investigated how teachers made instructional decisions when implementing a

new core reading program that incorporated SBRR instructional practices. The three

primary data collection instruments that were used are discussed below.

Teacher Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed using a Likert-like rating scale to determine agreement

and occurrences of behaviors related to the implementation of the new core reading

program for the kindergarten through third grade teachers at *EDES*. Statements on the

questionnaire were phrased in a positive fashion with each response assigned a point

value from five to one. There were three sections to the questionnaire with different scale

descriptors for each section. For this questionnaire:

- a score of 5 correlated with strongly agree (SA), daily (D), or always (AL) responses

- a score of 4 correlated with agree (A), several times weekly (SW), or most of the time (MT) responses

- a score of 3 correlated with undecided (U), once a week (W), or sometimes (S) responses

- a score of 2 correlated with disagree (DA), monthly (M), or very little (VL) responses

- a score of 1 correlated with strongly disagree (SD) or never (N) responses.

These scores, along with the teacher demographic data, served as the basis for the quantitative data analysis section of the research.

Items on the questionnaire were formulated to relate to the surveys and questionnaires utilized in the work of Baumann and Heubach (1996) and Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993). Their research studies focused on teacher use and dependency on the basal or core reading program for providing reading instruction.

This questionnaire was intended to obtain an overall impression of kindergarten through third grade teachers at *EDES* on their use and perceptions regarding the implementation of this new core reading program during the first year. Questions on the questionnaire addressed teachers' perceptions regarding the quality of the professional development they received, the role of the principal in implementation, and the overall perceived quality of the new core reading program. Additional questions inquired about how the new core reading program addressed the 5 SBRR components of phonemic

awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension for effective reading instruction. A significant number of questions queried specifically how teachers used the instructional suggestions and materials in the new core reading program, and how often they used them to provide reading instruction in their classroom. These questions were formulated by analyzing the teacher's manuals of the *Treasures* program. Specific instructional strategies and materials were identified in the teacher's manuals that were consistently promoted throughout all the grade levels to instruct the 5 SBRR components.

The questionnaires were distributed on-site to the kindergarten through third grade teachers at a scheduled staff meeting.   The teachers had the opportunity to respond and complete the questionnaire, and immediately returned it to the researcher. The researcher was on-site during the administration of the questionnaire to provide clarification or to answer any questions regarding the questionnaire. Twenty six of the 29 possible participants elected to complete and return the questionnaire.

Teacher Interviews

Following the completion of the questionnaire, the researcher asked for volunteers to participate in a further in-depth one-on-one interview. A total of 12 teachers agreed to participate in the in-depth interview process.

A qualitative interview consists of open ended questions and probes that yield in-depth responses about a person's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge. Data consist of verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable (Patton, 2002).

The interviews with the teachers took place on-site during the school day at *EDES*. This procedure choice allowed the teacher to refer to documentation he or she had in the classroom to answer certain questions. A substitute was provided by the researcher to cover the teacher's class while the interviews were conducted. This procedure allowed the interview to be conducted in an uninterrupted block of time. The interview location was a small resource room often used for meetings and small conferences. This setting allowed for a quiet and comfortable location for the interview, and prevented others from hearing.

The interviewer first explained the reasons for the interview and the types of questions to be asked. At this stage, it was extremely important to create rapport with the teachers, which enhanced the interview exchange process (Patton, 2002). The researcher ensured absolute anonymity and explained to the teachers that their responses would not be shared with administration at the school district where they were employed. The interview began with the researcher requesting that the teacher "walk" the interviewer through their planning of day 1 of the 5 day literacy instructional sequence, while using and referring to the teacher's manual in the new core reading program.

In order to probe further regarding the teachers' instructional decision making when using a new core reading program, the researcher had additional guided interview topic questions. The topic questions probed four key areas: (a) overview of the use of the new core reading program; (b) implementation of the new core reading program; (c) research-based instructional components provided in the new core reading program; and (d) perceptions of the new core reading program. The overview questions addressed the teachers' planning and the instructional sequence of literacy instruction. The

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implementation questions investigated how the teachers specifically used the new core reading program. The research-based components area sought to understand how the teachers made decisions to instruct in the five SBRR components of comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness and fluency. Questions regarding the teachers' perceptions captured what strengths, weaknesses, and general observations teachers had on the new core reading program. These questions allowed for further probing into factors that influenced the teachers' instructional decision making when using the new core reading program. The researcher wanted the opportunity for teachers to respond in their own words and express their personal perspectives. The interview questions were structured to avoid dichotomous answers, which only limits the research detail. The interview questions were also carefully worded to avoid multiple questions within one query, which could have confused the interviewee (Patton, 2002).

The interviews varied in length. The researcher communicated to the participants the approximate length of time the interview would take. Blaxter, et. al, (1996) comments that an interview of less than 30 minutes is unlikely to be effective, while an interview lasting longer than 60 minutes might be too time-consuming to a busy group. Based on the pilot interview conducted, the interviews conducted took between 45 and 60 minutes. The interview schedule was coordinated with the principal of the school to minimize any conflicts.

The interview allowed teachers to explain and elaborate on specific questions regarding the implementation of a new core reading program. Since the researcher had significant experience and knowledge of the methods required to implement a core reading program, the interview was structured to minimize influence on the research

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being conducted. However, the interviewer's extensive knowledge served as a positive influence on the study, as follow-up and clarifying questions needed to be asked to fully understand the specifics of the teacher's answers. During each interview, the researcher will heard words and issues repeated; these represented important categories of knowledge and lea to further probes. The researcher asked questions that attempted to identify why the teachers made the decisions they did when implementing certain components of the new core reading program.

The researcher tape recorded and transcribed the interviews. The tapes of the interviews will be kept and stored for at least 3 years after completion of the study. The interview tapes and transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's basement to keep them safe and secure, but also available for access if necessary. The interviews were the primary means of data collection and provided in-depth insight into teachers' thoughts and ideas. Tape recording was an important method that allowed the researcher to focus attention on the interviewee rather than the mechanics of note-taking. Due to the nature of this interview, it was imperative to pay full attention to current talk in order to formulate and link probes to the research questions being sought. The interviewer needed to be thinking ahead to ask teachers to elaborate and justify responses, and also to pose additional questions to the interviewee that arose that were not taken into account in the interview guide. In an effective interview, attention must be given to the interviewee to show that the researcher is listening and values what is being said (Patton, 2002).

A pilot interview was conducted with a teacher at *EDES* to practice how to anticipate teacher responses on how they plan instruction using the new core reading

program. The practice interview allowed the researcher to analyze the written transcript of the interview to determine when to ask more probing questions. For example, in the pilot interview, the teacher began discussing how she goes through planning a day. The teacher mentioned that she began with vocabulary for the focus story. The teacher said, "We go through vocabulary and when we do this, we start to build the background with the first two pages where they have a picture page, illustration, and a focus question for the kids to look at, read, and answer. So what we do is build background knowledge of what we think is happening."   After the teacher made this comment, the researcher prompted her by asking her to explain why she built background knowledge. This type of probe allowed the researcher to gather stronger data and rationale for why the teacher made the decisions she did when implementing the new core reading program.

As the teacher continued her discussion in the pilot interview regarding how she addressed vocabulary, she commented, "I really like the part where they ask a question, because it relates it to the kids' personal experiences or their thoughts and ideas of what that vocabulary word means to them." At this point, the researcher would probe the teacher further and ask "Why do you think this is important?" This probing question allowed the researcher to determine the teacher's knowledge base and how that influenced her instructional decision making.

The pilot assisted the researcher in identifying logistical and content oriented refinements. More probing questions were necessary and were needed to be implemented at the appropriate time, to obtain substantial feedback on why the teachers made the decisions they did when implementing this new core reading program. The pilot interview served as a guide in developing and revising the interview guide, helped

to ensure that the interview length was appropriate, and helped focus the interview on the issues related to implementing a new core reading program.

<u>Principal Interview</u>

A one-on-one interview was conducted with the school administrator regarding the perspective and role of the administrator in the instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program. Similar procedures regarding interview techniques were implemented and followed for the administrator that were identified in the teacher interview section, along with an appropriate interview guide sheet focused on the administrator's role in the implementation of the new core reading program at *EDES*.

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative analysis, it is common that mounds of field work and notes will be reduced to a small number of core themes. The quality of the insights generated is what matters, not the number of such insights (Patton, 2002). The researcher organized the data into major themes, categories and illustrative case examples extracted through content analysis. The themes, patterns, understandings, and insights that emerged from fieldwork and subsequent analysis were the fruits of qualitative inquiry. Through these data collecting methods, the researcher sought to identify factors that influenced how teachers implemented a new core reading program to attempt to answer the research questions posed.

The qualitative data took the form of semi-structured interview notes and responses on questionnaires.   To reduce the possibility of negative reflexivity, the following actions were performed: (a) important comments and phrases directly related to the implementation of the reading program were identified and studied; (b) attempts were made to synthesize the meaning(s) of each significant statement; (c) groups of significant statements were collected and grouped into clusters of themes; and (d) the clusters were used to create a full portrayal of the teachers' experiences.

The analysis strategy used for this qualitative study was an inductive analysis approach. The inductive analysis approach (a) condensed raw textual data into a brief, summary format, (b) established clear links between the evaluation or research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data, and (c) developed a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that were evident in the raw data. The general inductive approach provided an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analyzing qualitative data that produced reliable and valid findings (Thomas, 2004).

The data was analyzed using NVivo 7, which was software specific for data analysis on qualitative research projects. The software assisted with analysis of small or large bodies of text in focus group summaries or open-ended answers in surveys, and was designed to automate tedious work by auto-coding text for easy bracketing and grouping for further analysis. This process assisted with reliability by using actual examples, comments and notes in the research paper. These anecdotal comments, taken verbatim, were used to support drawn conclusions and comments from the researcher.

The questionnaire responses were analyzed using quantitative analysis, to determine key components such as descriptive statistics analysis, variability, correlations,

and frequency distributions. In addition, the data was compared with the themes gathered

from the qualitative data to determine what correlations existed. These triangulation

methods yielded results that were more meaningful than simply standalone qualitative or

quantitative data analysis (Gay et.al., 2006). The quantitative data was analyzed using

SPSS for Windows, which was a statistical analysis package that allowed for robust data

query. The overall research maintained a qualitative focus, but the quantitative data

enhanced the results and linked findings that could have been overlooked without the use

of a mixed-model research approach.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF DATA

This is a story about how kindergarten through third grade classroom teachers are reflective and deliberate instructional decision makers when providing reading instruction using a new core reading program that contains a variety of teaching suggestions and instructional options. This study examined how teachers made instructional decisions while implementing a new core reading program based on students' needs, content knowledge of the five scientifically based reading research (SBRR) components, and knowledge of a variety of instructional approaches and strategies.

4.1 OVERVIEW OF DATA ANALYSIS

To detail the ways teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program, identifying *what* teachers were doing for reading instruction when using the new core reading program, and identifying their perceptions of the new core reading program were important first steps. The questionnaire in this mixed-method study served as the quantitative data collecting source, to provide an overview for how teachers implemented the new core reading program. An analysis of the questionnaire responses allowed the researcher to determine the use and perceptions of the new core reading program for the 26 of the 29 participating kindergarten through third grade teachers at the designated site. The ultimate goal of the data analysis was to capture specific teacher activities conducted when implementing the new core reading program.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers and with the school administrator collected insights on how and why teachers made instructional decisions, and outlined the factors that influence implementation when using a new core reading

program. Individual case studies of teacher interview responses, along with a cross-interview analysis based on years of experience and grade level were conducted. Content analysis was used to reduce and make sense of the volume of qualitative material to identify core consistencies, patterns and themes (Patton, 2002). Distinct patterns and themes emerged from work with informants that involved both inductive and deductive process analysis (Patton, 2002; Biklen & Casella, 2007).

4.1.1 First stage of analysis

 The questionnaire responses focused on (a) what teachers did while teaching reading to address the five SBRR components, (b) what materials teachers used in the new core reading program and (c) what, if any, supplemental materials and instructional approaches were used with the new core reading program during reading instruction. Additional data were collected using the questionnaire to determine the teachers' overall perceptions of the new core reading program during the first year of implementation, and the issues and factors that may have influenced implementation. This data, along with the teacher demographic data, served as the basis for the quantitative data analysis section of the research.

The three sections to the questionnaire differed in scale descriptors. The questionnaire data were ranked numerically by coding teacher responses. A score of 5 was given to any response of strongly agree (SA), daily (D), or always (AL). A score of 1 was given for strongly disagree (SD) or never (N) responses. From the numerical coding, a weighted average rating was compiled by multiplying the score (5-1) by the percentage of teachers responding for that rating. The resulting rank for each question

was between 5 and 1. The questionnaire data were sorted by total responses, by grade

level (kindergarten through third grade) and by level of experience (novice, experienced

or veteran). Ratings were then rank-ordered to identify the highest and lowest responses

from each group of teachers. This sorted data indicated what teachers did consistently

during implementation and indicated their perceptions of the implementation of the new

core reading program. In addition to the weighted ratings, the percentage of teacher

responses in each category was calculated for each question.

Of the 29 total kindergarten through third grade teachers available at the research

site, 26 chose to respond to the questionnaire. From the 26 teachers who responded to the

questionnaire, teachers were asked to volunteer to participate in a more in-depth and

probing anonymous interview to specifically discuss why and how they made the

instructional decisions they did when implementing the new core reading program.

4.1.2   Second stage of analysis

The 12 teacher interviews and 1 principal interview were transcribed into a Microsoft

Word document. These documents were imported as source documents into NVivo 7, a

qualitative data analysis program which allows for specific coding and querying, for the

purpose of drawing links and correlations amongst qualitative, textual data (Bazeley,

2007). In addition, specific data were collected and input into NVivo 7 in the Attributes

section. Attributes, such as teacher experience and grade level, were created for each

case interview, to create correlations and links between teacher comments and the

research questions.

All 12 transcripts were read once as a group, and then re-read individually and coded as a free node. A free node is meant to define certain key concepts, phrases or ideas that a teacher mentioned. After completion of the initial round of coding, there were a total of 71 unique free nodes, and over 1,800 individual references (see Table 3). Over 75% of the material in the interview documents was ultimately coded to a specific node. The initial coding process is to "chunk the text into broad topic areas...to identify just those passages which will be relevant to our investigation." (Bazeley, 2007).

Table 3

Preliminary Node Report by Name

Name	References		Name	References
Accountability	34		Instructional Approach – ALL	216
Administration	25		Limited Time	34
Assessment	43		Materials	11
Collaboration	26		New Series - Trial and Error	18
Core Instruction	11		Perceptions of Core	115
Experience	27		Philosophy	15
IA - Accelerated Reader (AR)	9		Professional Development	26
IA - Brainstorming	4		SBRR – Comprehension	41
IA - Centers	15		SBRR – Fluency	20
IA - Comprehension Strategy Instruction	34		SBRR - Phonemic Awareness	23
IA - Cooperative Learning	13		SBRR – Phonics	31
IA - Differentiated Instruction	33		SBRR – Vocabulary	44
IA - Direct Instruction	3		SBRR – Writing	8
IA - Explicit Instruction	14		SN-Adaptation or Accommodation	9
IA - Graphic Organizers	22		SN-Age_Grade Appropriate	12
IA - Grouping (flexible)	38		SN-Choices	4
IA - Guided Reading	28		SN-Confidence (Develop)	3
IA - Independent Reading	5		SN-Critical Thinking	71
IA - Indirect Instruction	12		SN-Instructional Levels	26
IA - Integrated Instruction	19		SN-Interest	9
IA - Modeling	14		SN-Knowledge - Prior_Gain_Content	30
IA - Morning Message	5		SN-Learning Styles	6
IA - Phoneme Manipulation	8		SN-Motivation	27
IA - Questioning	6		SN-Practice and Repetition	22
IA - Read Aloud	4		SN-Provide Experiences	2
IA - Reciprocal Teaching	2		SN-Review	2
IA - Repeated Reading	5		SN-Skills necessary for success	49
IA - Shared Writing	2		SN-Special Needs	2
IA - Technology	4		SN-Time	8
IA - Word Learning Strategy	12		Student Needs – ALL	148
IA - Word Wall	8		Supplemental Materials	49
IA - Word Work	11		Time Teaching Literacy	18
IA - Writing Workshop	18		Use of Core	195

Once the nodes were sorted, further grouping of nodes created tree nodes, which are designed to organize nodes into a hierarchy for easy visual use and analysis. The three largest nodes were Knowledge of Instructional Approaches, Knowledge of Student Needs, and Knowledge of the five SBRR Components. The researcher then categorized each comment within these three main topic categories under the tree node into smaller segments. This detailed process is called "coding on" and allows for more robust analysis of the data. Coding on is distinguished from re-coding, "on the basis that it is coding to reflect a conceptual advance, rather than just recoding to better sort the text" (Bazeley, 2007). The smaller coded topics, called child nodes, roll under the tree or parent node. The finalized node layout is graphically represented in Table 4. The other codes which were not able to fit under a tree node were kept as free nodes, and were analyzed for their relevance to the research questions.

Table 4

Grouped Final Node Report

Name	References		Name	References
INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES	**Parent Node**		**STUDENT NEEDS**	**Parent Node**
IA - Accelerated Reader (AR)	9		SN-Adaptation or Accommodation	9
IA - Brainstorming	4		SN-Age_Grade Appropriate	12
IA - Centers	15		SN-Choices	4
IA - Comprehension Strategy Instruction	34		SN-Confidence (Develop)	3
IA - Cooperative Learning	13		SN-Critical Thinking	71
IA - Differentiated Instruction	33		SN-Instructional Levels	26
IA - Direct Instruction	3		SN-Interest	9
IA - Explicit Instruction	14		SN-Knowledge - Prior_Gain_Content	30
IA - Graphic Organizers	22		SN-Learning Styles	6
IA - Grouping (flexible)	38		SN-Motivation	27
IA - Guided Reading	28		SN-Practice and Repetition	22
IA - Independent Reading	5		SN-Provide Experiences	2
IA - Indirect Instruction	12		SN-Review	2
IA - Integrated Instruction	19		SN-Skills necessary for success	49
IA - Modeling	14		SN-Special Needs	2
IA - Morning Message	5		SN-Time	8
IA - Phoneme Manipulation	8		**Other Free Nodes**	**FREE NODES**
IA - Questioning	6		Accountability	34
IA - Read Aloud	4		Administration	25
IA - Reciprocal Teaching	2		Assessment	43
IA - Repeated Reading	5		Collaboration	26
IA - Shared Writing	2		Core Instruction	11
IA - Technology	4		Experience	27
IA - Word Learning Strategy	12		Limited Time	34
IA - Word Wall	8		Materials	11
IA - Word Work	11		New Series - Trial and Error	18
IA - Writing Workshop	18		Perceptions of Core	115
SBRR COMPONENTS	**Parent Node**		Philosophy	15
SBRR - Comprehension	41		Professional Development	26
SBRR - Fluency	20		Supplemental Materials	49
SBRR - Phonemic Awareness	23		Time Teaching Literacy	18
SBRR - Phonics	31		Use of Core	195
SBRR - Vocabulary	44			
SBRR - Writing	8			

Data analysis was prevalent throughout the study. It was a continual process,

from the distribution and completion of the initial questionnaire, through the detailed

interview coding process. The reliability of the transcripts was determined by two raters, who both coded 17% of the same transcripts. Agreement between the two raters for the initial node categories was found to be 83%. The subsequent detailed nodes that were classified under the three broad decision making

categories were also determined by using inter-rater reliability. The agreement for the nodes for instructional approaches, student needs and SBRR components was determined to be 84%, 81% and 92%, respectively.

Once the final coding layout was created, NVivo 7 allowed for easy querying of relationships between data. For example, because the attributes of Grade Level and Years of Experience were captured and linked to each transcript, as well as the entire transcript coded at the case level, the researcher analyzed specific criteria, and quantified the qualitative data.

4.2 WHAT IS THE NATURE OF TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION MAKING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW CORE READING PROGRAM?

To investigate how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program, it was first necessary to find out *what* teachers did when using the new core reading program. Through the questionnaire administered and completed by 26 of 29 participants at the research site, a combined analysis was compiled on what the teachers said they did for reading instruction throughout the school year while implementing the new core reading program and their perceptions of the new core reading program. The 12 teacher interviews provided specific justifications, rationales, and support for the teachers' thoughts, use, and perceptions of the new core reading program and its implementation.

4.2.1 Overview of Kindergarten Through Third Grade Teachers' Implementation of the New Core Reading Program: A Combined Analysis

In the teacher questionnaire on the implementation of the new core reading program, teachers were specifically asked if they implement the new core reading program as indicated by the directives in the teachers manual. Of the teachers surveyed, 95% responded that they follow the directives in the teachers manual daily or several times weekly. The in-depth teacher interviews revealed rationales why the teachers followed the directives. For example, one teacher commented:

> I think this series has allowed me to have the tools to be able to
>
> choose from, and not have to pull and pick and choose my own
>
> things that might not coordinate quite as good [sic]. It also lets me

allow the kids to be a little more flexible, but if they have gotten

something [a skill or strategy], I can very easily expose them to

more information by using the additional suggestions in the series.

It has a lot of tools, and it has allowed me to differentiate a lot

more effectively than I was able to before.

The explicit use of the teacher's manual and its directives was supported by another

teacher's comments regarding the program as being *new* and the need to follow the

directives:

I follow the teacher's manual because I had to learn what this is about. In

order to learn what this is about, you have to go through it, and you have

to do it. You've got to teach it, and you've got to practice with it. You've

got to have students there to practice with.

Another teacher reflected on the use of the directives in the manual in the new core

reading program by saying "Well, I think it reminds me. It's all the stuff that I've done

for years and years, but a new program and by following it so closely, I know that I'm

hitting all the components."

4.2.1.1 Teacher Instructional Use of the Core Reading Program with 5 SBRR

Further analysis of the questionnaire responses determined that the teachers found the

new core reading program provided helpful materials and instructional suggestions

regarding teaching the 5 SBRR components.

Figure 4 shows the rank ordered frequency of the use of the instructional

directives and materials by the teachers regarding the 5 SBRR components when using

the new core reading program.

Figure 4

Rank Ordered Frequency of SBRR Component Use

**Frequency of Use of SBRR Components When
Using the New Core Reading Program**
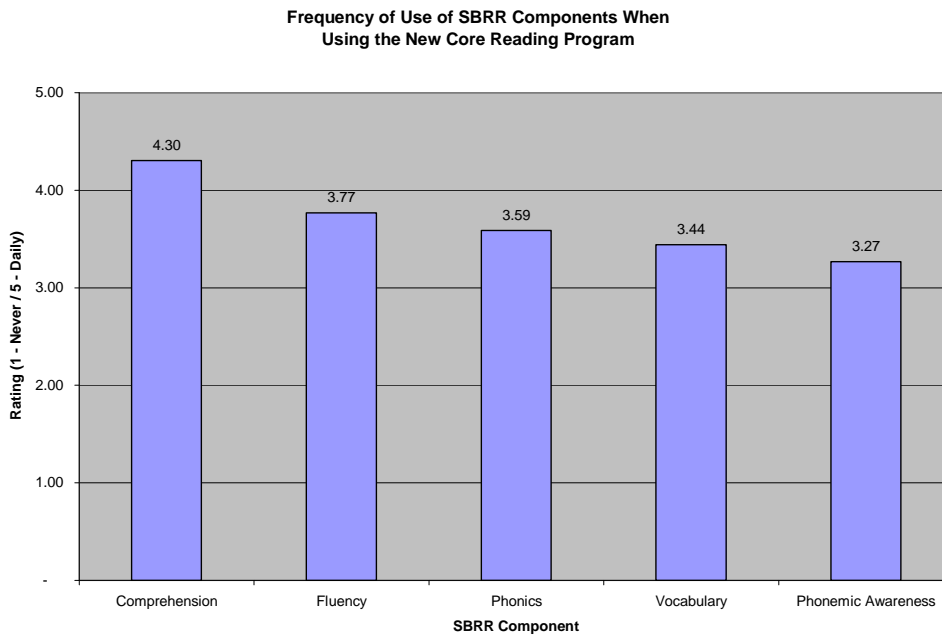
Figure 5 provides data on the percent and frequency of the teachers' instruction of the 5

SBRR components when using the new core reading program.

Figure 5

Percent of Teachers' Frequency of Instruction in the SBRR Components

Percent of Teachers' Frequency of Instruction in the SBRR Components
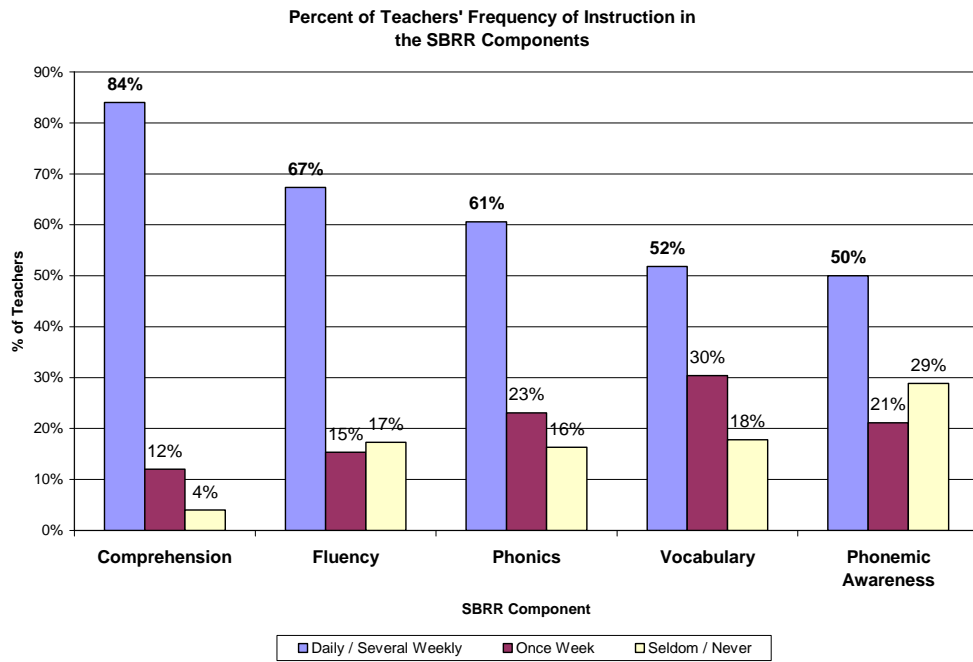
In analyzing the frequency of use of the various SBRR components utilized from the new core reading program, specifically which materials and instructional suggestions were used for each SBRR component, comprehension ranked the highest with a rating of 4.30 out of 5.00. All 26 teachers provided comprehension instruction by modeling the skills and strategies outlined in the new core reading program at least weekly, with 84% providing it daily or several times weekly.

The second highest component was fluency, with a rating of 3.77. Sixty seven percent of the teachers doing fluency used the new core reading program daily or several times weekly. Phonics instruction using the new core reading program was ranked 3.59 with 61% of the teachers using the core reading program daily or several times weekly to provide instruction. Vocabulary instruction and phonemic awareness instruction were

ranked 3.44 and 3.27 respectively, with 52% of the teachers providing vocabulary

instruction and 50% of the teachers providing phonemic awareness instruction either

daily or several times weekly, using the new core reading program.

Clearly, the majority of teachers used the specific instructional materials

contained within the new core reading program. Only 6% of the weighted average

responses on the questionnaire indicated that teachers never used these materials or

instructional suggestions.

4.2.1.2 Teacher Supplement to the New Core Reading Program

The teachers consistently followed the directives in the teachers manual of the new core

reading program and utilized the instructional suggestions and materials provided to

teach the 5 SBRR components. However, the majority of the teachers indicated that they

supplemented the core reading program with additional materials and/or instructional

approaches. A total of 73% of the surveyed teachers replied that they always, or most of

the time, supplement the new core reading program with additional materials for the

students. One teacher was quoted as saying:

> This is a guide... this is a guide and it gives me some really great ideas, but
>
> to be honest when I look at it, I read through this and I think about it. I
>
> look at the resources that I have to support it. I pull any books that I may
>
> have in my library that I can read throughout the week.

After further use and the implementation of the new core reading program a first grade

teacher commented:

I will answer that differently now, than I would've in September because I've gotten a lot more comfortable with it. At first, I was very stiff as far as what to pull out and now I'm a lot more comfortable. I usually start with the selection for that week, and I look at some of the strategies that they [the program developers] have pulled out that and they think are important for me to cover. I scramble off of that and I pull some books that I've accumulated over the years or activities that I think relate to that [the skills and concepts].

Throughout the interviews teachers often commented on their additions and use of supplemental materials to use with their students. The teachers often shared the types of materials they used as supplements and why they chose to do that: For example a second grade teacher said:

The first few days are spent on the books with the series and I do like the planned days. I do the planned days in the series and then we do a chapter book the other two days that aren't with this reading series. It's a different effect. I still think they need to get a feel for the literature. They don't just have to do the same literature we're doing with the story.

The types of materials that teachers said they used as supplements varied among the teachers interviewed. Some teachers discussed adding additional literature and chapter books while other teachers shared their need to use supplemental leveled guided reading books or outside resources such as newspapers, scholastic news, workbooks, big

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books or content material books. Several teachers discussed their need and interest to supplement the new core reading program with technology. One third grade teacher was quoted as saying:

> Technology is a great supplement. It's a wonderful series with many materials to choose from, but we're also going to talk about technology. I like to bring technology into my reading unit. I feel that we use the Internet to get supplemental materials. We use the Internet as an extra added bonus, so this would be a bonus to them...

A total of 81% of the teachers indicated that they supplement the new core reading program with additional and varied instructional approaches beyond what is in the teacher's manual. The types of instructional approaches supplemented and the specific reasons why they supplement varied instructional approaches will be further explained in the section on knowledge of instructional approaches and decision making. The three combined supplemental questions ranked a total of 4.01 out of 5.00. Of the 78 total possible responses for the supplemental questions (3 questions, each with 26 teacher responses) only 1 teacher's response (1%) was ranked as *never* with regards to use of supplemental materials.

4.2.1.3 Perceptions of the New Core Reading Program

The questionnaire also probed the teachers' perceptions of the new core reading program and factors that influenced implementation. Figure 6 identifies the top 5 most influential factors and beliefs about the new core reading program and its implementation.

Figure 6

Most Influential Perceptions of the New Core Reading Program

Most Influential Perceptions of the New Core Reading Program

Weighting (out of 5)

Rank	Statement	Score
1	My experience teaching this grade level influences how I implement the new core reading program.	4.38
2	My years of teaching experience influence how effectively I implement the new core reading program.	4.31
3	The new core reading program allows me to meet the state standards and goals better.	4.26
4	The new core reading program provides explicit modeling of before, during, and after reading strategies to develop comprehension.	4.24
5	I have been supported by my principal throughout the implementation of the new core reading program.	4.23

Question Rank (y-axis). Axis scale: - , 1.00, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00, 5.00

Teachers believed that their experience teaching at their grade level, as well as

their overall experience, strongly influenced how they implemented the core reading

program. Of the 26 total respondents, all participants (100%) either agreed or strongly

agreed that their *specific grade level experience* influenced how they used the new core

reading program. Only 1 of 26 respondents (4%) disagreed with the statement that their

overall experience influenced how they implement the new core reading program. The

remaining 25 teachers (96%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this question. These

two questions were ranked 1 and 2 respectively (weighted scores of 4.38 and 4.31 of

5.00) when reviewing the reasons behind teachers' perceptions of implementing the new reading program. Similarities and differences regarding teacher decision making when implementing a new core reading program and teacher experience level will be analyzed and discussed further in Section 4.3.

Teachers also believed that the new core reading program allowed them to better meet the state standards and goals. The weighted score for this response was a 4.26 out of 5.00, with 22 of 26 teachers (84%) responding that they either agree or strongly agree.

The teachers at the research site had the opportunity to be part of the selection process for the new core reading program. The teachers reviewed different core reading programs, heard presentations from the company representatives, and had input on which program was selected that best met their needs. Having the opportunity to be part of the selection process for the new core reading program may have influenced the teachers' views on how well the new core reading program met state standards. One teacher interviewed shared this perspective:

> That's why we picked this one. We thought it did match. There's a whole
> program here and they've done research on it. They've given us cards that
> match our state standards right through this. So I feel confident that I'm
> covering what needs to be covered.

The new core reading program used by the teachers at the research site came with supplemental planning cards with designated Pennsylvania standards already determined for each lesson. The planning cards allowed teachers to identify standards to be covered in each lesson and plan more effectively to be sure the standards were being met. As far

as the program assisting a teacher in meeting the state standards, a third grade teacher

commented:

> It does because it's all written out for us. We have cards that we look at
>
> and we can see the standard right there. These books go along pretty well
>
> with the standards and the PSSA test. They guide us through so we, as
>
> teachers, have to make sure we get enough material covered before the
>
> state test. If we use this throughout the year, then we will have a deadline
>
> and this [the program] sees us through the year. It will guide us right
>
> through the year to cover the standards.

Teachers largely agreed that the new core reading program provided materials

that helped them address the 5 SBRR components of reading instruction. Twenty five of

26 respondents (96%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the new core reading program

was able to assist with *comprehension*, by providing explicit modeling of before, during

and after reading strategies. Only 1 teacher (4%) was undecided, with none disagreeing.

A weighted average score for *comprehension* was 4.24.

Fluency ranked at 4.15, due to 25 (96%) of the teachers either strongly agreeing

or agreeing that the new core reading program provided instructional suggestions and

materials to practice fluency. Only 1 teacher (4%) disagreed with the fluency question.

The remaining three SBRR components, from higher to lower, were *phonemic awareness*

ranked at 4.12, *vocabulary* at a 4.10, and *phonics* at a 4.04. A detailed analysis and

elaboration on how teachers address the 5 SBRR components while using the new core

reading program and why they made the instructional decisions that they did will be addressed in detail in Section 4.2.2.

Teachers felt supported by their principal during the implementation of the new program. A total of 23 (88%) of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed, while only 1 (4%) disagreed. This question was rated at 4.23 out of a possible 5.00.   Further details on the roles of the administrator when implementing a new core reading program will be addressed in Section 4.5 regarding Role of the Administrator.

4.2.1.4 Professional Development and the New Core Reading Program

Figure 7 identifies teachers' perceptions of professional development as related to the new core reading program.

Figure 7

Teacher Perception of Professional Development

Professional Development and the New Core Reading Program

Weighting (out of 5)

1	The high quality of professional development I received enabled me to implement the new core reading program effectively. — 3.12
2	I have been provided ample professional development during implementation in order for me to feel successful. — 3.15
3	I was provided with ample professional development prior to implementation of the new core reading program in order for me to begin. — 3.46
4	The content of professional development I receive influences how I implement the new core reading program. — 3.46

(Question Rank; axis: -, 1.00, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00, 5.00)

Teachers ranked their professional development and the training they received the

lowest of all the questions. Of the three questions and 78 total responses regarding

professional development, only 9% (7) of the respondents strongly agreed that they

received adequate professional development prior to and during implementation of the

new core reading program. The 3 questions on professional development had a combined

average weighting of 3.24 out of a total 5.00.

A majority of teachers (65%) either were undecided or disagreed that the quality

of professional development they received assisted them in implementing the new core

reading program. Only 1 teacher (4%) strongly agreed, and the remaining 9 teachers

agreed with the question. This question ranked the lowest of the 18 agree / disagree

questions on the questionnaire, and received a score of 3.12 out of a possible 5.00.

The questionnaire results showed that more teachers believed they had adequate

professional development *before* the implementation of the new core reading program

than *during* the actual implementation. Approximately 50% (13) of respondents either

strongly agreed or agreed that they received adequate training before the new core

reading program implementation, whereas only 11 respondents felt the same way *during*

implementation. Even more evident are those respondents who disagreed with the

question. A total of 19% of respondents (5) disagreed, with none strongly disagreeing on

their training *before* the implementation. However, a total of 31% of respondents

disagreed or strongly disagreed that they received adequate training *during*

implementation.

Through the teacher interviews, teachers commented on their professional

development opportunities before and during implementation of the new core reading

program. These teachers had strong views and perceptions regarding the professional

development provided prior to and during implementation. When referring to her

professional development experience, one teacher said:

> .....not as prepared as I would have liked to have been. I would've liked
>
> some more time to work on it [the program]. I would've liked time to
>
> work with my grade level, talking about it and going through it, and
>
> breaking it apart. There's never enough time to do that.

On preparedness to implement the new core reading program, some of the teachers had

differing perspectives:

We were very prepared. I feel we were, really. We were given a lot of

time to look it over and you know we had a lot of time to really check it

all out so, I think we were prepared for it. You know that trying to find

your teaching style and mixing it with this takes time, but it always takes a

year or two to kind of fit it all in.

Another teacher reflected:

I didn't think we received very much at all. I thought we were given it, we

were walked through it, and then, you know, it was feel it out yourself.

That's what I've done and I think that's what most teachers have done. I

think that's what most good teachers do.

However, despite the perceived lack of professional development, 11 (42%) of 26

teachers were either undecided, disagreed or strongly disagreed that the content of

professional development they received influenced how they implemented the new core

reading program. Only 2 (8%) believed that they needed professional development to

impact how they implemented the new core reading program.

Several teachers shared very clear and concise needs and desires as far as

professional development when implementing a new core reading program. The specific

needs and desires shared by teachers during the interviews dealt with their expectations

from the publishing company and the representative and their desires to collaborate with

colleagues. As far as expectations of the publishing company and representative, one

teacher was quoted as saying:

I would've liked more support. I would've liked someone from the

company to come several different times during this year to say 'good job'

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or 'that a boy' or 'wow, are you having any problems?' I guess I would

have liked some more support. I feel you're left stranded sometimes.

Another teacher was very specific on her desires of the publishing company and

representative. She said:

Actually, I would like to be shown a lesson from the representative of the

program. I want to see how she's doing the grammar lessons. I want to

see if she can present it in a different way than how I see it presented in

the manual. I want her to show me how she's using those little books

because I'm using them as guided reading books, but they didn't really

refer to them as guided reading books.

A third grade teacher shared "We wish the book company would come back half way

through the year and say, what do you think about our series? What can we do? What

could we add? You know."

Many teachers shared their desires of what type of professional development

would help when implementing a new core reading program. Several teachers shared

their need to collaborate, talk, and reflect with colleagues, as noted in the following

comments:

If we had professional development it would be to bring everybody

together. Let's compare and contrast what we're doing with what others

are doing. What's working for you? Maybe share ideas to try to explain

what is going on in certain teachers' rooms.

Another teacher commented:

Just talking with other teachers would be beneficial. Okay, what are you

really doing with this? Are you doing all this? Are you not doing it?

What parts are you not doing? Just talking with them [colleagues] about it

and talking about it with the reading specialist.

A third grade teacher made this statement:

I learn so much from other people and I wish I just had more time to be

able to plan with someone else and get ideas from someone else. I would

like to read over the series and really have professional discussions about

what concepts we think are important. I feel like if I had more time to

plan and digest things with my colleagues, I would probably be using this

a lot more effectively.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data support the desire and need of teachers

to be provided professional development before and during implementation of a new core

reading program in order to make quality instructional decisions.

4.2.2 Teacher Knowledge of Content Related to SBRR and Teacher Instructional Decision Making

Research question 1a asks: *In what way does teacher knowledge of the content related to*

SBRR influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core

reading program? The interview transcripts were coded based on the 3 broad categories

of (a) teacher knowledge of the 5 SBRR components, (b) teacher knowledge of student

needs, and (c) teacher knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies. Figure 8

shows that of the total 789 specific coded references, teacher knowledge of the 5 SBRR components was coded 159 times for a total of 20%. References were coded teacher knowledge of the 5 SBRR components when teachers described instructing one of the 5 SBRR components such as vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, and/or fluency. Teachers described when and why they taught one of the 5 SBRR components using the new core reading program.

Figure 8

Count and Percent of Total Main Node Categories

Percent of Total and Numerical Count of Total Responses for Main Node Categories
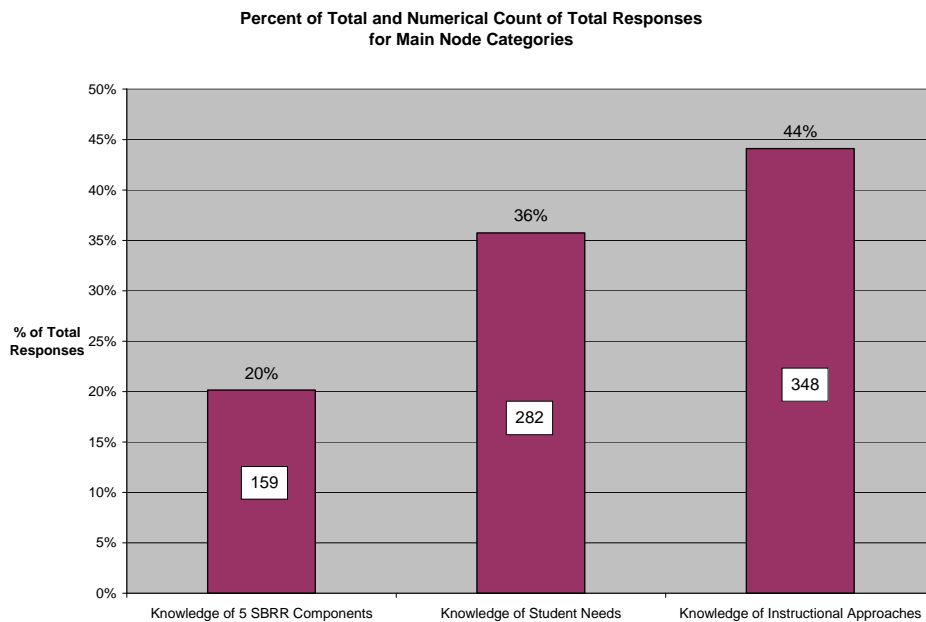
During the teacher interviews, the teachers were specifically asked how much time they spent instructing each of the 5 SBRR components during a week. Table 5 displays each of the 12 teachers' responses displayed by the percentage of time they believed they spent instructing each of the 5 SBRR components. Teachers spent the most

time on comprehension, and the least amount of time on phonemic awareness and

fluency.

Table 5

Table of Teachers and Percent of Weekly Time Spent on Each SBRR Component

Teacher	Grade Level	Comprehension	Phonics	Vocabulary	Phonemic Awareness	Fluency	TOTAL
1	3	85%	5%	5%	4%	1%	**100%**
2	3	45%	10%	20%	10%	15%	**100%**
3	K	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	**100%**
4	1	25%	25%	13%	25%	12%	**100%**
5	1	30%	30%	10%	10%	20%	**100%**
6	K	35%	35%	10%	10%	10%	**100%**
7	2	40%	10%	20%	10%	20%	**100%**
8	2	40%	15%	20%	15%	10%	**100%**
9	K	15%	30%	10%	30%	15%	**100%**
10	2	35%	10%	20%	15%	20%	**100%**
11	2	50%	20%	15%	5%	10%	**100%**
12	3	50%	10%	15%	10%	15%	**100%**
Totals		**39%**	**18%**	**15%**	**14%**	**14%**	**100%**

Figure 9 displays the average percent of time the 12 teachers spent instructing each of the

5 SBRR components on a weekly basis.

Figure 9

Weekly Time Spent by Teachers on Each SBRR Component

Time Spent Weekly by Teachers on Each SBRR Component
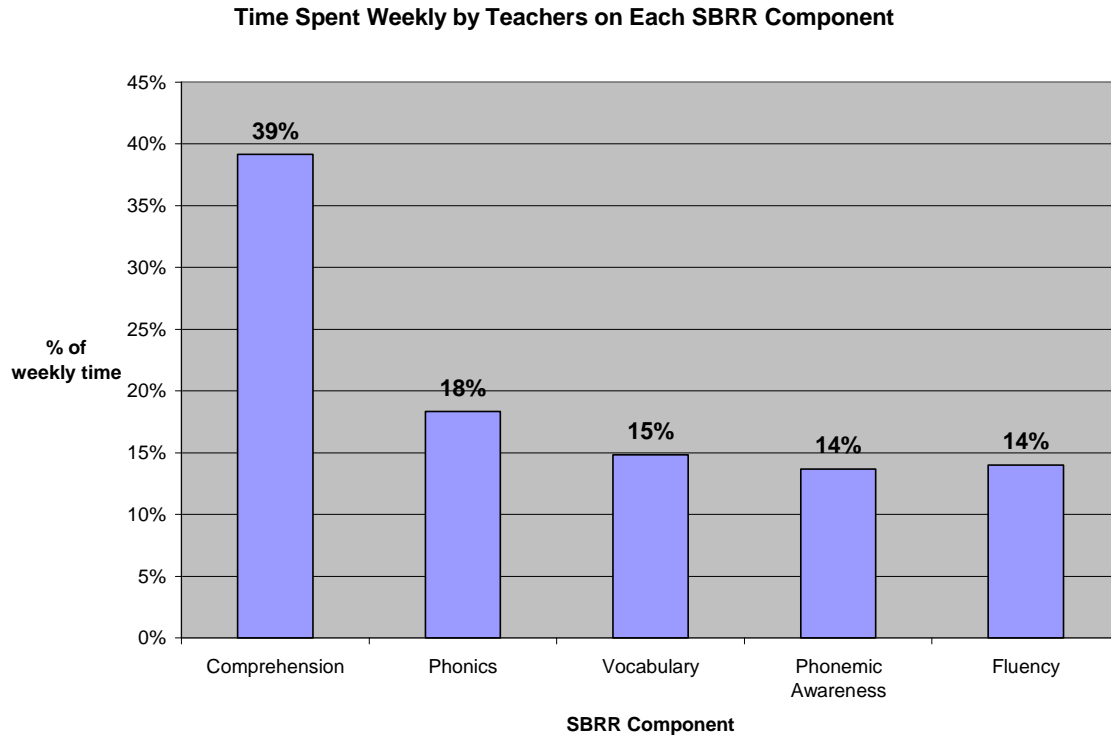
Of the 12 teachers interviewed, 9 of the teachers spent over one third of their instructional time weekly teaching comprehension. An average of the 12 teachers weekly time spent instructing the 5 SBRR components revealed that 39% of instructional time was spent on comprehension instruction. Phonics instruction was determined to be the second highest average. The average percent of time spent by the 12 teachers interviewed on phonics instruction was 18%. The average percent of time spent on vocabulary, phonemic awareness and fluency were 15%, 14% and 14% respectively.

The teacher interviews provided additional support and rationale for why teachers spent more instructional time on comprehension instruction than on the other 5 SBRR components.

A second grade teacher expressed her thoughts about the 5 SBRR components when she

shared:

> The heavy emphasis is on comprehension and developing vocabulary
>
> which goes with it. I'm spending some time on the decoding with the
>
> children and the phonics deals with the decoding, but I spend most of my
>
> instructional time developing comprehension.

Another second grade teacher expressed her ideas about the importance of

comprehension instruction when she discussed her personal thoughts:

> Well comprehension...we drill, drill, drill, everyday in reading groups, in
>
> small reading groups, in big reading groups. I think that is one of the most
>
> important things that they have to get out of life is the ability to
>
> comprehend. I myself had a very hard time learning. I had to do third
>
> grade twice because I didn't get reading comprehension. My goal is to get
>
> these kids to feel comfortable understanding how to retell a book.
>
> Comprehension plays a big part of life and I feel that is important.

A first grade teacher mentioned:

> I know I spend a lot of time both in whole group and in small reading
>
> groups on comprehension because I know how important that is for the
>
> kids to understand what they are reading and to learn comprehension
>
> strategies.

Several teachers expressed their views regarding the 5 SBRR components and their implementation of reading instruction in their classrooms. They had strong beliefs about what was important when providing reading instruction. One teacher said:

The reading instruction in my room...we need to read, read, read. The more opportunities we have to read and understand, the more opportunities we have to work on comprehension and the more it will help my students. I don't know how you can separate reading and understanding. I think they [the students] come from second grade with the knowledge of reading, but they haven't expanded it to be able to know that reading is understanding.

A second grade teacher shared her views on the need to address comprehension in her reading instruction for her students.   She said:

I think those kids before [from prior years] would be a lot better word readers, but maybe not apply what they've read in order to understand.   I don't think that they were reading nearly the level books and really understanding the way they are now. There's a lot more emphasis on nonfiction which I think there should be, but that requires you to be much better at comprehension than with just fiction stories. So I think that the emphasis on nonfiction has really required us to teach better comprehension.

A third grade teacher demonstrated her thorough knowledge of the 5 SBRR components, her thorough knowledge of students' needs, and her knowledge of reading instruction

when she described how she implements reading instruction when using the new core

reading program.

> You have to have your prior knowledge--- you have to use a little bit of
>
> what they know which comes with their prior knowledge. I build on that
>
> information, and then you have to build vocabulary words. It [the
>
> program] has a great structure for using vocabulary words. I believe in
>
> consistency and routine and doing the same thing to develop vocabulary.
>
> The more repetition there is, the more that it enables the child to learn in a
>
> variety of ways. Not all children learn the same way, and I need to tap
>
> into all those different ways of learning for every child. After vocabulary,
>
> I believe in understanding how words work so that comes from the
>
> spelling component. You have to teach the children that words have ways
>
> of going together. They need to understand how our language works and
>
> how letters are formed which is the basic foundation of learning. You
>
> have to develop comprehension in a variety of ways, not just written
>
> comprehension. You have to develop oral comprehension; you have to
>
> develop silent comprehension. Also, you have to do fluency. This series
>
> has a great fluency component. I'll teach them a little bit about fluency
>
> and we practice that same method for a number of weeks. So every time
>
> they [the students] get a fluency passage, I just keep reiterating, you must
>
> remember about the punctuation--- what does punctuation mean?, what do
>
> you have to do there?, what do your words have to sound like?

In summary, teacher knowledge of the 5 SBRR components is exemplified by how the teachers consistently knew to instruct phonics, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary and phonemic awareness. The teachers demonstrated their knowledge of the importance of comprehension and its link to the overall reading process. The teachers knew how and when to instruct the other components in order to support the enhancement of comprehension by their students. Some of the teachers acknowledged the evolution of the reading process in the primary grades and recognized how reading instruction at their grade level had a different emphasis than it had in the past.

4.2.3 Teacher Knowledge of Learner Needs and Teacher Instructional Decision Making

Research question 1b asks, *In what ways does teacher knowledge of learner needs in the classroom influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?* For analysis, the interview transcripts were coded based on the three broad categories of (a) teacher knowledge of the 5 SBRR components, (b) teacher knowledge of student needs, and (c) teacher knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies. Figure 10 shows the total numerical count and the percent of references related to the three broad decision making categories. Of the total 789 specific coded references dealing with the 3 broad categories, teachers' instructional decision making based on student needs was coded 282 times for a total of 36%.

Figure 10

Count and Percent of Total Main Node Categories

**Percent of Total and Numerical Count of Total Responses
for Main Node Categories**
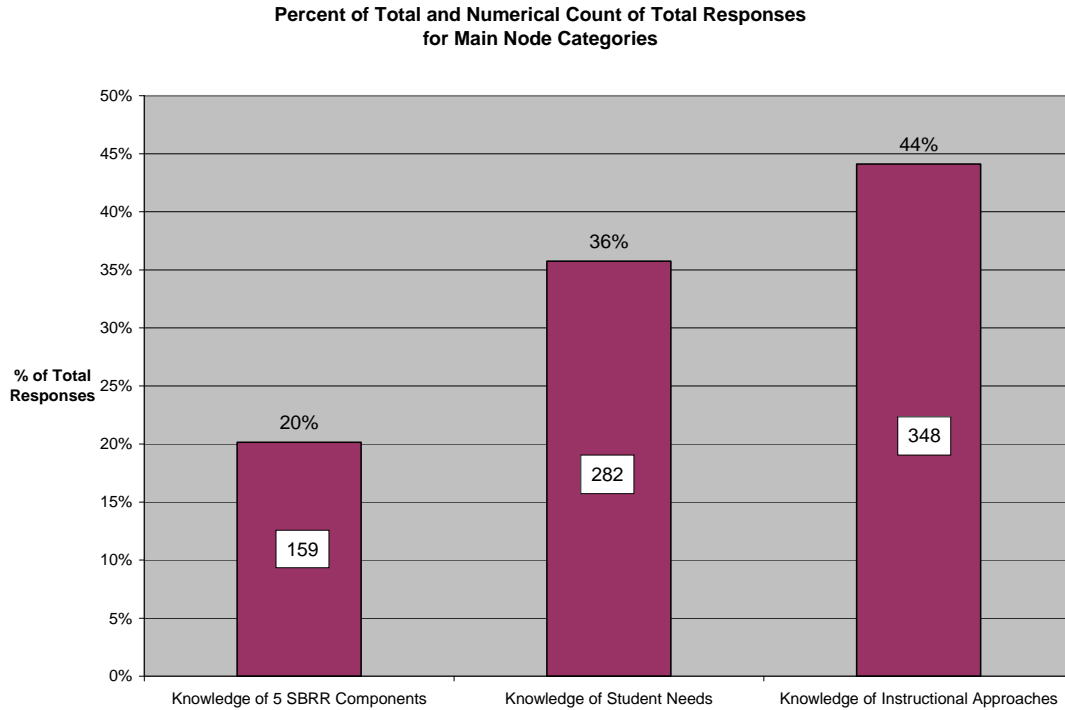
The importance of making instructional decisions based on student needs was often directly stated by the teachers during the interviews. For example one teacher stated:

> I really let the kids and what they need drive what I need to do. I can tell again from just keeping track of them on a weekly basis of where they're weak and what they need more emphasis on.

Another teacher reiterated the need to address students' instructional needs when she said " So I let them lead me and we go from there. I know what I have to cover in that book and we cover it, but I let them lead me in that instruction." When a teacher considered making instructional decisions based on student needs while still trying to implement a new core reading program a second grade teacher said it best:

I try to focus on the things that I see my students consistently needing

more support with. I try the suggestions from the core series and if it

doesn't match the needs of my reading group, I sometimes will shift that

strategy to things [skills and strategies] I think the kids need. I can tell

when they're ready to go on to something else, or if they need to backtrack

to something, or if they are right where I am. So I start with their

suggestions first and tweak them, depending on what I see the needs of the

kids are.

The codes of students' needs were then further refined and coded specifically to

examine exactly what student needs were being addressed when teachers made

instructional decisions when using the new core reading program. Table 6 displays the

16 subcategory codes assigned to teacher comments in the interviews.

Table 6

Codes of Student Needs

STUDENT NEEDS

Name	References	% of Total
Critical Thinking	71	25.2%
Skills Necessary for Success	49	17.4%
Knowledge - Prior-Gain-Content	30	10.6%
Motivation	27	9.6%
Instructional Levels	26	9.2%
Practice and Repetition	22	7.8%
Age_Grade Appropriate	12	4.3%
Adaptation or Accommodation	9	3.2%
Interest	9	3.2%
Time	8	2.8%
Learning Styles	6	2.1%
Choices	4	1.4%
Confidence (Develop)	3	1.1%
Provide Experiences	2	0.7%
Review	2	0.7%
Special Needs	2	0.7%
STUDENT NEEDS - Total	**282**	**100.0%**

Teachers most frequently made instructional decisions based on student needs to (a) develop critical thinking skills, (b) address skills that students require for future success, (c) utilize and gain knowledge, (d) be motivated when learning, and (e) meet individual student instructional levels.   Teachers also commented that they make instructional decisions to have students practice and have repetition of concepts and skills, and the need to address students' varying learning styles when providing reading instruction.

Figure 11 displays the top five nodes identified through the coding of the teacher interviews on why teachers made instructional decisions based on student needs.

Figure 11

Top 5 Coded Nodes for Student Needs

Top 5 Nodes for STUDENT NEEDS
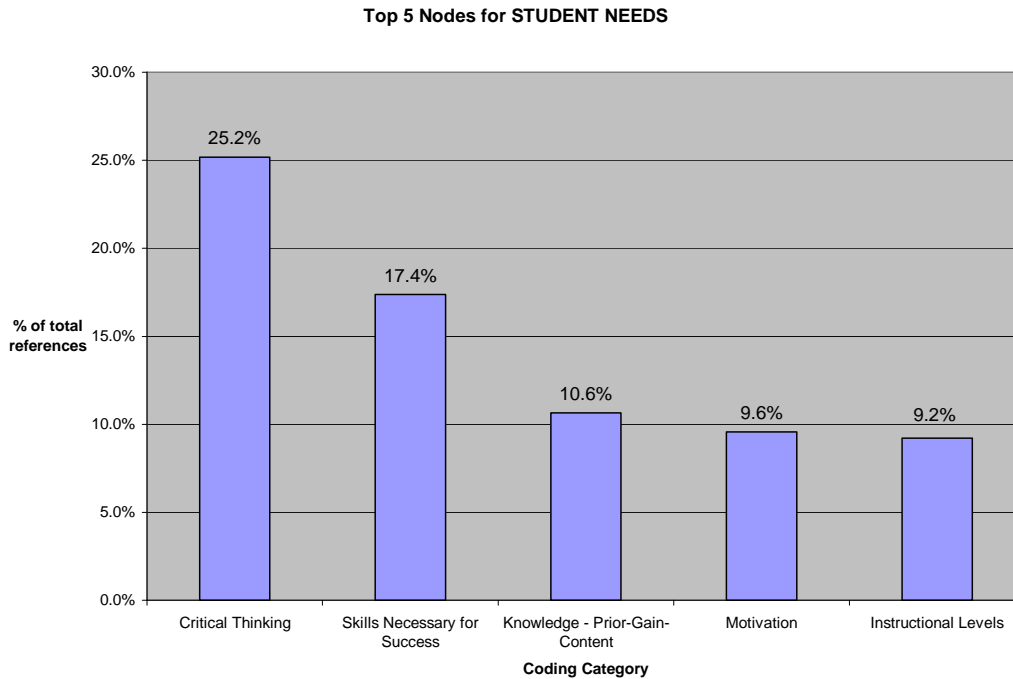
<u>Critical Thinking</u>

The researcher coded concepts and ideas shared by the teachers as the need to

develop students' critical thinking skills when teachers explained and commented that

students needed to apply skills and strategies, make connections, generate and answer

questions, and to think and to respond beyond literal meanings. The teacher interviews

revealed that most teachers made their instructional decisions based on the need for

students to develop critical thinking skills. Of the 282 total references coded for student

needs, 71 or 25% were coded as the need to develop students' critical thinking.

During the interviews, the teachers often gave very specific rationales for making

decisions based on students' needs. For example, when discussing how a second grade

teacher addressed phonics instruction while using the new core reading program the teacher stated:

> One of the reasons I do this [phonics instruction] in this manner is so they can make words and figure out the words that they don't know. I also try to show patterns. They [the students] know if they know this word, then they will know this word, or this word. It's also a way to help them [the students] with their spelling and when we're doing their syllables. It also makes them [the students] aware of how everything every week is interrelated as far as the spelling and the phonics and the sound work. All of our stories have an emphasis on that [the phonics skill]. So it's making them familiar to different sound patterns and that will allow the students to apply their decoding skills to different reading situations.

Another second grade teacher explained why she does the oral language parts of the new core reading program by sharing that:

> It's important to discuss how they feel about things and get them to talk about pictures, even if there's no words [sic]. They didn't even know how to describe it [a picture] and talk about it. We usually do a writing prompt about it [the picture] too. They write what they would think if they were in the picture and how they would feel. Then we tie it into their journals. We try to do the writing journals to connect their thought process and to show that what they think and what they say can be written and illustrated.

When discussing how she uses centers in her classroom, a second grade teacher related her thoughts on her students' needs to make connections by saying:

At this time, I really get to work with my kids and I usually spend most of

my time at the writing center because I want to see what they're doing. At

this center they have to make a poster. They like doing that kind of writing

because they get to write up at the top 'Lost Cat' and write about why

their cat's lost and a description about it. It teaches them, hey, someday, I

might have to do that. I might have to put a poster out that says my cat's

lost or my dog's lost. It just puts it in the real world.

A first grade teacher also believed it was important for students to make connections

when she explained why she often had students access prior knowledge before reading.

She commented:

I think the kids have to do that [access prior knowledge] in order to

connect to the text that they are reading. So, I think that's important for me

to make sure that I know where we should be concentrating and how to

draw that out of the kids. I think if the kids don't make connections then

they're not going to relate to it as well. If they understand why they're

starting there and thinking about what they know, then they can relate to

what they are reading better.

A kindergarten teacher shared how she believed that the new core reading program ran

through ideas, skills, and concepts so quickly that she felt her students needed the quality

stories and information, but perhaps in a different way than was presented in the teacher's

manual. This decision reflected her knowledge regarding the need to allow her students

to think, reflect, question and process information that was being learned. The

kindergarten teacher stated:

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I always do the big book that first day. I'll run through it, but I have a

hard time. I have a hard time on that first day because they want you to

run through it so quickly. My kids always have questions as we're going

through. Like today, we're reading this one [story] and there are all these

different fish and they want to know the kind of fish for every single page.

So, it really slowed us down quite a bit and I know tomorrow when we go

to day two [in the teacher's manual], that's when we really delve into it,

and delve into the comprehension, and delve into what's going on. I know

that this is supposed to be more of a preview, but I have a hard time just

letting those questions go for a whole day. I add a lot of day two stuff into

day one [from the teacher's manual], just because the kids want to know,

and they're ready to know. Then we'll talk about it again on day two, 'Do

you remember what we talked about yesterday?' In here [the teacher's

manual], you [the students] should be asking questions in your brain. It

doesn't necessarily have us answering all those questions. But a lot of

those times I do. Then we'll see how much they retain on the second day.

Notably, several teachers notably expressed that their instructional decisions regarding

student needs were based on the importance for students to be able to apply skills, make

decisions, and think beyond the literal. A first grade teacher who is following the core

reading program explicitly shared what she was doing with the core, and the importance

of preparing her students to apply what they are learning. She explained:

I'm going to introduce the first story and the high frequency words. I call

them vocabulary words. I think that sometimes getting the words

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correctly in your own mind helps you know how to use them. I want them

[the students] to first understand what those words mean when they hear

them or read them. I also want them to be able to recognize them, and if

they are not decodable, I want them to memorize those words so they can

use them when we are reading. I can tell just from looking at the week,

that I'm going to introduce the OO sound, using the letters OO. The high

frequency words I'm going to make sure they understand and are able to

read are bear, bird, birth, table, pulling, guess, helmet, and space. So those

are words I'm going to make sure that they can read or understand. They

need to understand what they mean in the story because they're going to

show up in the decodable reader. They're going to show up in their

anthologies, and also in the guided reading books.

A third grade teacher shared how she knew students needed to think beyond the literal

meaning of text and to apply their skills. She stated:

We've done this graphic organizer over and over. They will use that

[graphic organizer] and after we're done with the Web Spinner story, they

can work on it [graphic organizer]. They will take this [the graphic

organizer] and summarize it [the story] down here, and show me a picture

up at the top. I still think at third grade they have to visualize along with

their writing in order to understand.

A second grade teacher made instructional decisions to foster students' critical thinking

when students work together. This teacher believed that developing critical thinking

skills for students such as decision making went beyond reading and interpreting text, but

was an important life skill. She assigned her students to make posters using vocabulary words from the story selection. This teacher said:

> .... I believe strongly in partnering and learning how to work together and learning how to decide who will do what part of the activity.   At the very beginning, we had a lot of arguments on what picture they [the students] were going to make and what details they were going to put in. Now the posters related to the vocabulary words are getting done quicker and quicker each week, because they [the students] learned how to compromise and that is just such an important skill to learn.

Skills Needed for Success

Many of the teachers interviewed discussed certain skills they knew their students needed to be successful in life or to be prepared for the next grade level. This need to ensure students were introduced to and acquired the necessary skills for success influenced teacher instructional decision making. The skills necessary for success ranked second of all the coded references for student needs with 49 total references or 17.4%.

The teacher interviews revealed very specific rationales and reasons for addressing the student need to acquire certain skills. One first grade teacher shared:

> Well, it doesn't just depend on the book; it depends on what the child is in need of. If I have little Johnny that needs *st* blends or I have little Katie who needs *th* digraph, then maybe one day I'll work on the *st* sound, and the next day I'll work on the *th* sound. It all depends on them [the students], and what I can find in the book and by corresponding all of that

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together I can address the necessary skills. If the students don't master

those concepts, it will be difficult for them because all of the skills and

concepts build on each other.

Another teacher described her reading instruction regarding students' needs for certain

skills in this way:

I need to keep literacy balanced and to make sure that I'm seeing the

whole picture of what most kids need to be exposed to. They [the

students] need to be learning successfully to be ready for the next grade

level.   I am thinking at any given time what's the most appropriate and

important thing for them [the students] to be learning, and the best way for

me to deliver that to them, so that they're applying it in their own way and

feel successful.

A teacher's sense of ensuring that her students had the skills to be successful was evident

by the statement made by this first grade teacher:

......because kids today don't hear it at home as much as we do..... and the

kids... we're with them forty hours a week..... and if we don't model to

them good reading, and we don't model them good manners, and good

grammar, where are they going to hear it? They aren't going to hear it. A

lot of kids don't hear it at home anymore, so I think the read-alouds [in the

program] are important. Some of the kids will ask me if they can take the

anthology back to their seat and read it and I will say sure. Once in a

while I will copy the story for them if they really want it, but I think it's

important that they hear that language in order to be successful.

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A second grade teacher shared her thoughts about the importance of teaching vocabulary

and the skills necessary for success in this way:

> .....and vocabulary, they have to understand what words mean in order to
>
> be good readers and understand what they're reading, so I think that is a
>
> big part [of instruction]. I spend a lot of time on vocabulary. They've
>
> learned how to use it [the vocabulary words] They [the students] use a
>
> regular dictionary sometimes; they use the glossary; they do a lot with
>
> vocabulary. It is an important skill to be a good reader.

Some teachers expressed what they were doing for reading instruction by sharing what

they did if students were not successful with a skill or concept. This teacher said:

> Now I felt a lot of the kids were not getting the possessive pronouns. So,
>
> I halted the grammar for next week, and resumed review for the following
>
> week on possessive pronouns. Then, I made a sheet up for that Friday to
>
> go along with the assessment in order to see how they [the students] got
>
> the skill now. So we weren't actually a week behind, but I was
>
> supplementing that possessive pronoun skill throughout the following
>
> week because a lot of my kids weren't getting it. They had the idea, but
>
> they couldn't grasp it. I supplemented the following week, so I could just
>
> pulled it [possessive pronouns] in. The students would determine what I
>
> need to do for the next week. If it means not doing the grammar that's
>
> supposed to be from the book then that's fine. I need to have you with
>
> me..... so as we move on and build our grammar skills you're not falling

behind. So I use the book, but then again, I can waiver from the book if

it's necessary.

<u>Use and Gain Knowledge</u>

The need for students to utilize and gain knowledge was also a significant student

need factor when teachers made instructional decisions when using the new core reading

program. Utilizing knowledge and the need for students to gain knowledge ranked third

with 30 coded references for 10.6% of the total coded responses for student needs. When

a second grade teacher was asked why she made the decision that she did in regards to

her reading instruction and the new core reading program she said:

......because most of our life we're learning. We need these skills to

function in the world. We need knowledge and we need to know not just

how to read a word, but we need to know the meaning of these words and

how to use them.

Many teachers believed activating students' prior knowledge is important and

necessary. They often used the suggestions to do so found in the new core reading

program. A kindergarten teacher explained that she activates students' prior knowledge

because it assists her instructional decisions in this way:

It gives me a good gauge of what they [the students] know and what they

don't know in order for me to guide my instruction. For instance, a lot of

them [the students] didn't know what kind of fish these were. Some of

them [the students] thought that was a whale and some thought it was a

shark. That gave me good insight into how much they knew. It gets the

children's minds thinking about what we're going to be talking about or

going to be reading. Then, they [the students] bring up any questions that

they may have, and I know what questions to ask them as we start going

through the story.

Several teachers explained the need to extend and expand students' knowledge to meet

all the students' needs. A second grade teacher personally shared this anecdote:

......well because then I know where I need to pull things in. I know how

many kids really want to learn about it. I have one student in particular

who watches the Discovery Channel everyday. He is my blurb of

information at any moment. He gives me so much information, I just love

it. He will tell me 'I saw this on the Discovery Channel', but I like it

because I get to see, number one, what I need to bring in, what do they

know, what did they get on their own at home or have they gone to

museums. They might get a lot of books out of the library. I use what

they know to help me know what they need to learn.

Another second grade teacher emphasized the need to extend students' knowledge when

implementing her spelling instruction. She said:

In my way of thinking, if you [the students] know these words, you're not

expanding anything, you're just regurgitating what you know. I'm glad

that you [the student] know the eighteen of twenty words already. I'm

thrilled, but now I want to challenge you.   I think you should have

eighteen words that you're not quite sure of, or that you need to study, or

you need to see the pattern. Sometimes I give three extra challenge words

or maybe I have sixteen pattern words and then I have four that are

challenging to you. I mix it up based on what students know and need to

know.

Motivation

According to Guthrie and Humenick (2004), the word motivate refers to the sense

of engagement in an important task. The term motivate does not point to the mere thrill

of something for fun and excitement, but to a cognitive commitment towards something

to learn and extend one's aesthetic experience. Students need to be motivated was coded

when the teachers interviewed in this study explained that they made certain instructional

decisions based on the need for students to be engaged and enjoy the reading and learning

process.

Motivation was the fourth most referenced code in addressing student needs with

27 references cited for 9.6% of the total responses. When teachers shared the need for

students to be motivated they were very straightforward and explicit in their

justifications. For example this kindergarten teacher shared:

.....because if I'm not motivated, then I don't do it, and ultimately my

students see that's my style. If it's not motivating and it's just another

mundane activity that you kind of just walk through, than it's not worth

doing. For kindergarten especially, it's important for them to learn new

things so they have to be motivated.

Another kindergarten teacher expressed the need to keep children motivated to learn when he shared:

I would use a song I was familiar with, or the students were familiar with, or when we put one [a song] on, we will put a couple of songs on and we will do the whole thing. If it just isn't motivating, we will throw another one [a song] on that the kids will like better, and then continue with whatever the objective is.

A second grade teacher explained the need for students to be motivated when doing word work. She said:

I think it's important to keep the kids motivated. I think motivation is very important because for them to sit down and write each one of the words everyday, or clap the word everyday, it has to be engaging. I think repetition is good, and we always clap the words and we always stomp the words everyday.   It's important for them [the students] to get the awareness of the chunks that we're talking about, and then getting them [the students] motivated to actually want to learn the words. We make the words out of letter tiles and play dough and stuff like that, just to keep them [the students] motivated to learn so they can read the words and write the words.

This teacher summarized the need for students to be motivated and how it influences her instructional decision making by saying:

I have to teach them [the students] to love to read, to love to learn.   That's what I have to do. I have to expose them [the students] to all the other

stuff [skills and strategies], but they're going to get exposed to that stuff

again, again, and again. It's my job is to make them want to come to

school and to want to learn.

Student Instructional Levels

The need to address students' instructional levels when making instructional

decisions when using the new core reading program ranked fifth with 26 references for

9.2% of the total coded nodes in the interviews. Several teachers discussed the

importance of meeting specific children's levels when teaching and planning instruction.

For example, one teacher said:

I've have five groups. I have one student who reads at a DRA level 28 and

there's another student from another grade level, she's at a level 34. She

comes into my room and I pull the two of them in and work on the second

grade material. I try to work with them as much as I can with the limited

amount of time that I have. I have so many kids that are below [reading

level], so I still try to challenge them. I have three groups that are at a

DRA level 3. They [the students] should be a little higher [reading level].

I've got one group of students that are significantly below [reading level].

I try to meet each student's level during that time.

Meeting students' instructional level can also be exemplified with this teacher's

comment:

.... I try to do comprehension just to see where they are on their own

before we get to that test. So I might give them [the students] the on level

or the approaching level skill sheets just to see where they are at. Not so

much as a grade in the grade book, but just to see if they're on or not on

level [reading level] Then, I think about where [the instructional level] I

need to work in small reading group with that kid.

Many teachers had a genuine concern about addressing student instructional levels when

planning and implementing the new core reading program. Teachers gave insightful

analysis of what students were able to do and what they needed to do for instruction. For

example this teacher stated:

Some of the kids are going to have an easier time with that [skill or

concept], but my lower kids are going to have a heck of a time with that

[skill or concept]. They might have to totally do that with a partner or

buddy up with a person who is at little bit higher reading level to help

them understand what they are reading.

Practice and Repetition

The need for students to have multiple exposures to skills and concepts and

opportunities to practice certain skills and concepts was found to be important to teachers

while making their instructional decisions. Teachers explained that they knew what their

students needed and that often times they needed to provide additional opportunities to

practice certain skills. One teacher explained that the teacher's manual didn't tell her to

instruct a certain concept again. She knew what her students needed. She said:

It [the teacher's manual] didn't necessarily tell me to do that [skill or

concept]. I just know that in order to get to the point I need to be at the

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end of the year, I can't do it [skill or concept] once or twice. I have to

keep doing it time and time and time again. Also, I have a class of many

students that receive Title I support, so I really know that I need to be

repetitive this year.

When fostering students' comprehension and fluency in a first grade classroom, two

teachers expressed their thoughts on the need to have students be exposed to the

repetition of skills and concepts in this manner:

.....because they need that, they need to revisit things; this group has a hard

time comprehending. So I think it's important to review, review, review.

We spend one whole week on that story. They [the students] read this

book four times by the time they're done. Then they get to retell the whole

story to me. They can tell me from the beginning to the end what it's

about.

The other teacher mentioned:

I think most kids need repetition in order to be able to really get

something. In my top reading group we would probably not have to

reread that [the story], but probably all of the rest of the kids would [have

to reread] in order to be fluent and really concentrate on the

comprehension.

Learning Styles

The need to address students' specific learning styles was not referenced as often

by the teachers as a most influential component in their instructional decision making

when implementing a new core reading program. It was only referenced six times out of the total 282 codes of student needs. However, the teachers who did reference learning styles as a reason for their instructional decision making presented very clear and concise rationales. They believed that it was important to provide students with the opportunities to learn through auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities. A second grade teacher shared:

> I want various ways to present the topic. I need to be diverse in my
>
> presentations. I need to be able to hit all of my learners whether it's
>
> auditorily or visually, and like I said my classroom is very hands-on
>
> because that's they way I learn. I'm very visual so I do a lot of pictures.
>
> They [the students] laugh at some of my pictures, but I draw a picture
>
> that's   the way I have to learn, and I believe that is the way my kids have
>
> to learn.

Another teacher expressed her thoughts about learning styles when referring to the use of graphic organizers from the new core reading program. She said:

> To meet the needs of all of the kids in my room, some of them might need
>
> that visual. Just asking them a question and someone in the class
>
> answering it they might miss it if they weren't paying attention. So writing
>
> it down and actually having that sequence for them visually helps them to
>
> retell it [the story] to someone else, or tell someone what they have
>
> learned. I think that [graphic organizer] helps them [the students] a lot.

A kindergarten teacher, when discussing the use of instructional materials with the new core reading program, commented:

There are lots of opportunity there [in the program], but what I'm finding,

it's really helpful for all levels of children, all different levels....maybe I

have little Susie, that is a visual learner, she may not auditorially be able to

do things, but visually this chart might be just the answer for her. I think

this series has a lot of different components that can assist my instruction.

In summary, the teachers utilized the new core reading program materials and

followed the directives in the teacher's manual while also highly considering the students

and their instructional needs. Many of the teachers were found to use their knowledge of

what and how students learn effectively to make instructional decisions. The teachers

recognized what students needed to be successful learners such as developing critical

thinking skills while, learning specific reading skills and gaining necessary knowledge.

Overall, the teachers recognized that for students to think, to learn skills and to gain

knowledge, they needed to be motivated, have the opportunity to practice repetition, and

have instruction presented using different modalities.

4.2.4 Teacher Knowledge of Instructional Approaches and Strategies and Teacher Instructional Decision Making

Research question 1c asks, *In what ways does teacher knowledge of instructional*

approaches and strategies related to SBRR influence teacher instructional decision

making when implementing a new core reading program? The interview transcripts were

coded based on the three broad categories previously described. Figure 12 shows that of

the total of 789 specific coded references dealing with three broad categories, teacher

instructional decision making based on knowledge of instructional approaches and

strategies was coded 348 times for a total of 44%.

Figure 12

Count and Percent of Total Main Node Categories

Percent of Total and Numerical Count of Total Responses for Main Node Categories
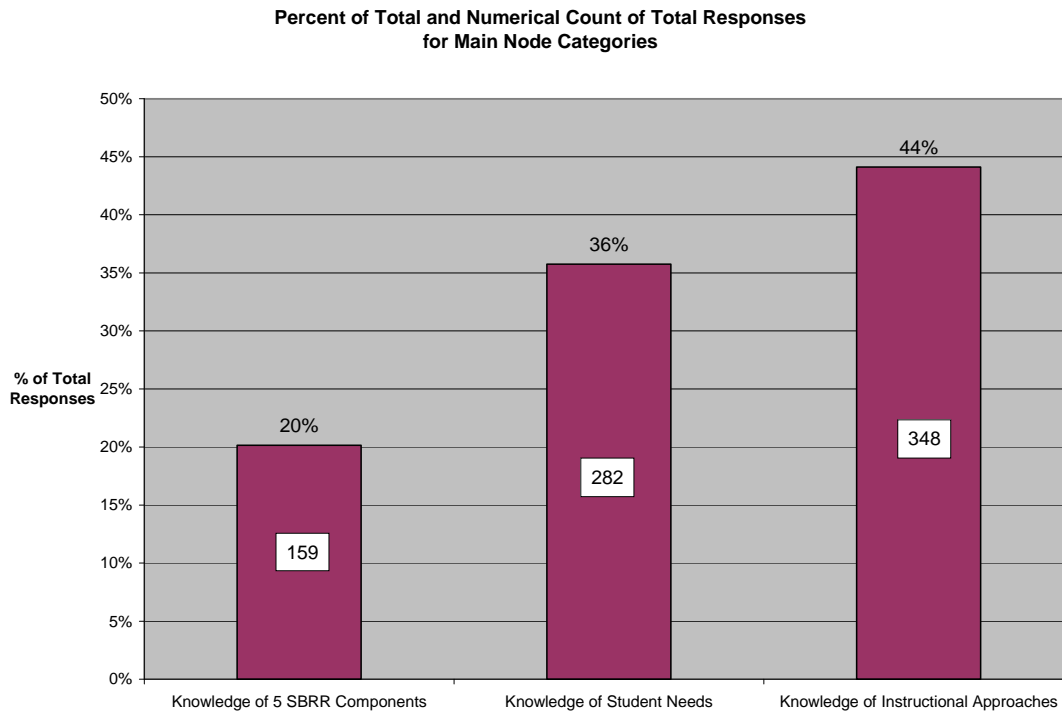
The codes for instructional decision making based on knowledge of instructional

approaches and strategies were further refined and broken down. This detail captured the

specific methods and strategies teachers used when using the new core reading program.

Table 7 lists the identified and coded instructional approaches and strategies utilized by

the interviewed teachers along with a definition of what the researcher determined to be

the meaning of the intended instructional approach.

Table 7

Coded Instructional Approaches and Definitions

Coded Node – Instructional Approach and Strategies	Definitions
Guided Reading	Teacher works with small groups of students who have similar reading processes. The teacher selects and introduces new books and supports children reading the text while making teaching points before, during and after reading. Students apply reading and decoding strategies *
Cooperative Learning	Students working together as partners or in small groups on clearly defined tasks +
Word Learning Strategy	Using dictionaries, references, word parts, and context clues to determine word meanings +
Word Walls	Words posted on classroom walls as a means of immersing student in language. Students add new words as they come in contact with them. Word walls can be used to teach vocabulary, pronunciation, word families, categorization, spelling and high frequency words. ^
Graphic Organizers	Visually summarize and illustrate concepts and interrelationships among concepts in a text using diagrams and other pictorial devices +
Morning Message	A component of Responsive Classrooms that is part of the Morning Meeting routine where children daily practice functional reading and reinforce literacy skills using a variety of topics, while setting a positive tone for the day, encouraging a sense of community, and getting students ready to learn for the day through reading and interacting with a written message (Kriete, 2002).
Differentiated Instruction	A flexible approach to teaching in which the teacher plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process and product in anticipation of and in response to student differences in readiness, interest and learning needs (Tomlinson, 1999)
Flexible Grouping	The use of a variety of student groupings to accomplish learning tasks. Groupings include individuals, partners, triads, teams of four or five students or a whole class. The groupings are dynamic and change according to the student work, roles experience and expertise. ^
Comprehension Strategies Before, During and After Reading	Conscious plans or steps that good readers use to make sense of text and when utilized before, during

	and after reading provide a solid basis for improving text comprehension. Focused strategies include (predicting, previewing, comprehension monitoring, summarizing and retelling) ^
Modeling	Teacher models or demonstrates how to apply the strategy or skill usually by "thinking aloud" while reading the text that students are using. +
Brainstorming	An instructional approach to generate lots of ideas on a specific issue, and then determine which idea or ideas are the best solution.
Explicit Instruction	Intentional design and delivery of literacy skills (such as phonics and vocabulary) by the teacher to the students that begins with teacher modeling, then provides structured opportunities for students to practice and apply new skills with teacher guidance and feedback. ^
Direct Instruction	Teacher structured lessons in a straightforward, sequential manner with clearly determined goals, teacher direction and careful monitoring of student outcomes (Burden & Byrd, 2003)
Independent Reading	Children read on their own or with partners from a wide range of materials to apply reading strategies independently *
Writing Workshop	Children engage in writing a variety of texts. Teacher guides the process and provides instruction through minilessons and conferences *
Technology Integration	Utilizing computers, internet, websites and other technology to enhance literacy development
Phoneme Manipulation	Children working with the sounds in words by blending phonemes to make words, segmenting words into phonemes, deleting phonemes from words adding phonemes to words or substituting one phoneme for another to make a new word. +
Word Building (Word Work)	Instructional approach that is systematic and explicit to teach phonetic skills, concepts, and strategies good readers and writers utilize when decoding words ^
Shared Writing	Teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories; teacher supports process as scribe *
Literacy Centers	A location within a classroom in which students are presented with instructional materials, specific directions, and clearly defined objectives. Students engage in a literacy related activity to practice skills and concepts individually or in small groups ^

Learning Styles	Way by which students learn best through various modalities such as visual, auditory and/or kinesthetic ^
Integrated Curriculum (Content and Writing	Interdisciplinary teaching approach that presents subject matter according to themes and topics. Each theme or topic is presented in extended units so that students have enough time to develop understanding and to find connections (Meinbach, Rothlein and Fredericks (1995)
Questioning Strategies	Teacher questioning and student generated questions that strongly support and advance students' learning from reading which allow readers to think actively, make connections and monitor comprehension +
Indirect Instruction	Inquiry-based exploratory instructional approach using activities such as discussion, hands-on projects or cooperative learning techniques that lead to students discovering a concept or generalization (Burden & Byrd, 2003)
Repeated Readings	Developing fluency by having many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success with short and simple text +
Reciprocal Teaching	A multiple-strategy instructional approach for teaching comprehension skills to students. Teachers teach students four strategies: asking questions about the text they are reading; summarizing parts of the text; clarifying words and sentences they don't understand, and predicting what might occur next in the text. +
Accelerated Reader (AR)	Learning information system that enables free standing computer-assisted assessment of student comprehension of "real" books and provides a summary and analysis of results to enable teachers to monitor the quantity and quality of reading practices engaged in by their students
Read Aloud	Teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups carefully selected literature containing a variety of genres and represents our diverse society *

Note:
  * Fountas & Pinnell (1996)
  + CIERA (2003)
  ^ www.usu.edu/teachall/text/effective/EFFglos.htm

Table 8 displays the specific instructional approaches and strategies utilized by the

teachers with the number of coded references and the percentage of total times it was

referred to as being utilized by the teachers.

Table 8

Codes of Instructional Approaches Sorted by Frequency

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

Name	References	% of Total
Grouping (flexible)	38	10.9%
Comprehension Strategy Instruction	34	9.8%
Differentiated Instruction	33	9.5%
Guided Reading	28	8.0%
Graphic Organizers	22	6.3%
Integrated Instruction	19	5.5%
Writing Workshop	18	5.2%
Centers	15	4.3%
Explicit Instruction	14	4.0%
Modeling	14	4.0%
Cooperative Learning	13	3.7%
Indirect Instruction	12	3.4%
Word Learning Strategy	12	3.4%
Word Work	11	3.2%
Accelerated Reader (AR)	9	2.6%
Phoneme Manipulation	8	2.3%
Word Wall	8	2.3%
Questioning	6	1.7%
Independent Reading	5	1.4%
Morning Message	5	1.4%
Repeated Reading	5	1.4%
Brainstorming	4	1.1%
Read Aloud	4	1.1%
Technology	4	1.1%
Direct Instruction	3	0.9%
Reciprocal Teaching	2	0.6%
Shared Writing	2	0.6%
INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES Total	348	100.0%

Figure 13 displays the top 5 nodes identified through the coding of the teacher interviews on why teachers made instructional decisions based on knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies. Of the total 348 codes to knowledge of instructional approaches, the most prevalent, flexible grouping, was mentioned in 10.9% of the responses. The second most prevalent, comprehension strategy instruction, was mentioned in 9.8% of the responses. Differentiated instruction was the third most prevalent, at 9.5% of all total references, followed by guided reading and graphic organizers, at 8.0% and 6.3% respectively.

Figure 13

Top 5 Coded Nodes for Instructional Approaches

Top 5 Nodes for INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES
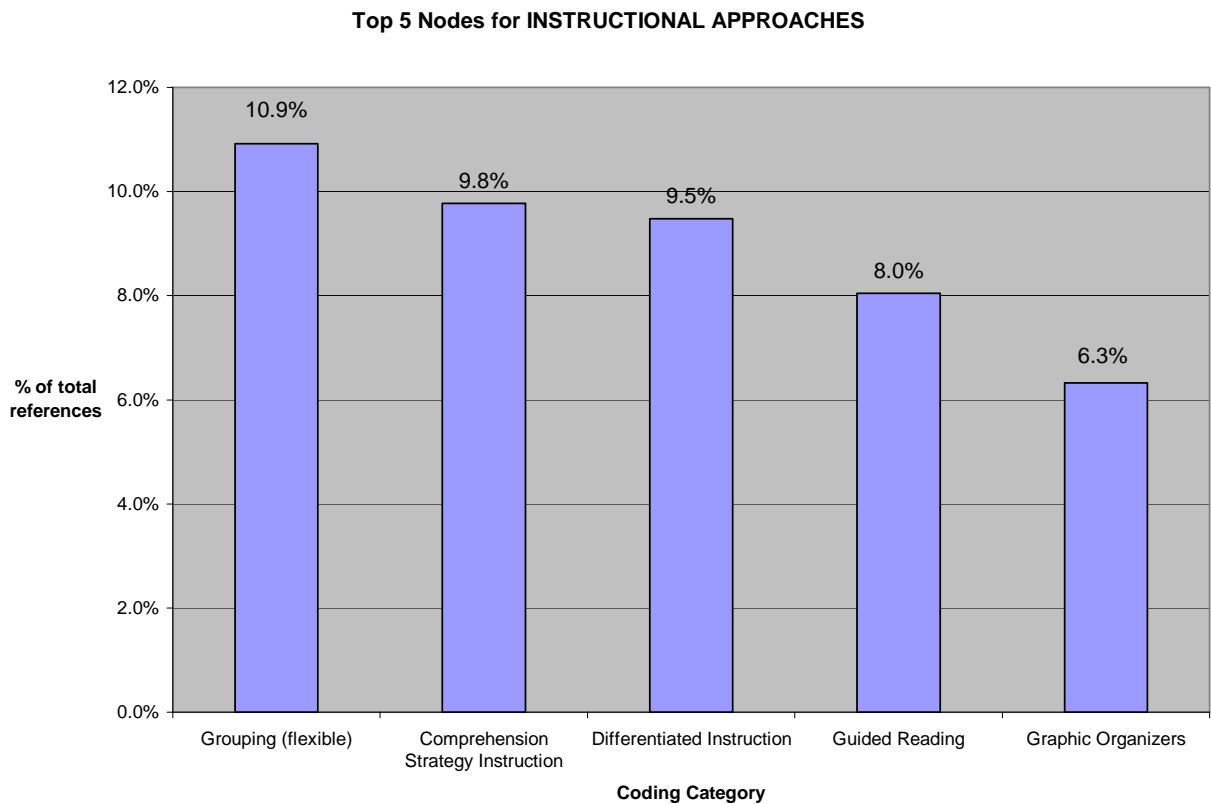
The teacher interviews provided for rich, robust rationales to support the teachers' knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies and their implementation while using the new core reading program. The top five nodes are explained with supporting documentation from the teacher interviews.

Flexible Grouping

A node was coded flexible grouping when a teacher in the interviews described grouping students in different ways such as: partners, small groups, whole group, one-on-one with teacher for a specific reason. When teachers discussed their implementation of the new core reading program and the reading instruction that occurred in their classroom, they often shared a variety of grouping patterns for reading instruction with specific objectives in mind.

For example, a first grade teacher described how she planned her week using the new core reading program. She specifically shared the materials, the approaches, and the grouping pattern that she utilized and why. For example, she said:

> I do Lucy Calkins in the morning for writer's workshop, and then I go
>
> right into guided reading in the morning. I pick and choose some from the
>
> series and I basically go through the whole thing [plans for the week from
>
> the program] and I pick out skills. On Mondays, I'll do the discussion.
>
> Tuesday I might do a phonics activity, so next week is OW and OU. I
>
> might use the decodable reader. I might split the kids up into twos or fours
>
> and they each get a decodable reader and they reread the story and they
>
> find all the OW's and the OU's words that the story has.

A second grade teacher exemplified her need to flexibly group her students for instruction by explaining:

> When I get into the story of the week, we do this whole group; I do that because I have children at many different levels. What we do during the week, is the first day I go through and I'm reading it [the teacher's manual] and we're talking about the different learning points. Here we talk about the vocabulary. I usually don't spend as much time on the strategies the first day [of the plan] because we're just getting into it. The next day I might have them do the partner reading. We might listen to the tapes[of the story], but at that point then I'm going to start pulling out skills that they are supposed to be getting this week. For example, next week will be opposites. I'll also be looking at compound words and having the students find those [words] as we read in the text. I often have students do this with a partner or independently if they choose. I don't spend as much time teaching reading skills and strategies here as I do in their small groups and their guided reading everyday. That's why I pull more from the series for whole group to give a general overall overview. It's also giving them a knowledge base to be successful.

The teachers interviewed used flexible grouping for their reading instruction when using the new core reading program. They knew when they were going to do it, and why they were doing it as is evident from these teacher's comments. A second grade teacher shared:

They [the students] get with a partner and they read the decodable reader. First of all, in a whole group we talk about the high frequency words we're going to see before they read it. Then, they [the students] go through and read with a partner, and then we comeback as a whole group. We talk about the spelling, the words that they found in the book that go with our spelling list and they [the students] find them [the words] in the text and they point them out, and write them down in their notebook independently.

A first grade teacher explained:

I feel that making sure that you have diversity in your classroom and making sure you have whole reading group time plus small reading group time are essential for reading instruction. I try to meet with a child one or two times a week one on one if I can just to discuss how they are doing and what they've been working on.

Another second grade teacher said:

I try to meet with my groups at least one to two times a week depending on how many assignments I give them and my time frame, but that means formally. Like this week, I met with them yesterday and gave them the assignment. I gave them their books and now I'm meeting with even smaller little mini groups just to go over skills they need to work on and to monitor their progress to see what they know.

A first grade teacher described how she flexibly groups students in order to read through a selection in the new core reading program when she said:

I always use the prompt in the teacher's manual and then in the selection

itself, it has the words highlighted that they [the students] have just

reviewed. I always read that story [in the program] whether it's an oral

reading, or a partner read, or sometimes I have one group read the yellow

words [in the text] and another group reads the rest of the text aloud, but

somehow we go over that selection...

When describing using flexible grouping when implementing the new core reading

program a third grade teacher commented:

Sometimes we just do this [skill sheet] together. Sometimes I make an

overhead of this. I let them [the students] partner up to do it. We discuss it

and review the skill when we work in small groups. Sometimes I let them

[the students] do it [the skill sheet] on their own, just to see what they did

gain from what we talked about the whole class period...

This third grade teacher further explained:

I mix the kids up in groups based on what they're needing, or what

strategy is being applied in this [the program]. Sometimes I group all of

the boys together and all of the girls together, or I'll group who works well

together that week. So I kind of change the groups up based on the

activities and the kids.

Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Comprehension strategy instruction was coded in the interview transcripts when

teachers explained that they modeled and had students engage in specific reading

strategies before, during, and after reading a text. The teachers described how they

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emphasized certain reading strategies to strengthen students' comprehension and how they supported the students' application of these strategies. The comprehension strategies that were most often found to be emphasized by the teachers included, previewing, predicting, activating prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, summarizing, retelling and questioning.

The teaching of comprehension strategies was found to be an important instructional practice for the teachers interviewed as they implemented the new core reading program. Teachers mentioned comprehension strategies 34 times of the total 348 references for knowledge of instructional approached. Some of the teachers commented that they felt they focused on comprehension strategy instruction even more due to the use of the new core reading program and the materials provided. A second grade teacher described her emphasis on comprehension strategy instruction by saying:

> They're [the students] predicting and looking at the pictures. I spent a lot
> of time on that. A lot of their books are nonfiction in the reading series, so
> that's really helped me because they have to be able to be a twenty-eight
> [instructional level] on the DRA [Developmental Reading Assessment] at
> the end of the year even on a non-fiction selection and that's one thing
> that's really helped. We have a chart, and we brainstorm with the
> different reading groups all of the things that they need to be doing to
> comprehend a nonfiction book. We go over that regularly.

Another teacher shared her experience of making the decision to focus on comprehension strategies when she shared:

I think I am focusing on that [comprehension] more because I've never

really talked about what's coming up in a story. I've always delved right

into the story, day one. It was really hard for me to break that habit of not

sharing the main story with them the first day. I've gotten out of that habit

to where we do questioning and I ask 'what do you?' know kinds of things

before we read a story. I even sometimes pull in a KWL [type of graphic

organizer]. It's really assisted my students' understanding of the stories

and they are more focused and interested.

A second grade teacher discussed how she engages students in before reading strategy

activities when she stated:

What I'm doing with my groups is I'm sitting with them [the students] and

we talk about the inside cover of the book, and we discuss the main

purpose of the book and the type of genre. We review the vocabulary

which is the same vocabulary for the week, but we talk about it again. So

we just go over what the reasons are why we're reading the book. Then,

we look at the table of contents and the chapter titles again. I ask them

'What do you think is going to be about?' 'What do you think you're

going to learn?'

Another teacher reflected her knowledge of developing comprehension strategies for

students when she explained:

...just to activate their prior knowledge, get them thinking about what

we're going to be doing or what we're going to be reading about. I try

find out what they do know and what they don't know. I try to find out

any questions that they may have. A lot of times, I won't answer them

right away. I'll just say, 'that's a good question', 'I wonder if we will find

out the answer if we read it.' 'We should keep that in mind.' Some days I

will write it down for students to remember as they read to remember what

they wanted to find out.

A third grade teacher shared how she fostered her students during reading strategies when she discussed a guided reading session.

I usually do the two on grade level groups first and we get started

previewing and predicting what the story is going to be about. We look at

the table of contents. We look at the read to find out prompt. Then we do

a little bit of reading in the beginning on their own. I encourage them [the

students] to pause and reflect and think about what this book is going to be

about. I ask the students if they have any questions or predictions about

what they think is going to happen throughout the rest of the chapter.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction was coded in the teacher interviews when teachers

described a specific instructional approach that enabled them to better assist and meet the

instructional needs of all students. Teachers discussed very specific instructional

approaches that assisted them to differentiate instruction, while others described how they

differentiated materials, activities, and assignments to better meet the needs of their

students. A kindergarten teacher shared this example:

I think that Lucy Calkins is better for differentiation just because they [the

students] don't have to be done with their writing that day. They [the

students] can pick up with it [their writing] the next day and it's all their

own ideas. Like for instance, the nonfiction with the animals, they [the

students] got to pick their own animal. I didn't say, 'Okay here is a lion,

you have to write about a lion, or write about what you learned about the

lion in a journal.' I think for them [the students] to be able to research the

information and find all the information on their own, in their own way,

and in their own timeline is better.

Two second grade teachers explained how they differentiate the reading process to ensure

student success by providing reading opportunities in a variety of ways. One second

grade teacher explained:

I do it differently with my high group then my lower group. The high

group we do the vocabulary. They are really being able to read these

stories to themselves. I will set a purpose at times, tell them [the students]

to comeback, write up a summary and come back to tell me what it is

about. I will have them do some partner reading a little bit, and then talk

to their partner about what's going on in the book. I do a lot more of

having them read on their own, and then coming back to the small group

to discuss the story. I read along more and monitor with my lower group.

Another second grade teacher had this to say:

I take my eight title kids and learning support kids and I read it [the story

selection] to them. The other twelve kids do it more on their own, so that's

how I adapt it. As they read, even the kids that read it on their own, they

read the selection that they were given and they have to highlight their vocabulary words and I give them extra points on that.

A second grade teacher described a perceived strength of the new core reading program when she said:

It allows for differentiated instruction. I took a course this summer and I absolutely loved it. It [the core program] gives you three sets of worksheets you can use so my lower groups can work on the below level sheets and my higher kids can work on the above level sheets. I differentiate instruction all day long because of my group this year, so it's great.

A second grade teacher described how she implemented her phonics instruction and spelling wordlists when implementing the new core reading program and differentiated instruction.

I pretest the twelve words that are in here [the core program]. I correct their papers and then whatever words they have correct they get to replace that word with another word from what we call our 'word bank.' So, all twenty kids in my room have individual spelling lists. They all have their own. We've spent a lot of time on phonics that first day [of the program]. We look at the [phonetic] patterns. We look at the examples and sometimes depending on the pattern, if it's an easy one, they [the students] make up their own word bank. We come up with other words that maybe are in the same family and follow the same rule for the [phonetic] pattern we are looking at that week.

A third grade teacher and a second grade teacher shared how they used assessment data to provide opportunities to differentiate content for specific students. The third grade teacher said:

> ...I need to know since you didn't do really well on contractions, then I
> will be able to supplement you on contractions. The rest of us can move
> ahead. I might work with a student one on one, or I might give an extra
> sheet to practice when you come in the morning. I might just work on the
> ones [contractions] you are having trouble with and go over those. It
> depends on what your need is...

The second grade teacher explained:

> I compile it [assessment data] to see if there's some similarities or
> differences between the kids that are in that group. The next week they
> [the students] might be in [a group] with a different set of kids. Then, I
> can concentrate on teaching those decoding skills or comprehension skills
> that they needed more time on. I try to use that to really drive [decide]
> what I do the following week.

A second grade teacher explicitly shared how she differentiates materials, content, and instructional approaches depending on the needs of her students. She demonstrated her need to differentiate instruction for her students in this way:

> For example, my lowest two groups I do one of these books for one day.
> They are still at the point where they are almost getting a new story each
> day. I might spend two days on this book or another supplemental book
> because I have a lot of books in my classroom that are multiple copies and

leveled readers. I might use the book room in order to find appropriate

materials for my lower group. The middle group I might take two or three

days to do some of the activities that I do. I will pick out strategies to do

with the small guided reading group. At least one or two days of the week

they [the middle group] get another book also. My high group, I might

have them read more than one book at the same time because they're just a

lot higher reading level. I might work on the leveled text that goes with

the series with them a little bit of each day. They [the high group] might

have some independent reading time on a completely different text. It just

depends on the level and what is involved with that reader each week.

Guided Reading

Guided reading was coded when the teachers used the term "guided reading" in

the interviews. The new core reading program supplied the teachers with leveled readers

that corresponded with the anthology stories by theme and corresponded to the skills and

strategies introduced for a weekly unit. Teachers described their use of guided reading

incorporated into the new core reading program in the following ways. One teacher

mentioned:

I think it [the core program] is a really important part of the way I teach

now. I felt that when we got this [the core program], it was to be the

guidelines of what we taught, so that every child would be touching on the

same things [skills and strategies] before they went to the next grade level.

So this way, we should know that every child has had this instruction and

that they have been exposed to all the skills and strategies. I try to use it

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[the core program] in that way. I also use guiding reading and the leveled

books provided in the series to get my students small group time to apply

the reading strategies and skills that I covered with the core program.

A first grade teacher described how she incorporates guided reading in this way:

I use a lot of it [the core program]. I regularly do all the spelling. I do all

the phonics. I do all the grammar that is taught in this [the core program]. I

use the main selection. I try to pick out the skills and whatever the

comprehension strategy is that they [the core program] use. I also transfer

that into my guided reading and that's where I hit it more intensely for my

students.

A second grade teacher shared:

During our guided reading I sometimes use the books that they [the core

program] have provided, but a lot of times I'm still using the books that

are down in our guided reading library. The books that they provide for us

are all on this topic which is good. I can't seem to do that one book that

they have provided for five days for my guided reading that week. I'd

rather put more books in their hands to expose them to more different

things. That way I can hit more skills besides the ones that they're hitting.

Some teacher discussed how and why they incorporate guided reading with the new core

reading program. Two second grade teachers shared:

 I also use the guided reading and the leveled reading books for some of

my small group instruction. I have supplemented with some other books

from our book room and also from my classroom. I found that I use those

leveled books from the core program because they have some of the same

words, some of the same sounds. They're applying the same concepts in a

very closely related text. So I think before it was a lot harder for me

because I wasn't as comfortable with taking out books that might not

directly apply to the skills that I was teaching before. I thought it was a lot

more scattered, but now that I have the leveled readers that are pretty close

to the ability levels of my kids, it's made my guided reading group

instruction more effective.

Another second grade teacher said in regards to guided reading:

When you couple the reading series with guided reading you're able to

meet individual needs. You can teach the reading strategies from the

series, and then you can do that with guided reading, and you're doing

things at specific levels and that are appropriate for the students' needs.

Graphic Organizers

The instructional strategy of utilizing graphic organizers was coded in the

interviews when the teachers described providing students with any pictorial device to

visually summarize or illustrate interrelationships among concepts when reading text and

gaining information. The teachers described using specific graphic organizers such as

KWL charts, webbings, diagrams and T-charts. When utilizing graphic organizers, the

teachers provided descriptions and justifications for using this instructional strategy.

A second grade teacher described how she used a graphic organizer for a lesson

and what she had her students do with the graphic organizers to further enhance their

learning. She stated:

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I use those [graphic organizers] every story. I'll have them make them or I'll make one and get it run off. With this story, we would have the graphic organizer in front of them [the students]for this group. We would say 'Okay, in reality what could happen in the story? Look at the sun in the picture. The sun is smiling, in reality does the sun smile?' They will say, 'No the sun doesn't smile.' So they will write in reality on the graphic organizer that the sun can shine, but it doesn't smile. We pretty much go through the story that way. Then we keep these graphic organizers in a folder on the guided reading table and we come back and we reuse them the next day and we add things to them [the graphic organizer]. That's how I use them in my guided reading group.

When one teacher was asked why she uses graphic organizers so often she replied:

It teaches the kids how to organize their thoughts. It teaches them that this is what they read about. Sometimes I say to my kids, 'Hey that's a good point, we should write that down.' Because if they go through and just read this, and we don't talk about it, they won't understand that they have to pick out important ideas from the story. So that helps them understand and comprehend it. I think graphic organizers are really important to use.

A kindergarten teacher discussed the benefits of using a webbing graphic organizer with young children. She commented:

The core reading program makes it very easy. I have the kids tell me what they know about this idea and I record it on a webbing. In the past, I haven't put it [students ideas] up on paper. I haven't put it up on the board

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so that they see that there are words that go with what I'm saying. I

realize how quick it can be now. It doesn't take long and I see some kids

doing a webbing themselves when they're thinking about what to write.

They've seen me do it so many times now that they're starting to do it.

They actually remind each other 'Do your web.'

A third grade teacher stressed the importance of using the instructional strategy of

graphic organizers when students summarize. She said:

It [graphic organizers] helps them to analyze and to separate information

because you have to pull everything apart and then put everything together

in a summary. The graphic organizer assists the students in doing that. I

want them [the students] to summarize the most important information. I

want them to reread it and see if their summary was correct. Did you have

enough information? What were your details? Did you give those details?

Those are components they have to identify in order to summarize

information.

In summary, many teachers supplemented a variety of instructional

approaches and strategies when implementing the new core reading program. The

teachers were found to be knowledgeable and passionate about specific

instructional approaches and strategies that they considered valuable in assisting

students to become proficient readers. Many of the instructional approaches that

were implemented such as guided reading, flexible grouping and differentiated

instruction demonstrate the teachers' knowledge and desire to provide effective

reading instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

4.3   WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES, IF ANY, ON HOW NOVICE TEACHERS, EXPERIENCED TEACHERS, AND VETERAN TEACHERS MAKE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS TO IMPLEMENT A NEW CORE READING PROGRAM?

To determine the influence of teacher experience level on instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program, the questionnaire responses along with the detailed interview coding results were quantified and narratively summarized. This analysis was done to determine what similarities and differences existed between teachers, on how they implemented the new core reading program and how they made their instructional decisions.

4.3.1   Similarities between Teacher Experience and Perception in Implementing a New Core Reading Program

The questionnaire results were quantified and grouped by teacher experience. The results of the 26 teachers who answered the questionnaire are also presented concurrently with the results of the in-depth interviews to link the quantitative questionnaire data to the qualitative interview results. Years of experience were based on years teaching at the present grade level. A novice teacher had 0 to 5 years of experience, an experienced teacher had 6 to 12 years experience, and a veteran teacher had over 12 years experience. There were 13 novice teachers, 9 experienced teachers and 7 veteran teachers who participated in the questionnaire.

The majority of teachers who responded to the questionnaire believed they were supported by their principal when implementing the new core reading program. Only one novice teacher (4%) believed they weren't supported during the implementation process,

whereas no experienced or veteran teachers believed they were not supported. On

average, 88% of all teachers believed the principal supported them throughout the

implementation of the new core reading program. See Table 9.

Table 9

Teacher Perception on Principal Support

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Novice	82%	9%	9%
Experienced	89%	11%	0%
Veteran	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	**88%**	**9%**	**4%**

All 26 teachers (100%) who responded to the questionnaire either agreed or

strongly agreed that their experience teaching at their current grade level influences how

they implement the new core reading program (See Table 10).

Table 10

Teacher Perception on Grade Level Experience and Influence on Implementing the New

Core Reading Program

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Novice	100%	0%	0%
Experienced	100%	0%	0%
Veteran	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**

Twenty five of 26 respondents, or 96%, believed their overall teaching experience

influences how effectively they implement the new core reading program. Only one

novice teacher (4%) disagreed with this question (See Table 11).

Table 11

Teacher Perception on Overall Experience and Influence on Implementing the New Core

Reading Program

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Novice	91%	0%	9%
Experienced	100%	0%	0%
Veteran	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	96%	0%	4%

As supported in the qualitative detailed discussions, 25 of 26 teachers (95%)

implement the new core reading program as indicated, by using the directives in the

teachers manual daily or several times weekly. The other one experienced teacher (5%)

used the directives at least once week. All 26 teachers indicated that they do use the

directives from the new core reading program (See Table 12).

Table 12

Frequency of Use of Directives in New Core Reading Program

	Daily or Several Times Weekly	Once a Week	Seldom or Never
Novice	100%	0%	0%
Experienced	89%	11%	0%
Veteran	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	95%	5%	0%

Teachers were most consistent and focused on the use of the comprehension

strategies and materials. A total of 92% of the teachers stated they use the

comprehension activities found in the new core reading program at least weekly, with

only 8% of the teachers indicating they seldom or never use them (See Table 13). A total

of 69% of the experienced teachers used the comprehension activities daily or several

times weekly, compared to 62% of the veteran teachers and 57% of the novice teachers.

Table 13

Frequency of Use of Comprehension Activities in New Core Reading Program

	Daily or Several Times Weekly	Once a Week	Seldom or Never
Novice	57%	34%	9%
Experienced	69%	21%	10%
Veteran	62%	36%	2%
TOTALS	**62%**	**30%**	**8%**

According to the teachers who completed the questionnaire and the teachers

interviewed, experience is an influential factor when implementing a new core reading

program. The teacher interviews supported the findings of the questionnaire data. The

similarities and differences between how novice, experienced, and veteran teachers at a

certain grade level make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading

program was supported by the teacher comments in the interviews. Several teachers had

specific comments regarding their experiences teaching and using a new core reading

program. A novice first grade teacher had this to say:

I never used a basal before in my life before I started teaching here. So

this is all new to me, so going through the training that we went through

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and choosing a core reading program, it was very beneficial to me because I've never had this before to actually guide me through my units, because I always taught from units at other schools.

An experienced teacher had this to say about implementing the new core reading program and what she does and why:

I just found that those are things that routinely need the repetition for the kids to really be able to have - trying to work independently with those areas and to gain better understanding. They don't get the making words nearly as profoundly until they have to manipulate the letters on their own, so I just tried to hone in with experience over the years and working with kids, and feeling like I know kind of what they need, and I observe what I see them struggling with and what's difficult for them...

A 30 year veteran in kindergarten felt so comfortable about her ability to implement the new core reading program and make instructional decisions for her kindergarten students that she commented:

My experience at kindergarten all this time has helped me implement this well because I think I can look at it as to what components are probably going to be more valuable, but I think my experience has showed me, give this (meaning the program) a chance. Hey, maybe I could be a salesman for the company.

4.3.2   Differences Between Teacher Experience and Perception in Implementing a New Core Reading Program

Teacher responses on the questionnaire differed on their perception of the level of professional development they received. Veteran teachers perceived they received a higher level of professional development than their experienced or novice counterparts, with respect to the new core reading program. Four of the veteran teachers (75%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided adequate professional development, whereas only 2 of experienced teachers (25%) and 5 of the novice teachers (48%) perceived they received adequate professional development (See Table 14).

Table 14

Teachers' Perceived Amount of Adequate Professional Development Received

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Novice	48%	39%	14%
Experienced	25%	42%	33%
Veteran	75%	0%	25%
TOTALS	**47%**	**29%**	**24%**

 This finding is supported by teacher responses in the interviews regarding years of teaching experience and the need for professional development A third grade teacher commented about the need for professional development and her experiences by saying:

> I think being a teacher of nine years, I was prepared to grab hold of the new core reading series and follow the structured five day plan that they provided. After the initial introduction by the publishing representative I was fully prepared to do that.

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Another teacher shared her perspective on having teaching experience and her professional development needs in a different way. She commented "I would have liked some support, but often times teachers are handed something, and then because they know that we have experience in teaching, we can just jump right in and do it."

Teachers across experience levels differed in their level of how frequently they supplemented the new core reading program with additional or varied materials. Veteran teachers were more likely to supplement the new core reading program than the novice or experienced teachers. Only 59% of experienced teachers and 73% of novice teachers always, or most of the time, supplemented the new core reading program with additional instructional materials, compared to 78% of veteran teachers (See Table 15).

Table 15

Frequency of Supplementing the New Core Reading Program

	Always or Most of the Time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
Novice	73%	18%	9%
Experienced	59%	41%	0%
Veteran	78%	22%	0%
TOTALS	**71%**	**25%**	**4%**

Veteran teachers were more likely to plan with their respective grade level than their experienced or novice counterparts. Table 16 displays that only 36% of novice teachers said they always or most of the time plan with their grade level team, and 55% of the novice teachers shared that they *never* plan with their grade level team. Only 44% of the experienced teachers said they planned with their grade level team always or most of the time, while the remaining 56% of this experienced group said they sometimes plan

with their grade level. A total of 83% of the veteran teachers stated they always, or most

of the time plan with their grade level.

Table 16

Frequency of Planning with Current Grade Level Team

	Always or Most of the Time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
Novice	36%	9%	55%
Experienced	44%	56%	0%
Veteran	83%	0%	17%
TOTALS	**49%**	**24%**	**26%**

Veteran teachers were also more likely to use the assessment measures found in the new

core reading program in helping them guide their planning and instruction. A total of

67% of the veteran teachers said they always or most of the time used these assessment

measures, compared to 56% of the experienced teachers and 45% of the novice teachers

(See Table 17).

Table 17

Frequency of Use of Assessment Measures Found in New Core Reading Program

	Always or Most of the Time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
Novice	45%	45%	9%
Experienced	56%	22%	22%
Veteran	67%	17%	17%
TOTALS	**50%**	**31%**	**19%**

4.3.3 Analysis of Interview Data

Since there were an unequal number of teachers interviewed at each experience level, the total number of references, along with a calculated *per teacher average* was compiled. For the 12 teachers interviewed, under the attribute of *experience*, there were 5 novice teachers, 4 experienced teachers and 3 veteran teachers. Averages by experience were calculated by determining the total number of responses for a key category, divided by the number of teachers. For example, there were 59 codes by 3 total veteran teachers relating to the knowledge of the 5 SBRR components. The resulting average is 19.7 comments per veteran teacher, which is 59 codes divided by 3 teachers. The entire matrix of the teachers' experience compared to the three broad decision making categories was calculated and cross-referenced and is displayed in Table 18. The similarities and differences amongst the findings are addressed below.

Table 18

Coding Analysis Based on Teacher Experience

Count	SBRR	Student Needs	Inst Approach	TOTALS
Novice	67	126	150	**343**
Experienced	33	97	115	**245**
Veteran	59	59	83	**201**
Totals	**159**	**282**	**348**	**789**

Average	SBRR	Student Needs	Inst Approach	TOTALS
Novice	13.4	25.2	30.0	**68.6**
Experienced	8.3	24.3	28.8	**61.3**
Veteran	19.7	19.7	27.7	**67.0**
Avg	**13.3**	**23.5**	**29.0**	**65.8**

% to total	SBRR	Student Needs	Inst Approach	TOTALS
Novice	19.5%	36.7%	43.7%	**100%**
Experienced	13.5%	39.6%	46.9%	**100%**
Veteran	29.4%	29.4%	41.3%	**100%**
Avg	**20.2%**	**35.7%**	**44.1%**	**100%**

In analyzing the coded responses from the 12 in-depth interviews, grouped by teacher experience, the experienced teachers had the least number of responses, with only 61 responses per teacher. Veteran teachers had an average 67 responses, and the novice level teachers had the highest number of average responses, totaling 69. The average number of teacher responses, compared with the total group average of 66 responses, is shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14

Average Coded Responses per Teacher Grouped by Experience

Average Coded Responses per Teacher Grouped by Experience
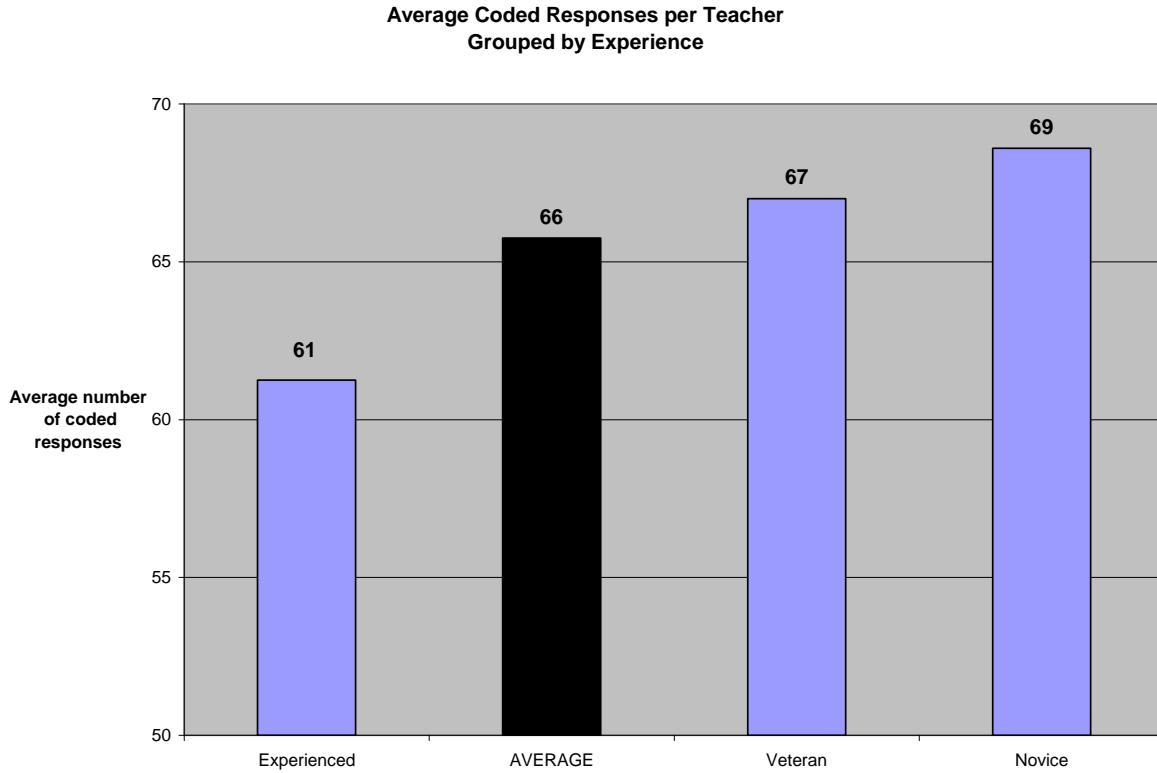

Figure 15 displays the group of teachers' level of experience, along with how frequently they made instructional decisions based on the three main components of a) knowledge of the 5 SBRR components, b) knowledge of student needs, and c) knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies.

Figure 15

Percent of Teachers Grouped by Experience and How they Made Instructional Decisions

**Percent of Category Used to Make Instructional Decisions
Grouped by Experience**
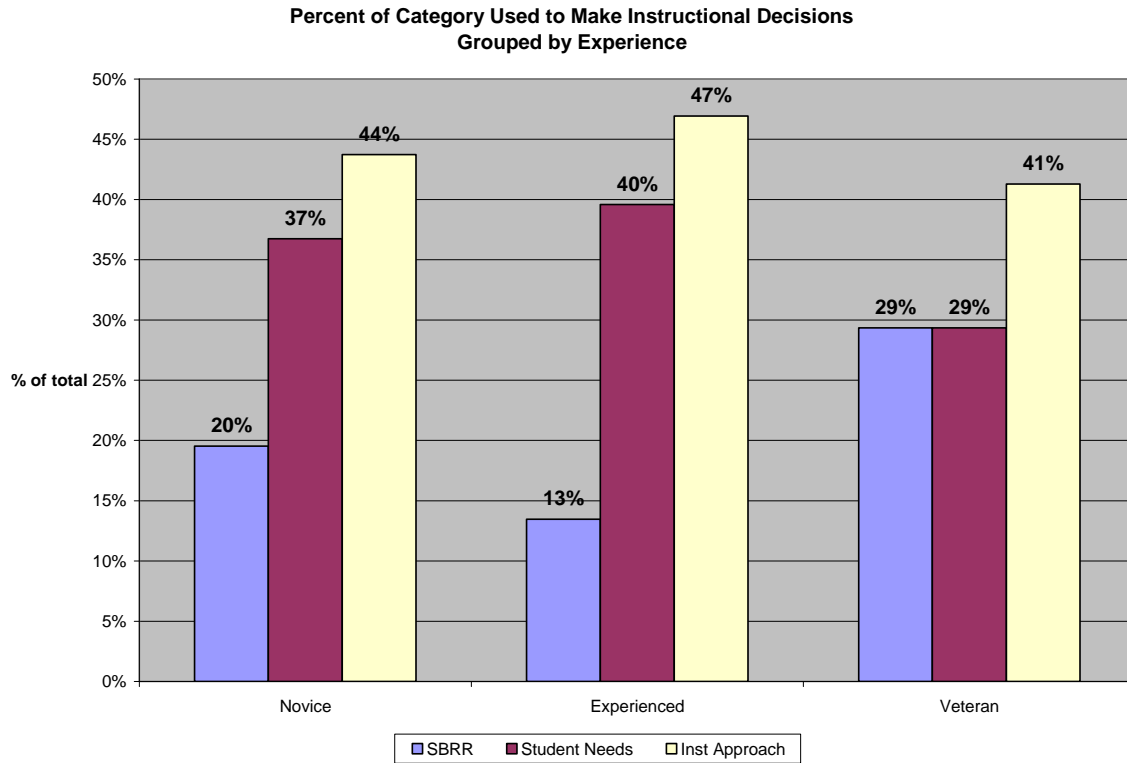
All three groups (novice, experienced and veteran) made instructional decisions based on knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies more frequently than knowledge of student needs, or knowledge of the 5 SBRR components.

Novice teachers made instructional decisions based on knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies 44% of the time, followed by knowledge of student needs 37% of the time, and knowledge of the 5 SBRR components only 20% of the time.

Experienced teachers strongly favored using knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies and knowledge of student needs, and relied much less on the knowledge of the 5 SBRR components. This group of teachers made instructional

decisions based on knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies nearly 47% of the time, followed by knowledge of student needs at 40%. Knowledge of the 5 SBRR components was only implemented about 13% of the time for this grouping of teachers.

Veteran teachers relied more frequently on knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies, using this approach nearly 41% of the time. The veteran group of teachers used knowledge of the 5 SBRR components more frequently than their novice or experienced counterparts, at nearly 29%. Knowledge of student needs was also measured at 29% for the veteran teachers.

4.3.3.1 Analysis of Novice, Experienced and Veteran Teachers on Knowledge of SBRR Content and Instructional Decision Making

As referenced earlier in Table 18, teachers as a group made instructional decisions based on knowledge of the 5 SBRR components about 20% of the time. Further analysis was done to determine how this percentage varied amongst different teachers' experience levels, which is graphically displayed in Figure 16.

Figure 16

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making Based on Knowledge of 5 SBRR

Components, Grouped by Teacher Experience
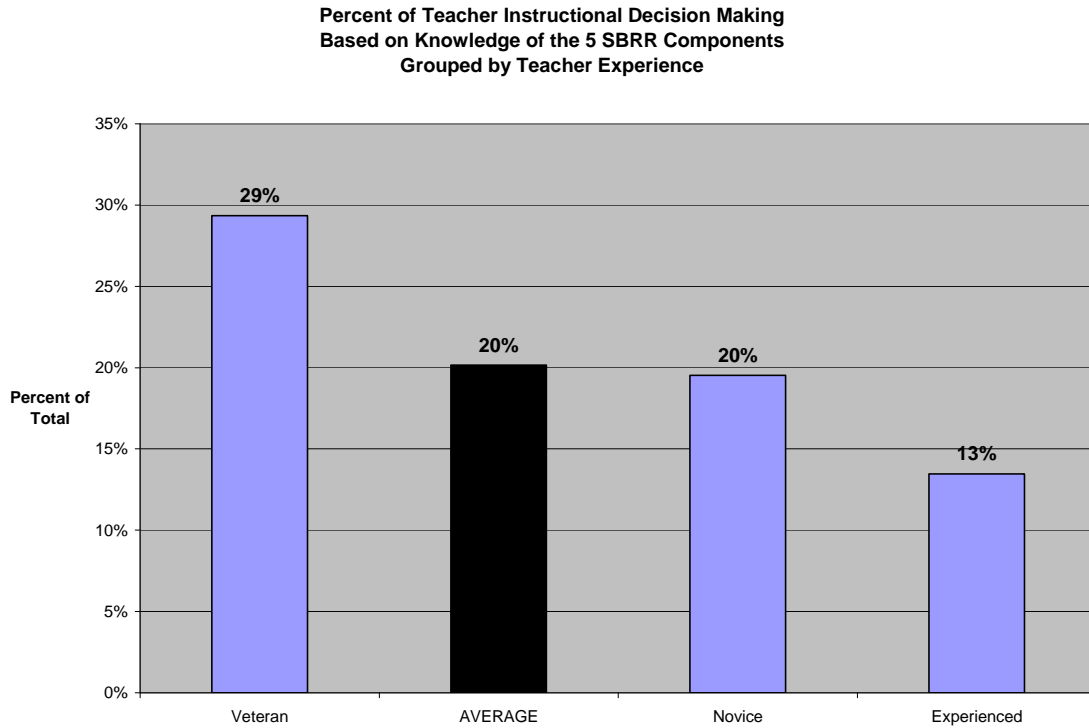
Of the 159 total responses referencing knowledge of the 5 SBRR components,

veteran teachers had the highest use per teacher of the three groups. About 29% of all the

veteran teachers' responses regarding decision making focused on knowledge of the 5

SBRR components. The second highest were the novice teachers, totaling 20%, followed

by the experienced teachers at 13%. The average for the interview group was about 20%.

Veteran teachers used the 5 SBRR components *more than* the other groups of teachers,

which was graphically represented in Figure 15. Also represented in Figure 15 is the

point that 29% of veteran teachers merely represents that they use knowledge of the 5

SBRR components more than the other groups of teachers; it is not their primary instructional method.

4.3.3.2 Analysis of Novice, Experienced and Veteran Teachers on Knowledge of Learner Needs and Instructional Decision Making

Of the total 282 responses identifying student needs as their reasons for instructional decision making, experienced teachers had the highest use per teacher of the three groups. About 40% of all the experienced teachers' responses regarding decision making focused on student needs. The second highest were the novice teachers, totaling 37%, followed by veteran teachers at 29%. The average for the interview group was about 36%. The experienced teachers used student needs as driving their instructional decisions *more than* the other groups of teachers, which is graphically represented in Figure 17.

Figure 17

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making Based on Knowledge of Student

Needs, Grouped by Teacher Experience

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making
Based on Knowledge of Student Needs
**Grouped by Teacher Experience**
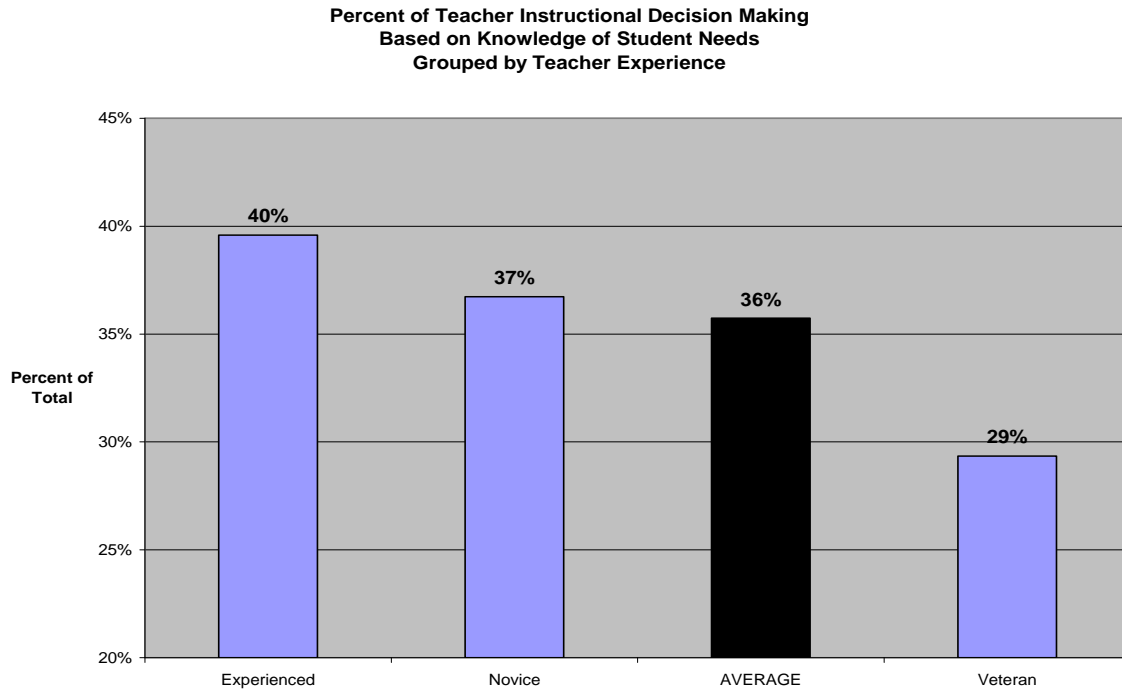
4.3.3.3 Analysis of Novice, Experienced and Veteran Teachers on Knowledge of Instructional Approaches and Strategies and Instructional Decision Making

Of the total 348 responses identifying varying instructional approaches as their reasons

for instructional decision making, experienced teachers had the highest use per teacher of

the three groups. Of all the categories, the knowledge of instructional approaches and

strategies was the most consistent, ranging from a high of 47% to a low of 41%, as was

shown in Figure 15. As noted above, all three experience levels of teachers used

knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies to make instructional decisions

more frequently than knowledge of student needs and the 5 SBRR components.

About 47% of all the experienced teachers' responses regarding decision making focused on instructional approaches for the decisions they made. The second highest were the novice teachers, totaling 44%, followed by the veteran teachers at 41%. The average for the interview group was about 44%, which means that on average, the entire group made instructional decisions based on varying instructional approaches about 44% of the time.

Figure 18

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making Based on Knowledge of Instructional Approaches and Strategies, Grouped by Teacher Experience

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making
Based on Knowledge of Instructional Approaches and Strategies
Grouped by Teacher Experience
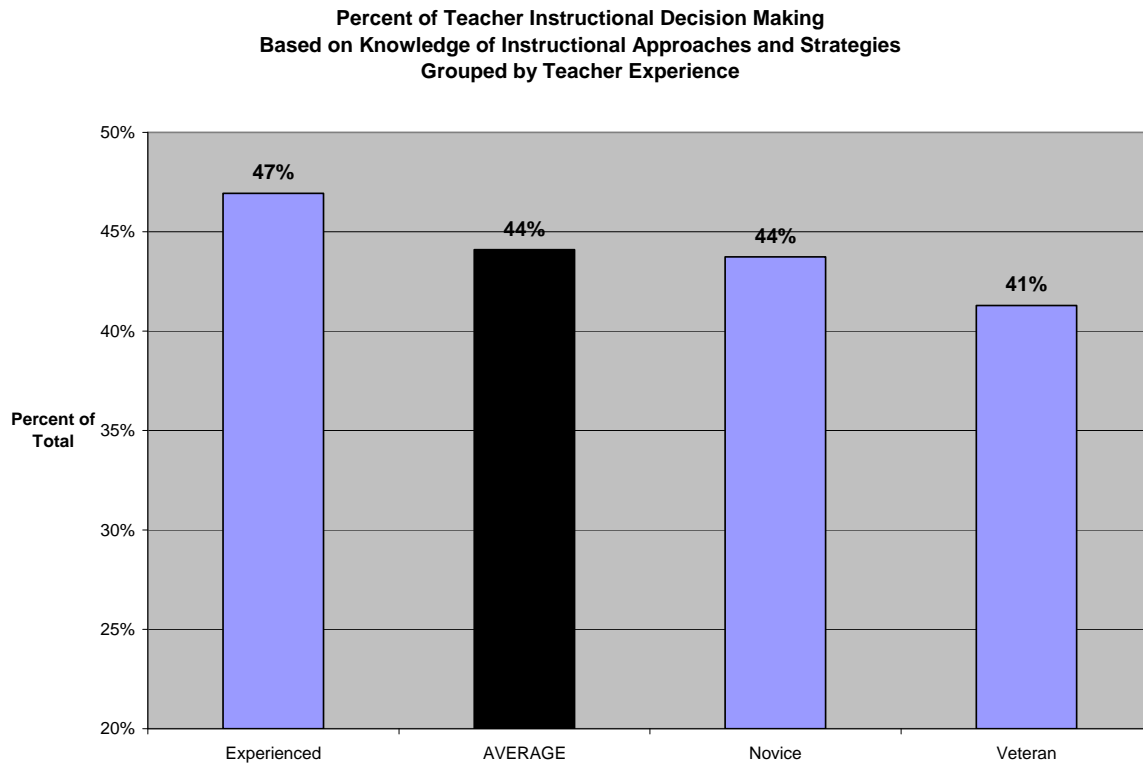
4.4 WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES, IF ANY, ON HOW KINDERGARTEN, FIRST GRADE, SECOND GRADE AND THIRD GRADE TEACHERS MAKE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS TO IMPLEMENT A NEW CORE READING PROGRAM?

To determine the influence of teacher grade level on instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program, the questionnaire responses along with the detailed interview coding results were quantified and narratively summarized. This was done to determine what similarities and differences existed between teachers, on how they implemented the new core reading program and how they made their instructional decisions.

4.4.1 Similarities Between Teacher Grade Level and Perception in Implementing a New Core Reading Program

The questionnaire results were quantified and grouped by teacher grade level. The results of the 26 teachers who answered the questionnaire are also presented concurrently with the results of the in-depth interviews to link the quantitative questionnaire data to the qualitative interview results.

Although the majority of teachers who responded to the questionnaire believed they were supported by their principal when implementing the new core reading program, when analyzing the breakdown by grade level, the differences were more evident than strictly viewing results by experience level. On average, 88% of all teachers believed the principal supported them throughout the implementation of the new core reading program. However, all the second and third grade teachers agreed or strongly agreed, whereas only 71% of kindergarten teachers and 80% of first grade teachers agreed or

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strongly agreed that the principal supported them throughout the implementation of the

program (See Table 19).

Table 19

Teacher Perception on Principal Support

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Kindergarten	71%	14%	14%
Grade 1	80%	20%	0%
Grade 2	100%	0%	0%
Grade 3	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	88%	9%	4%

All 26 teachers (100%) who responded to the questionnaire either agreed or

strongly agreed that their experience teaching at their current grade level influences how

they implement the new core reading program. See Table 20 below.

Table 20

Teacher Perception on Grade Level Experience and Influence on Implementing the New

Core Reading Program

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Kindergarten	100%	0%	0%
Grade 1	100%	0%	0%
Grade 2	100%	0%	0%
Grade 3	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	100%	0%	0%

An average of 96% (25) teachers believed their overall teaching experience influences

how effectively they implement the new core reading program. Only one third grade

teacher (4%) disagreed (See Table 21).

Table 21

Teacher Perception on Overall Experience and Influence on Implementing the New Core

Reading Program

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Kindergarten	100%	0%	0%
Grade 1	100%	0%	0%
Grade 2	100%	0%	0%
Grade 3	86%	0%	14%
TOTALS	96%	0%	4%

As supported in the qualitative detailed discussions, 25 of the 26 teachers (95%)

implement the new core reading program as indicated, by using the directives in the

teachers manual daily or several times weekly. The other one third grade teacher (5%)

used the directives at least once a week. All 26 teachers indicated that they do use the

directives from the new core reading program (See Table 22).

Table 22

Frequency of Use of Directives in New Core Reading Program

	Daily or Several Times Weekly	Once a Week	Seldom or Never
Kindergarten	100%	0%	0%
Grade 1	80%	20%	0%
Grade 2	100%	0%	0%
Grade 3	100%	0%	0%
TOTALS	95%	5%	0%

When reviewing the teachers' use of the activities in the new core reading program

related to the 5 SBRR components, teachers were most consistent and focused on the use

of the comprehension strategies and materials. A total of 92% of the teachers stated they

use the comprehension activities found in the new core reading program at least weekly,

with only 8% of the teachers indicating they seldom or never use them (See Table 23). A

total of 72% of the third grade teachers used the comprehension strategies daily or several

times weekly, compared to 65% of the second grade teachers, 61% of the kindergarten

teachers, and only 49% of the first grade teachers.

Table 23

Frequency of Use of Comprehension Activities in New Core Reading Program

	Daily or Several Times Weekly	Once a Week	Seldom or Never
Kindergarten	61%	24%	14%
Grade 1	49%	46%	6%
Grade 2	65%	27%	8%
Grade 3	72%	25%	2%
TOTALS	**62%**	**30%**	**8%**

4.4.2   Differences Between Teacher Grade Level and Perception in Implementing a New Core Reading Program

Teacher responses by experience level on the questionnaire differed on their perception

of the level of professional development they received. There was less variance amongst

the teachers when categorized by grade level on the professional development question,

then when grouped by experience level. Between 50% and 55% of the first, second and

170

third grade teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they received adequate

professional development, whereas only 32% of kindergarten teachers believed they

received adequate professional development, with respect to the new core reading

program (See Table 24).

Table 24

Amount of Adequate Professional Development Received

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Kindergarten	32%	43%	25%
Grade 1	55%	10%	35%
Grade 2	50%	29%	21%
Grade 3	50%	36%	14%
TOTALS	47%	29%	24%

Teachers across grade levels differed in their level of how frequently they

supplemented the new core reading program with additional or varied materials. The first

grade and kindergarten teachers were more likely to supplement the new core reading

program than second or third grade teachers. Only 33% of the third grade teachers and

67% of second grade teachers always, or most of the time, supplemented the new core

reading program with additional instructional materials, compared to 86% of

kindergarten and 100% of first grade teachers (See Table 25).

Table 25

Frequency of Supplementing the New Core Reading Program

	Always or Most of the Time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
Kindergarten	86%	14%	0%
Grade 1	100%	0%	0%
Grade 2	67%	33%	0%
Grade 3	33%	52%	14%
TOTALS	**71%**	**25%**	**4%**

The second grade teachers were more likely to plan with their respective grade

level than their counterparts. Table 26 displays that only 29% of kindergarten teachers

said they always or most of the time plan with their grade level team, compared to 86%

of the second grade teachers. A total of 43% of the kindergarten teachers and 40% of the

first grade teachers noted that they seldom or never plan with their grade level team.

Table 26

Frequency of Planning with Current Grade Level Team

	Always or Most of the Time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
Kindergarten	29%	29%	43%
Grade 1	40%	40%	20%
Grade 2	86%	0%	14%
Grade 3	43%	29%	29%
TOTALS	**49%**	**24%**	**26%**

The second grade teachers were also more likely to use the assessment measures

found in the new core reading program in helping them guide their planning and

instruction. All of the second grade teachers always or most of the time used these

assessment measures, compared to 57% of third grade teachers, 43% of kindergarten

teachers, and no first grade teachers. Sixty percent of the first grade teachers never or

seldom used the assessment measures found in the new core reading program (See Table

27).

Table 27

Frequency of Use of Assessment Measures Found in New Core Reading Program

	Always or Most of the Time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
Kindergarten	43%	57%	0%
Grade 1	0%	40%	60%
Grade 2	100%	0%	0%
Grade 3	57%	29%	14%
TOTALS	**50%**	**31%**	**19%**

4.4.3   Analysis of Interview Data

Since there were an unequal number of teachers interviewed at each grade level, the total

number of references, along with a calculated *per teacher average* was compiled. For the

12 teachers interviewed, under the attribute of *grade level*, there were 3 kindergarten

teachers, 2 first grade teachers, 4 second grade teachers and 3 third grade teachers.

Averages by grade level were calculated by determining the total number of responses for

a key category, divided by the number of teachers. For example, there were 55 codes by

3 total kindergarten teachers relating to the knowledge of the 5 SBRR components. The

resulting average is 18.3 comments per kindergarten teacher, which is 55 codes divided

by 3 teachers. The entire matrix of the teachers' grade level compared to the three broad

decision making categories was calculated and cross-referenced and is displayed in Table

28.   The similarities and differences amongst the findings are addressed below.

Table 28

Coding Analysis Based on Teacher Grade Level

Count	SBRR	Student Needs	Inst Approach	TOTALS
Kindergarten	55	65	54	**174**
Grade 1	29	46	79	**154**
Grade 2	48	103	147	**298**
Grade 3	27	68	68	**163**
Totals	**159**	**282**	**348**	**789**

Average	SBRR	Student Needs	Inst Approach	TOTALS
Kindergarten	18.3	21.7	18.0	**58.0**
Grade 1	14.5	23.0	39.5	**77.0**
Grade 2	12.0	25.8	36.8	**74.5**
Grade 3	9.0	22.7	22.7	**54.3**
Avg	**13.3**	**23.5**	**29.0**	**65.8**

% to total	SBRR	Student Needs	Inst Approach	TOTALS
Kindergarten	31.6%	37.4%	31.0%	**100%**
Grade 1	18.8%	29.9%	51.3%	**100%**
Grade 2	16.1%	34.6%	49.3%	**100%**
Grade 3	16.6%	41.7%	41.7%	**100%**
Avg	**20.2%**	**35.7%**	**44.1%**	**100%**

In analyzing the coded responses from the 12 in-depth interviews by teacher grade level, third grade teachers only had 54 responses per teacher, which was the least number of responses of all the grade levels. Kindergarten teachers had the second lowest response rate, at 58 responses per teacher, followed by second grade at 75 responses per teacher, with first grade teachers having the highest number of teacher responses, totaling 77 per teacher. The average responses per teacher by grade level, compared with the total group average of 66 responses, is shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19

Average Coded Responses per Teacher, Grouped by Grade Level

Average Coded Responses per Teacher
Grouped by Grade Level
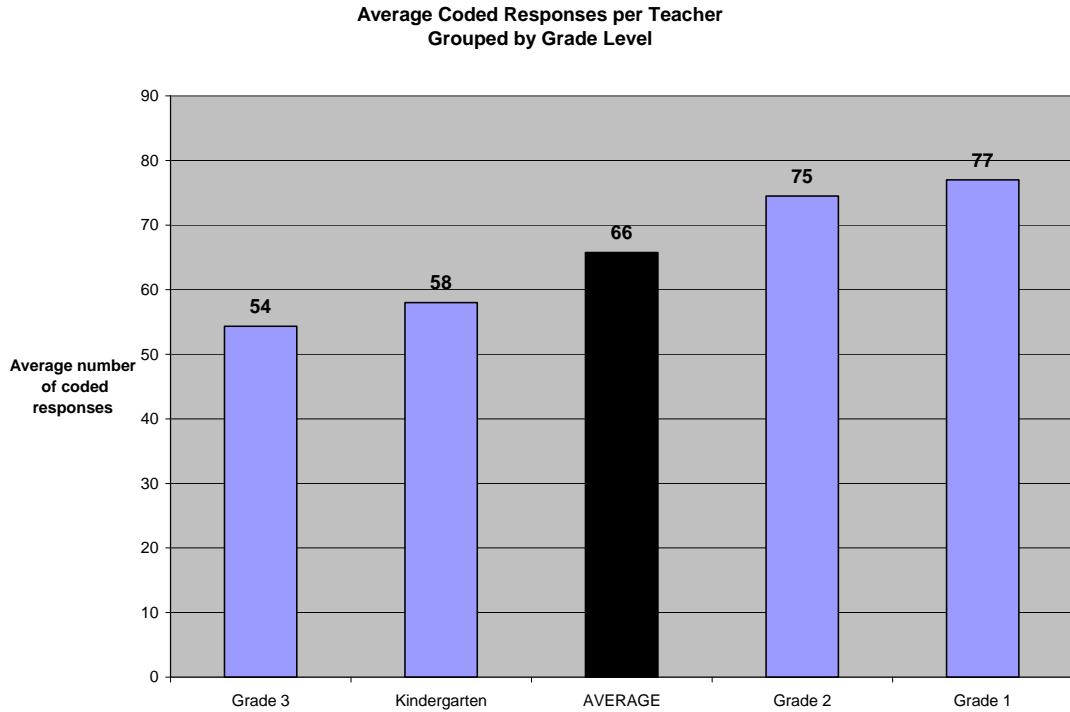
Figure 20 displays the group of teachers' instructional grade level, along with

how frequently they made instructional decisions based on the three main components of

a) knowledge of the 5 SBRR components, b) knowledge of student needs, and c)

knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies.

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Figure 20

Percent of Teachers Grouped by Grade Level and How they Made Instructional

Decisions

**Percent of Category Used to Make
Instructional Decisions Grouped by Teacher Grade Level**
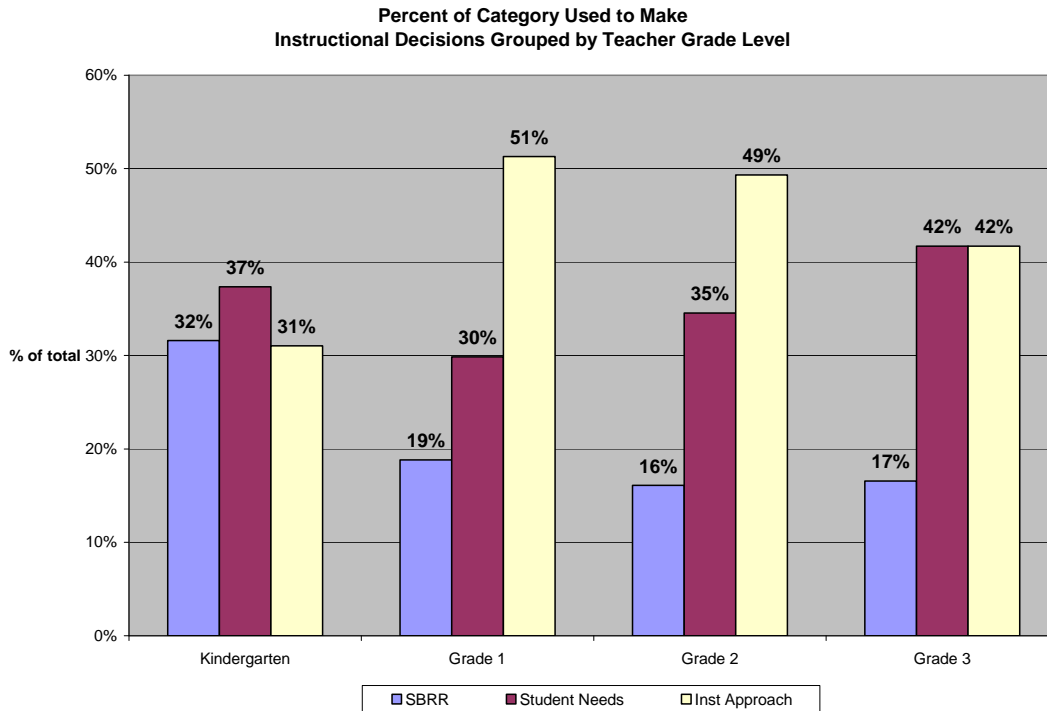
Kindergarten teachers made instructional decisions based on knowledge of

student needs 37% of the time, followed by knowledge of the 5 SBRR components 32%

of the time, and knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies 31% of the time.

Kindergarten teachers used the three components to make instructional decisions "more

evenly" than the rest of the grade levels.

The first and second grade teachers favored using knowledge of instructional

approaches and strategies significantly more than either knowledge of the 5 SBRR

components, or knowledge of student needs. The first and second grade teachers used

knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies 51% and 49% of the time,

respectively, while knowledge of student needs was used for instructional decision making for the first and second grade teachers only 30% and 35% of the time, respectively. Knowledge of the 5 SBRR components was used 19% of the time by the first grade teachers, and only 16% of the time for the second grade teachers.

The third grade teachers used knowledge of student needs, and knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies equally. Both approaches were used 42% of the time, while knowledge of the 5 SBRR components was used only 17% of the time. Further breakdown by each major category and teacher grade level will be addressed in the following sections.

4.4.3.1 Analysis of Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, and Third Grade Teachers on Knowledge of SBRR Content and Instructional Decision Making

Teachers as a group made instructional decisions based on knowledge of the 5 SBRR components about 20% of the time. Further analysis was done to determine how this percentage varied amongst different teachers' grade levels, which is graphically displayed in Figure 21.

Figure 21

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making Based on Knowledge of 5 SBRR

Components, Grouped by Teacher Grade Level
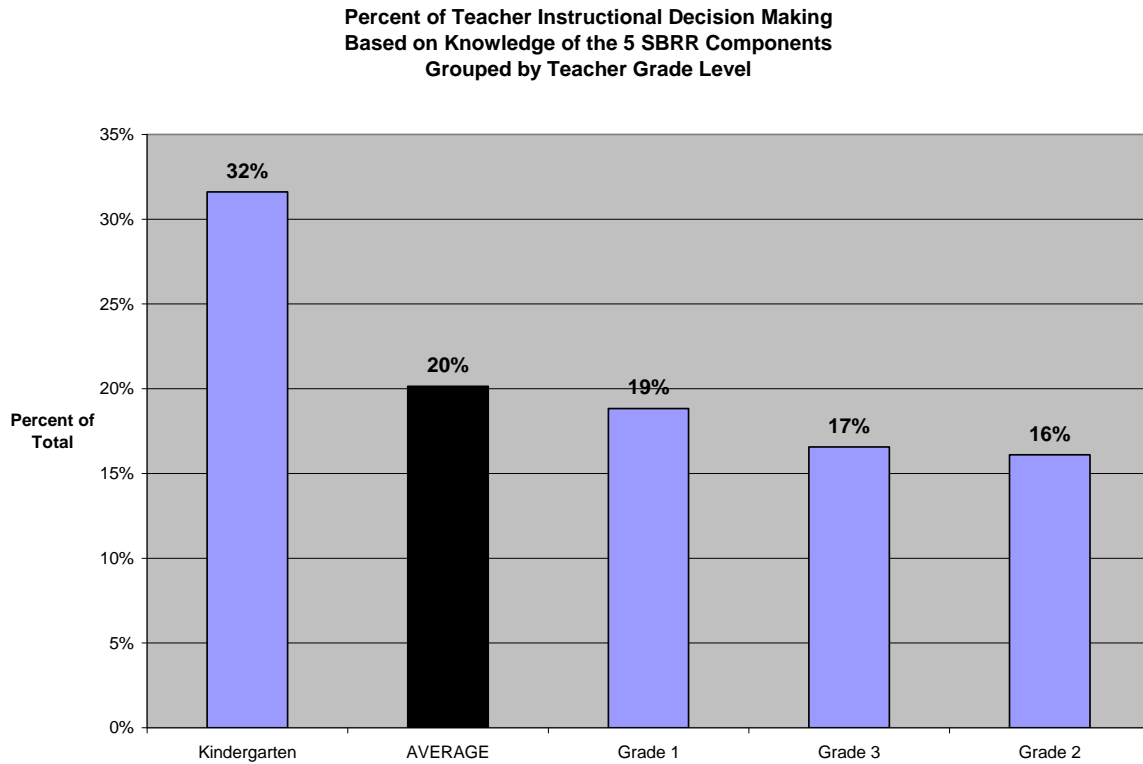
Of the 159 total responses referencing knowledge of the 5 SBRR components,

kindergarten teachers had the highest use per teacher of the four groups. About 32% of

all the kindergarten teachers' responses regarding decision making focused on knowledge

of the 5 SBRR components. The second highest were the first grade teachers, totaling

19%, followed by the third grade teachers at 17%, and the lowest being the second grade

teachers, totaling 16%. The average for the interview group was about 20%.

Kindergarten teachers used the 5 SBRR components *more than* the other groups of

teachers, which is graphically represented in Figure 20 and Figure 21. Figure 20 also shows that the 32% of kindergarten teachers merely represents that they use knowledge of the 5 SBRR components more than the other groups of teachers; it is not their primary instructional method, which was knowledge of student needs.

4.4.3.2 Analysis of Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, and Third Grade Teachers on Knowledge of Learner Needs and Instructional Decision Making

Of the total 282 responses identifying student needs as their reasons for instructional decision making, third grade teachers had the highest use per teacher of the four groups. About 42% of all the third grade teachers' responses regarding decision making focused on student needs. The second highest were the kindergarten teachers, totaling 37%, followed by second grade teachers at 35%, and the lowest being first grade teachers, totaling 30%. The average for the interview group was about 36%. The third grade teachers used student needs as driving their instructional decisions *more than* the other groups of teachers, which is graphically represented in Figure 22.

Figure 22

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making Based on Knowledge of Student

Needs, Grouped by Teacher Experience

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making
Based on Knowledge of Student Needs
Grouped by Teacher Grade Level
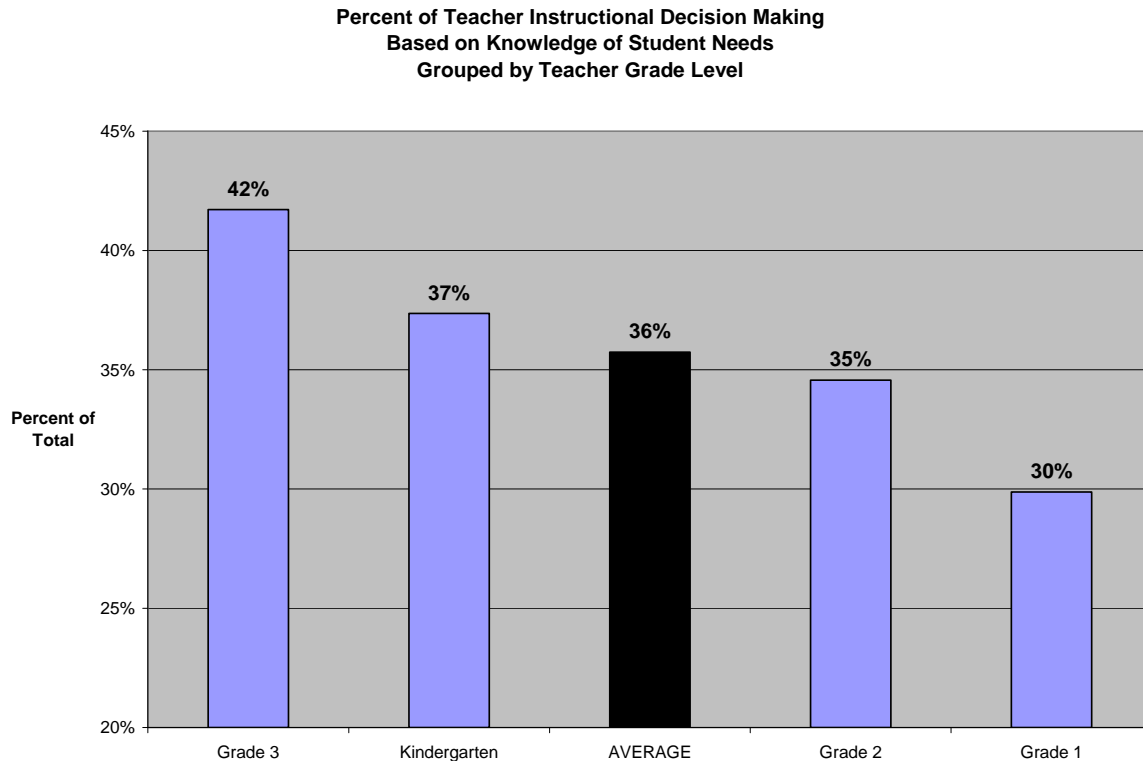
4.4.3.3 Analysis of Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, and Third Grade Teachers on Knowledge of Instructional Approaches and Strategies and Instructional Decision Making

Of the total 348 responses identifying varying instructional approaches as their

reasons for instructional decision making, first grade teachers had the highest use per

teacher of the four groups. About 51% of all the first grade teachers' responses regarding

decision making focused on instructional approaches for the decisions they made. The

second highest were the second grade teachers, totaling 49%, followed by the third grade

teachers at 42%, and the lowest being kindergarten, at 31%. The average for the

interview group was about 44%, which means that on average, the entire group made

instructional decisions based on varying instructional approaches about 44% of the time.

The first grade teachers used varying instructional approaches as driving their

instructional decisions *more than* the other groups of teachers, which is graphically

represented in Figure 23.

Figure 23

Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making Based on Knowledge of Instructional

Approaches and Strategies, Grouped by Teacher Experience

**Percent of Teacher Instructional Decision Making
Based on Knowledge of Instructional Approaches and Strategies
Grouped by Teacher Grade Level**
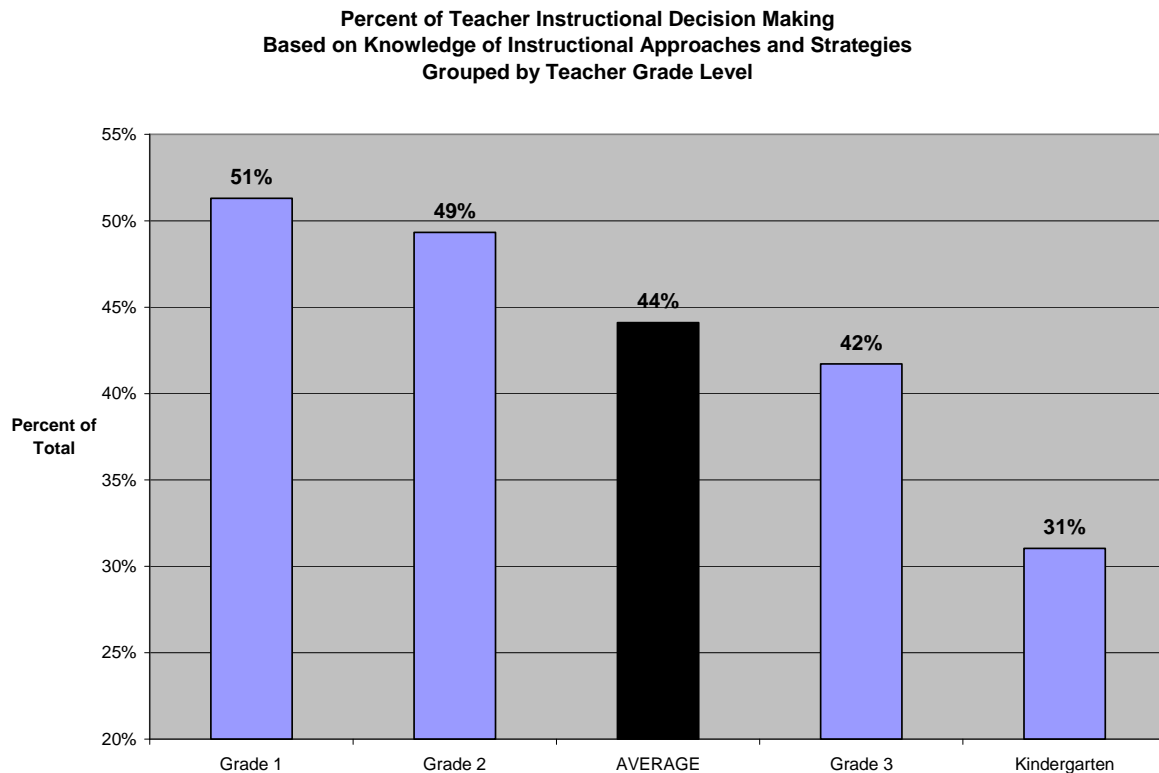
4.5   IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE ON-SITE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR INFLUENCE THE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION MAKING WHEN IMPLEMENTING A NEW CORE READING PROGRAM?

The school administrator's role in the implementation of a new core reading program and teacher decision making was not evaluated as extensively as the other research questions. However, data were collected through the teacher questionnaire and the teacher interviews to determine in what ways the school administrator influenced the implementation of the new core reading program.

There were a total of 25 references from the in-depth teacher interviews that referenced the school administrator's influence when implementing the new core reading program (See Table 4). The major topics mentioned by the teachers were (a) the administrator requested that the teachers use the new core reading program, (b) the administrator allowed for professional judgment by allowing the teachers to supplement or modify the program, and (c) the administrator met with the teachers frequently to assess how the new core reading program was progressing.

As addressed in the questionnaire results, teachers felt supported by their principal during the implementation of the new program. A total of 23 (88%) of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported, while only 1 (4%) disagreed. This question was rated at 4.23 out of a possible 5.00. On average, 88% of all teachers believed the principal supported them throughout the implementation of the new core reading program, 9% were undecided, and 4% disagreed (See Table 9).

The questionnaire also asked whether or not the principal influences the way the teachers implement the new core reading program. A total of 62% (16) of teachers

indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that their administrator influences the way

they implement the program. Twenty-three percent (6) were undecided, and 15% (4)

disagreed or strongly disagreed that the principal influences how they implement the

program. The breakdown of teachers responding to this question was most significant

when separated by experience level. Only 44% of the experienced teachers and 50% of

the veteran teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the principal influences how they

implement the program. For novice teachers however, 82% agreed that the principal

influences them in their implementation (See Table 29).

Table 29

Teachers' Perception on Whether the Principal Influences their Implementation

	Strongly Agree / Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree / Disagree
Novice	82%	9%	9%
Experienced	44%	44%	11%
Veteran	50%	17%	33%
TOTALS	**59%**	**23%**	**18%**

4.5.1 Administrator's Directive and Teacher Perception for Use of New Core Reading Program

The first broad point identified by the teacher interviews discussed whether the

administrator *required* the teachers to use the new core reading program. Perceptions

varied regarding how much flexibility the teachers had when using the new core reading

program with the students. The teachers largely agreed that the use of the new core

reading program was not optional; three teachers mentioned that since the school district

spent time researching multiple programs and purchased the series, it was a requirement

to use. A quote from a third grade teacher reflected this sentiment when she said, " They would like us to follow it [the core program].. They [school administration] said because they bought it, you use it. That's pretty much cut and dry."

A kindergarten teacher reflected on the use of the program by saying:

> I think because the district gave it to us, we've been told a couple different things along the way. We've been told when we first got this, our core reading program, that you have to do it, you have to embrace everything about it.

Another third grade teacher commented that she believed the directives from the administrator was to adhere to using the new core reading program:

> I would say probably ninety percent of the material I use for reading instruction comes from the core reading series and my supplements. The principal would like us to stick, as much as possible, to our reading series so that we learn it, so we can assess its use and effectiveness next year. The district wants us to use it. They're telling us we have to use it. You are using it, you're sticking to it, and you're going to because we bought it for you, you picked it, so you're using it.

After reviewing the detailed interview comments by the school administrator, it was noted that she perceived that the teachers believed there was a mandate to use the new core reading program strictly as designed. She commented on the teachers' perceptions on the mandated use of the new core reading program:

> For some reason, there was a message that wasn't clear...what I kept
>
> hearing from the teachers was they thought 'we have to do it this way'.
>
> Really, they were never told by even the literacy coach last year or by
>
> myself that they had to follow the new core reading program explicitly and
>
> without flexibility.

In addition, she commented on her discussion with the district's curriculum

director, saying:

> When we were looking at the core reading program last year, there was a
>
> discussion with the director of curriculum that the core reading program
>
> was not meant to replace existing curriculum. So from there, everybody is
>
> pretty much on the same page. You take it as one of the tools to use for
>
> instruction, but it's not everything...

After the researcher reviewed the teacher interviews, specifically for

comments related to the principal's directives on how to use the program, the

predominant tone from the teachers focused on flexibility and latitude in

implementation, which is addressed below.

4.5.2   Administrator's Directive and Teacher Perception on the Flexibility and Ability to Supplement the New Core Reading Program

The second broad point identified by the teacher interviews discussed whether the

administrator allowed for flexibility and the ability to supplement the new core reading

program with additional or varied materials and instructional approaches. This topic of

flexibility is strongly linked to the discussion of the mandated use of the program. The interviews showed the majority of teachers who commented on this topic believed they had the ability to use and modify the program to address student instructional needs and other district goals. Despite teachers' comments that the principal and district required them to use the program, there was large agreement from the teachers that they had latitude to modify certain components of the new core reading program. For example, a veteran second grade teacher commented:

> I think she's supportive of the fact that we can use our professional
> judgment, because there's so much in here [core reading program] that we
> need to be able to weed out what's important and what isn't. It would be
> impossible to cover every single thing that's done in this [core reading
> program] with all those workbook pages and everything else.

Similar comments were made by a third grade teacher, noting that modifications were made for the implementation of the new core reading program based on student instructional needs:

> ...I had also asked [the principal], 'If I want to supplement things
> [materials] am I allowed to do that?' 'Is that appropriate?' She said
> 'Sure'. I told her I was just going to take it [the core program]as it
> comes...I feel I can help the students understand something more by
> supplementing...

A second grade teacher discussed whether there was a mandate that the new core reading program needed to be followed exactly as presented:

No, I was never told 'you have to do this'; I think it's just that she trusts

us. I think she knows that professionally we're going to teach. We're not

just going to let this sit on our desk and collect dust. So we've been pretty

much given the freedom to use what we think is appropriate, and we

haven't been given guidelines like in our old series, that you were required

to do this. We haven't been told that with this new program.

A novice teacher also focused on supplementing the new core reading program based on

students' needs. She commented:

She [the principal] has given us support and she doesn't look down on

anybody for varying off and supplementing it [the core program]. She

trusts our expertise and we've had tons of professional development...

again this is one component of what we're doing to meet the student's

needs. The series is good because there's consistency with the

instructional approaches, but for the kids that need a little bit more help in

a specific avenue, or kids that are well above the guided lessons, we can

change it for them when we deem necessary.

The school administrator justified her rationale regarding on how the teachers

could use the new core reading program. She mentioned that she communicated to the

group that they could remain flexible and open to using different materials. The

administrator shared:

....So again, dialoguing was the key. Meeting with groups of teachers on

their grade level did help to get the teachers to start looking at what

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different materials they could use...definitely the use of an abundance of worksheets was addressed. I was able to say, 'Look, we already know that worksheets don't work, so let's think what does work?' 'Just because the worksheets came with the program, are they the best thing?'......

Participating in weekly meetings to discuss implementation of the new core reading program was supported by one of the third grade teachers when she explained:

Every week we meet at the grade level – we've sat down and discussed different aspects of the reading series, or things that we need to do, or ask 'what do we want to do and how do you want to handle it?' We talk about how our reading program is going as a grade level and what we need to do to make it easier and more effective for the students.

The administrator also commented on implementing the new core reading program regarding the flexibility in the teacher lesson plans that she would like to see. She shared:

What I would like to see is some thoughtful reflection in the lesson plans. I would like the teachers to monitor different students and where they need to be and how they are going to get them there. So the lesson plans would have to be fairly detailed, particularly if using differentiated instruction. What are the concepts that we're covering? Who is struggling with these concepts?......those types of notes are what I would like to see in their lesson plans so that they stay focused on the children, and the decisions that they are making to help each child succeed.

4.5.3   Meeting with Teachers to Assess Implementation

The last broad point identified by the teachers in the interviews discussed how the administrator maintained communication with the teachers regarding implementation of the new core reading program. The majority of teachers believed the administrator maintained an open dialogue with the teachers to assess progress and to note problems they were having with the implementation of the new core reading program.

When asked how supported she felt by the administration during the implementation of the new core reading program, a second grade teacher explained:

> She [the principal] is very supportive. She is very happy with how the
>
> kids are doing. She comes in and I think she's thrilled to see how much
>
> they've improved in their reading. She said, if we ever have any questions,
>
> or feel uncomfortable about what we're teaching, we can come talk to her
>
> about it. I think she has been very supportive.

A third grade teacher commented on the grade level meetings they have had with the principal about the new core reading program by saying:

> She [the principal] has been all for it [the core reading program]. She has
>
> always been there if you have any questions, or if you need to go to her to
>
> talk. She always wanted to know if we needed something [materials] that
>
> we didn't get or if we're having a problem...

When asked about any problems with implementation of the new core reading program or any need for additional support when implementing the new core reading program, a kindergarten teacher reiterated:

.....not a lot of problems. Any problems or concerns we had she [the

principal] would address anything. We went to her office a couple of

times with a concern.......and she has been real flexible about finding

something else [instructional approach or materials] to try to reinforce

what the basal is trying to do.

There were two teachers who commented that they would have liked more

support from the administrator and the district in regards to the new core reading

program. One teacher commented:

I haven't gotten much direction from her [the principal] since we got the

program, the actual materials... there hasn't been a whole lot of direction

from her. We [the grade level teachers] had a conflict regarding the

selection of certain words to teach and when to teach them. There hasn't

been a whole lot of directions about what to do from the principal. The

district hasn't given any direction on this program either.

A third grade teacher expressed her concern regarding the principal's understanding of

what the teachers were specifically doing with implementation of the new core reading

program when she commented: "Realistically, I don't know how much she [the principal]

is aware of what is going on or not going on with the reading program."

The administrator interview addressed what she perceived was her role during

implementation of the new core reading program. She expressed her need to provide the

teachers with support in any way necessary. When asked what she did to assist with the

implementation of the new core reading program, she expressed that her role was:

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......Pretty much getting the materials to them, having meetings once a

week at different grade levels, and being available as much as possible to

talk... Definitely a coach and definitely just having more time personally

to assist would be beneficial. People do look to the principal for

validation, and just to talk, 'Hey this is what I am doing... what do you

think about this? What do you think about that?' So those types of

conversations have happened. A lot of times, I [the principal] will just

stop in classrooms or be out and about throughout the building, but it

[assistance to teachers] is not as structured as I would like it to be. It's

been kind of hit or miss. One teacher talking to another teacher...... I just

wish we had more time to sit down and do some of that reflection that

needs to happen, so there's a goal for next year.

When the administrator was asked what she perceived to be her role and

responsibility in the implementation of the new core reading program, the

administrator expressed the need to provide leadership and vision. She discussed

her role as:

...one of my biggest jobs is to facilitate the dialog with the teachers about

philosophy, and try to establish a vision of where we want to go and what

we want to happen [referring to reading instruction]. Beyond that, I feel

that it's my responsibility to get the teachers what they need to make the

vision happen as far as time, support, and materials. Sometimes teachers

just even need to talk about how things are going, and have somebody

listen to them. Just talk to each other. I find that to be very helpful. One

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of the most motivating things for the teachers is when they have a chance

to dialogue together.

An ancillary discussion topic regarding the frequency of meetings, and the ability

for teachers to dialogue together dealt with the issue of time constraints. With the

complexities of implementing a new core reading program along with the hectic pace of

managing a classroom for the teachers, and the management of an entire school for the

principal, there was limited time to connect to discuss implementation issues with the

new core reading program. The principal commented on the lack of time, by stating:

> I think there are many challenges such as my lack of time, definitely. I
>
> feel in a lot of ways that I let my teachers down due to the change of
>
> staffing. This being a larger elementary school, I don't feel I have the time
>
> to support the teachers with curriculum and instruction issues as I would
>
> like to. I really would have liked to have all the teachers at mid-year have
>
> half a day where we could sit and dialogue about how the program was
>
> going. But really, it's my time constraints. I don't feel that I have been
>
> there for the teachers when I should have. I am looking forward to next
>
> year, when I will have a full-time assistant principal and then I'll be able
>
> to continue the implementation process because it does take more than one
>
> year. I will just try to help them more as they go through this shift in their
>
> reading instruction next year.

In summary, the comments of the teachers and the school administrator emphasize how the teachers do rely and value the administrator's input and guidance when implementing a new core reading program. Teachers wanted to know that what they were doing was appropriate and correct, and they wanted guidance in how much latitude they had to supplement and vary the core reading program. Both the school administrator and the teachers agreed on the need for more time together to discuss issues, reflect, and develop ideas to support and enhance their implementation of the new core reading program.

5.0   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, findings are summarized and conclusions are drawn from the data analysis. A discussion of the issues related to this study and possible implications for educators, administrators and publishing companies follows. Finally, recommendations for future research and limitations of this study are shared.

5.1   FINDINGS

This section highlights the findings for each research question regarding how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program. Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the new core reading program are also summarized.

Research question 1 asked the preponderant question: *What is the nature of teacher instructional decision making in the implementation of a new core reading program?*

1. Teachers made instructional decisions while implementing a new core reading program based on their knowledge of student instructional needs, their content knowledge of SBRR components, and their knowledge of a variety of instructional approaches and strategies.

2. Teachers made instructional decisions most often based on their knowledge of effective instructional approaches and strategies.

3. Teachers believed that their experience teaching at their present grade level, as well as their overall teaching experience, influenced how they implemented the new core reading program.

4. Teachers followed the directives in the teacher's manual of the new core

   reading program; however, they often supplemented the use of the core

   reading program with additional instructional materials and approaches.

Research questions 1a, 1b, and 1c further investigated teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program.

Research question 1a asked: *In what ways does teacher knowledge of the content related to the Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?*

1. Teachers consistently and explicitly provided comprehension instruction

   to students in grades K-3 when implementing the new core reading

   program.

2. Teachers demonstrated knowledge of the importance and need for

   comprehension strategy instruction in kindergarten through third grade.

3. Teachers consistently instructed students in all 5 SBRR components

   (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension).

4. Teachers demonstrated their knowledge of instructing students in phonics,

   vocabulary and fluency in order to support and enhance students'

   comprehension.

Research question 1b asked: *In what ways does teacher knowledge of learner needs in the classroom influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?*

1. Teachers made instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program based on student needs when:

   a. They wanted to develop students' critical thinking skills and their abilities to apply their reading strategies.

   b. They provided students with the skills necessary for future success (in the next grade level, later in school, and later in life)

   c. They wanted to motivate and engage students in order to learn.

   d. They provided instruction at the students' levels.

Research question 1c asked: *In what ways does teacher knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies related to SBRR influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?*

1. Teachers utilized a variety of instructional approaches and strategies beyond what was supplied in the teacher's manual of the new core reading program.

2. Teachers most often used flexible grouping and differentiated instructional techniques while implementing the new core reading program.

3. Teachers implemented comprehension strategy instruction, guided reading, and graphic organizers when implementing the new core reading program to provide effective reading instruction.

Research question 2 asked: *What are the similarities and differences, if any, on how novice teachers, experienced teachers, and veteran teachers make instructional decisions to implement a new core reading program?*

1. The majority of teachers felt that they were supported by their principal when implementing the new core reading program. There were no significant differences in teachers' views based on experience levels.

2. The majority of teachers followed the directives in the teacher's manual of the new core reading program, with no significant differences based on experience. However, veteran and novice teachers supplemented the new core reading program with additional materials and instructional approaches more often than the experienced teachers.

3. Veteran teachers perceived they had adequate professional development to implement the new core reading program compared to the experienced or the novice teachers.

4. Veteran teachers were more likely to plan with their current grade level team than either the novice or the experienced teachers.

5. Veteran teachers were more likely to make instructional decisions when implementing the new core reading program based on their content knowledge of the 5 SBRR components compared to the novice or the experienced teachers.

6. Experienced teachers made their instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program based on their knowledge of student needs and instructional approaches more often than the novice and veteran teachers.

7. Novice teachers made their instructional decisions based on instructional approaches and student needs more frequently than veteran teachers, and used

knowledge of the 5 SBRR components for instructional decision making more frequently than the experienced teachers.

Research question 3 asked: *What are the similarities and differences, if any, on how kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade teachers make instructional decisions to implement a new core reading program?*

1. Teachers across grade levels consistently agreed that their years of experience, as well as their years teaching at their current grade level, influenced how they implemented the new core reading program.

2. The majority of the teachers followed the directives as indicated in the teacher's manual of the new core reading program with no significant differences found based on grade level.

3. The first, second and third grade teachers felt they received adequate professional development to implement the new core reading program. Kindergarten teachers felt they received less than adequate professional development in order to implement the new core reading program.

4. The second and third grade teachers felt they were strongly supported by their principal during the implementation of the new core reading program.

5. The kindergarten and first grade teachers supplemented the new core reading program with additional materials and instructional approaches more frequently than the second and third grade teachers.

6. The kindergarten and first grade teachers were less likely to plan with their grade level team than the second and third grade teachers.

7. The second and third grade teachers consistently used the assessment measures provided in the new core reading program while the first grade and kindergarten teachers did not.

8. The kindergarten teachers were more likely to make instructional decisions based on their content knowledge of the 5 SBRR components compared to any other grade level.

9. The first and second grade teachers were more likely to make instructional decisions based on their knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies. The third grade teachers relied more heavily on their knowledge of student needs in order to make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program.

Research question 4 asked: *In what ways does the site-based school administrator (principal) influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program?*

1. During implementation of the new core reading program, teachers felt supported by the school administrator.

2. Teachers relied on and valued the school administrator's guidance and support when implementing a new core reading program.

3. Teachers needed guidance from the school administrator on the latitude and flexibility on the use of the new core reading program for reading instruction in their classroom and school-wide.

4. Teachers and the school administrator desired more opportunities to discuss the use of the new core reading program and to reflect on the implementation, but lack of time was an issue.

Teacher perceptions of the implementation of the new core reading program:

1. Teachers believed the new core reading program assisted them in meeting the state standards for reading, writing, listening and speaking.

2. Teachers believed they received ample professional development prior to implementation of the new core reading program.

3. Teachers believed they were not provided a sufficient amount or quality of professional development throughout the school year to successfully implement the new core reading program.

4. Teachers desired consistent support and visits by the publishing company representatives during implementation of the new core reading program.

5. As a beneficial form of professional development, teachers desired opportunities and ample time to meet regularly with colleagues to reflect and to discuss implementation of the new core reading program.

5.2   CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to the concept of the *deskilling* of teachers (Shannon, 1987) when utilizing a basal or core reading program, data gathered in this study supports the rationale that teachers make meaningful and thoughtful instructional decisions for reading

instruction when implementing a new core reading program. Teachers were found to make instructional decisions while implementing a new core reading program based on their knowledge of student needs, content knowledge of the 5 SBRR components, and knowledge of a variety of instructional approaches and strategies.

Shannon and Crawford (1997) claimed that using a core reading program was the mere presentation of the core reading materials according to the directives in the teacher's manual. Although many of the teachers in this study utilized the directives in the teacher's manual of the new core reading program, their implementation of reading instruction using the core reading program often consisted of very reflective and deliberate instructional decision making for the content covered and the instructional approaches and materials utilized.

Baumann and Heubach (1996) disagreed with the findings of Shannon (1987) and further investigated the concept of the *deskilling* of teachers when using a basal or core reading program. The researchers found teachers to be discriminating consumers in charge of their curricular and instructional decisions. The materials in a core reading program were found to empower teachers by providing them with instructional suggestions to draw from, to adapt, and to utilize to provide quality reading instruction (Baumann & Heubach, 1996).

The findings of the present study support and further enhance the conclusions of Baumann and Heubach (1996) by providing substantial evidence that teachers make prudent and intentional instructional decisions when using a new core reading program. The teachers' ability to make conscientious instructional decisions was evident with their vast knowledge of the content that students needed to become successful readers, and

their knowledge of a variety of instructional approaches and strategies to implement during reading instruction. This knowledge allowed the teachers to attempt to meet the reading instructional needs of the students in their classroom.

The teachers in this study made instructional decisions that were influenced by their level of experience when implementing a new core reading program. Schon (1983), supported the concept that experience influences instructional decision making. The teachers frequently commented that they used their prior experiences, as well as knowledge they have gained throughout their careers, to make the most appropriate instructional decisions for their students.

The studies by Jinkins (2001) and Woolacott (2002) provided evidence on how teachers make instructional decisions based on students' needs. The present study found that teachers also made instructional decisions based on students' needs. However, the most influential factor in this study when making instructional decisions was teacher knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies. The teachers' concerns to meet each student's instructional needs guided their instructional planning and their ability to make instructional decisions.

Teachers making instructional decisions based on knowledge of learner needs and knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies could be linked to the efforts of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The goal of the NCLB Act (2001) is to meet all students' learning needs by using research based instructional practices, along with requiring teachers to be accountable for the progress of their students. These issues might influence teacher instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program.

5.3   DISCUSSION

This study provided evidence about how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program. The interviews with the 12 teachers provided robust data to support the findings from the questionnaire. The open-ended nature of the interview where teachers were first asked to *walk through[to explain] how they plan their reading instruction for a day and then the rest of the week* using the core reading program, allowed the teachers to freely express their thoughts and ideas and to dialogue with the researcher.

It was evident from the rich data collected that the teachers who volunteered to be interviewed in this study wanted to talk, wanted to share their thoughts and ideas, and were very reflective regarding their planning and reading instruction. It seemed as if the teachers had been waiting a long time for someone to ask them "What do you do in your classroom and why do you do that?" When prompted to explain why they made certain instructional decisions when using the new core reading program, the teachers never hesitated to respond. They told stories, elaborated on concepts and ideas, and gave explicit examples to justify their thought processes. The teachers interviewed provided evidence of their extensive knowledge with their ability to articulate their ideas and thoughts about the reading instruction in their classrooms. There was never a lull in the conversation or dialogue to lead the researcher into thinking the teachers could not or did not want to talk about what they did when using the new core reading program.

Perhaps the mystery of finding out what happens in today's classrooms regarding literacy instruction or to find out what teachers are doing in their classrooms and why, could be more efficiently discovered by simply asking teachers as well as actively listening to them. By listening to teachers the needs of communities, schools, and children might be addressed more proficiently. Publishing companies could develop materials and programs to address the concerns and issues described by teachers, which would allow teachers and children's instructional needs to guide reading instruction more than already published materials.

Teachers were found to be very appreciative of being provided updated instructional materials with a wealth of activity ideas, materials to select from, and instructional options. The teachers were rarely negative about the new core reading program and seemed to appreciate its evolution over the years. It might be said that just as the basal or core reading program has evolved over the past decades due to new knowledge and research in the teaching of reading, so has the elementary classroom teacher in the ability to provide effective reading instruction using a core reading program to meet the diverse needs of all students.

The first, second and third grade teachers believed they received adequate professional development to implement the new core reading program; however, the kindergarten teachers believed they received less than adequate professional development. This perception of professional development could be due to the majority of kindergarten teachers being novice. Novice teachers require more professional support in a variety of areas such as classroom management, instructional strategies, and school-wide policies and procedures. Administrators and other grade level colleagues need to be

aware that a novice teacher's inexperience with the implementation of a new core reading

program requires more professional development to address his or her needs.

5.4   IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINSTRATORS

This study on teacher instructional decision making suggests that teachers *can*

make competent decisions regarding reading instruction when using a core reading

program. However, teachers need to have experience, be provided with quality

instructional materials, possess vast knowledge, and be provided a support system in

order to be more successful.

Having experience teaching at a particular grade level, and experience using a

core reading program were influential factors in this study. In order to acquire

experience, one must be provided with the opportunities. Therefore, it would be

beneficial for teachers to possess extensive experience at a particular grade level to feel

confident and competent with the students and the instructional materials. School

administrators should attempt to retain quality teachers within a school and within a

particular grade level for an extended period of time.

In order for teachers to be more successful teaching reading, experience with a

core reading program and its components should begin prior to a teacher's first day on

the job. Perhaps this means teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities

need to incorporate into their coursework opportunities for future teachers to review,

analyze, and utilize core reading programs when planning reading instruction.

Teachers appreciated having updated, research-based, and quality instructional materials found in the most recently published core reading programs. School districts should review their curricula and instructional materials often to ensure teachers have updated and quality materials to assist them in meeting the instructional needs of students. In today's elementary classroom, students' needs are constantly changing; therefore, the instructional materials and approaches for the teaching of reading need to change along with them.

This study provided evidence that teachers *can* make instructional decisions based on their content knowledge, knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies, and knowledge of learner needs. However, not all teachers have vast knowledge in all three areas. Knowledge in the area of reading instruction assists teachers in making instructional decisions. Future professional development opportunities for teachers need to address the areas of content knowledge, knowledge of instructional approaches and knowledge of learner needs.

Just as educators encourage differentiation of instruction with students in the classroom, teacher professional development should also become diversified. If a teacher feels competent in one of the knowledge areas, then his/her professional development opportunities should be focused in one of the other knowledge areas. All teachers might not need the same type of professional development to be successful. Perhaps asking teachers what professional development they desire in the area of reading instruction and the use of a new core reading program would enhance teachers' abilities to apply and utilize learned skills and strategies.

A child trying something new for the first time often needs support from an encouraging and knowledgeable adult to be successful. A teacher trying something new for the first time also needs this same type of support. The teachers in this study desired support from their colleagues in order to discuss and reflect about the implementation of the new core reading program. The teachers wanted support from the publishing company representative and the school administrator for reassurance and recognition that their implementation of the new core reading program was progressing successfully. Providing a support system such as opportunities to meet with colleagues, periodic check-in visits from the publishing representative throughout the school year, opportunities to have professional discussions with the school administrator and colleagues and/or providing a literacy coach to serve as the liaison between all parties, are ways of providing support in order to enhance the implementation of a new core reading program,

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- This study was limited to one elementary school in a small rural school district. It would be beneficial to replicate this study with multiple elementary schools within a larger school district to investigate if teachers' instructional decision making when using a new core reading program would be consistent with the current findings. Replicating the study in a larger school district could provide evidence on the consistency of implementation and teacher perceptions of a new core reading program. Since this small school district actively involved the

teachers at *EDES* in the decision making process of choosing the new reading program, it is possible that a larger school district, due to it's size, might simply choose a new core reading program and mandate its use without input from the teachers. The potential lack of teacher involvement in the program selection and varied professional development opportunities might reveal alternative outcomes of this study.

- The nature of this study investigated teacher decision making during the first year of implementation of a new core reading program. A systematic examination of the implementation of a new core reading program after the first year could provide additional insight into teacher instructional decision making. This probing could further our understanding on how, or if, teachers adapt the new core reading program during the second year of implementation.

- Teachers in the current study expressed their need to meet frequently and have extended periods of time with colleagues to discuss and reflect on implementation of the new core reading program. Research into a professional development model where teachers participate in reflective focus groups to discuss, reflect, and share instructional ideas when implementing a new core reading program would enhance the field in the area of professional development and teacher success.

- Further probing into the quality and types of professional development and graduate courses taken by teachers, could offer insight into the acquisition of teachers' content knowledge and knowledge of instructional approaches and strategies and the impact on teachers' instructional decision making.

- A study focused on observing teachers' instructional decision making when implementing a new core reading program, would provide evidence to link what teachers claim they do for reading instruction to actual classroom practices.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The following discussion identifies the limitations of this study:

1. Both the questionnaire component and the detailed interview section of this study were voluntary, which could have caused bias in the results. However, since 26 of 29 possible teachers elected to complete the questionnaire, the quantitative results of the study could be considered fairly representative of the entire population of the kindergarten through third grade teachers at this elementary school. The 12 teachers that volunteered to participate in the one-on-one interviews with the researcher enthusiastically volunteered to discuss their experiences. It is possible that this group of teachers had different *perceptions* and *strategies* than the rest of the group when implementing the new core reading program, since they volunteered to share their insights.

2. The data collecting methods in this study were teacher interviews and a questionnaire, which were both subjective in nature. No objective observation was conducted by the researcher to verify the accuracy of the teachers' responses.

3. Even though the researcher repeatedly assured the respondents that their answers were anonymous and confidential, it is possible that questions related to how the administrator supports them, and other sensitive questions, could have been answered differently than the teachers really believed.

4. This study was limited to one elementary school in a small rural school district. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, and the limited sample size, these findings cannot be generalized to the larger population.

Appendix A – Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire on Implementation of New Core Reading Program

This questionnaire is intended to capture your overall perceptions and use of the new core reading program. Please answer the questions honestly. Your participation and responses will remain confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Please respond to the following statements by placing an "X" in the box of the Likert-like ratings scale regarding what you think and how you use the new core reading program.

Grade Level: _____   Total Years Teaching: _____

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Question:
	SA	A	U	DA	SD	
1.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I was provided with ample professional development prior to implementation of the new core reading program in order for me to begin.
2.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I have been provided ample professional development during implementation in order for me to feel successful.
3.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The content of professional development I receive influences how I implement the new core reading program.
4.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The high quality of professional development I received enabled me to implement the new core reading program effectively.
5.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I have been supported by my principal throughout the implementation of the new core reading program.
6.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	My principal influences how I implement the new core reading program.
7.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	My years of **teaching experience** influence how effectively I implement the new core reading program.
8.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	My experience teaching this **grade level** influences how I implement the new core reading program.
9.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I am teaching reading differently than I did before based on the implementation of the new core reading program.
10.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program allows me to meet the **state** standards and goals better.
11.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program allows me to meet the **district** standards and goals better.
12.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	With the new core reading program, I can meet the instructional needs of all of my students.
13.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program provides systematic and explicit instruction in **phonics**.
14.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program provides instruction in blending and segmenting to develop **phonemic awareness**.
15.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program provides instructional suggestions and materials to practice **fluency.**
16.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program provides multiple exposures to new words and explicit teaching suggestions to develop **vocabulary.**
17.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	The new core reading program provides explicit modeling of before, during, and after reading strategies to develop **comprehension.**
18.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	This new core reading program is one of the strongest programs I have utilized for teaching reading throughout my teaching career.

Teacher Questionnaire on Implementation of New Core Reading Program

This questionnaire is intended to capture your overall perceptions and use of the new core reading program. Please answer the questions honestly. Your participation and responses will remain confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Please respond to the following statements by placing an "X" in the box of the Likert-like ratings scale regarding what you think and how you use the new core reading program.
Please respond to the additional open ended questions, and provide as much detail as possible.

Grade Level: _____   Total Years Teaching: _____

	Daily (D)	Several times weekly (SW)	Once a week (W)	Once or twice monthly (M)	Never (N)	Question:
1.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I implement the new core reading program as indicated by the directives in the teaching manual.
2.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide phonics instruction by incorporating the word building and the word sorting activities provided in the new core reading program.
3.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide phonics instruction by using the leveled practice workbook pages provided in the new core reading program.
4.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide phonics instruction by linking the skills to the different texts found in the new core reading program (ex: level text;anthology;decodable text)
5.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide phonics instruction by using the work station activities found in the new core reading program.
6.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide phonemic awareness instruction by following the modeling and guided practice activities suggestions found in the new core reading program.
7.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide phonemic awareness instruction by using the photo cards and suggestions provided in the new core reading program.
8.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide vocabulary instruction by using the vocabulary routine of DEFINE / EXAMPLE and ASK which is provided in the new core reading program.
9.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide vocabulary instruction by using the vocabulary transparencies and graphic organizers provided in the new core reading program.
10.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide vocabulary instruction by using the leveled practice workbook activities provided in the new core reading program.
11.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide vocabulary instruction by using the vocabulary building instructional suggestions provided in the teachers manual.
12.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide vocabulary instruction by connecting new words to the texts provided in the new core reading program (ex. Anthology; leveled texts, read-alouds)
13.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by using the focused comprehension strategies and skills recommended weekly in the new core reading program
14.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by using the graphic organizers provided in the new core reading program
15.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by asking the questions found in the teachers manual for each story in the new core reading program.

Teacher Questionnaire on Implementation of New Core Reading Program

This questionnaire is intended to capture your overall perceptions and use of the new core reading program. Please answer the questions honestly. Your participation and responses will remain confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Please respond to the following statements by placing an "X" in the box of the Likert-like ratings scale regarding what you think and how you use the new core reading program.
Please respond to the additional open ended questions, and provide as much detail as possible.

Grade Level: _____   **Total Years Teaching: _____**

	Daily (D)	Several times weekly (SW)	Once a week (W)	Once or twice monthly (M)	Never (N)	
16.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by using the teacher "Think Alouds" provided in the new core reading program.
17.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by modeling the skills and strategies provided in the new core reading program.
18.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by using the comprehension checks provided at the end of each story in the anthology of the new core reading program.
19.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I provide comprehension instruction by using the leveled practice workbook activities in the new core reading program.
20.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I use the recommendations in the teachers manual of the new core reading program to provide fluency instruction (ex. Echo reading; shared reading; repeated readings)
21.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I use the materials provided in the new core reading program for fluency instruction (ex. Charts ; poetry ; big books ; transparencies)

22. What are the reading instructional goals at your grade level? What do you want your students to be able to do, as readers, at the end of the school year? Explain. Respond on back of paper if needed.

	Always (AL)	Most of the time (MT)	Sometimes (S)	Very Little (VL)	Never (N)	
23.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I use all of the instructional materials available to me in the new core reading program when I plan for a week of literacy instruction.
24.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I use the assessment measures provided in the new core reading program to guide my planning and instruction.
25.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I supplement the new core reading program with additional or different books or materials for students to read.
26.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I supplement the new core reading program with other or additional instructional materials (teacher resources, workbooks, graphic organizers, etc.)
27.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I supplement the new core reading program with additional and varied instructional approaches beyond what is in the teacher's manual (examples: 4 blocks; interactive writing; writing workshop; shared reading; etc.)
28.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I plan with my grade level team when implementing the new core reading program.

29. In your opinion, what is the most essential component or factor in providing successful reading instruction in your classroom? Explain. Respond on back of paper if needed.

Core Reading Program Teacher Interview Questions

> **Instructions:**
> **You have been selected to participate in a fully confidential study involving your work in implementing a new core reading program. Please be honest in your answers. Your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation!**

Overview

Name: _____

Grade level: _____

Years of teaching experience: _____

How much time do you spend teaching literacy each day?

Using your teacher's manual as a guide, walk me through how you plan for a first day of literacy instruction for the five day plan.
(Guiding question for bulk of interview)
(Additional probing questions will be used to encourage elaboration and justification of responses).

If I were coming into your classroom, how would you describe the instructional sequence for your literacy instruction. What does your reading block look like? Is it the same each day? Is it the same each week? Why or why not?

Implementation

How do you use your new core reading program? (Probe: What other materials/methods do you use to supplement?)

How do you decide upon the strategies and activities you implement each day with the new core reading program? (Probe: How do you provide for differences in students?)

What parts of the new core reading program do you use on a regular basis? Why? (grammar, spelling, phonics etc.) What parts don't you use in the new core reading program? Explain.

What do you find is the most difficult aspect of implementing the new core reading program?

What do you find is the most beneficial aspect of implementing this new core reading program?

Research-based Components

How do you teach/address the following in your literacy instruction and how frequently? How well does the new core program help you teach:

- ➢ Comprehension (explain)

- ➢ Vocabulary (explain)

- ➢ Phonics (explain)

- ➢ Phonemic awareness (explain)

- ➢ Fluency (explain)

In your opinion, approximately what percent of your literacy instruction time is spent on each of the SBRR components each week? (chart %)

Perceptions of New Core Reading Program

Do you believe your new core reading program assists you in meeting the state standards and the literacy goals of your school district? Why or why not? Explain.

What do you think are the strengths of your new core reading program?

What do you think are the weaknesses of your new core reading program?

How prepared were you to implement this new core reading program?

What type of professional development did you receive prior to implementation of the new core reading program?

What type of support have you been provided so far during implementation of the new core reading program?

What is the districts' mandate on the use of the new core reading program for reading instruction?

What has the principal said about how to use the new core reading program? How does the principal influence your implementation of the new core reading program?

In your opinion, what is the most essential component or factor in providing successful reading instruction in your classroom?

Core Reading Program Principal Interview Questions

> **Instructions:**
> **You have been selected to participate in a fully confidential study involving your work in implementing a new core reading program. Please be honest in your answers. Your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation!**

Overview

Name: _____

How many years have you been a principal? In this school? _____ / _____

Tell me a little about the literacy program in your school (what are time requirements are; the policies regarding use of various materials and approaches?)

Probes: How much time are teachers required to teach literacy (in the primary grades) each day? Any differences at various grade levels? Why this amount of time?

What are your expectations in terms of lesson plans? What do you expect to see in the lesson plans regarding literacy instruction?

When you go into the classroom, describe what you want to see during literacy instruction.

What do you think are your roles and responsibilities in the implementation of reading instruction in your school?

Implementation

How do you think teachers are using use the new core reading program? (Probe: What other materials/methods do the teachers use to supplement? Why?)

What are your thoughts in terms of their acceptance of the various approaches or strategies?

Any challenges or problems that they have experienced or shared with you?

What procedures do you think teachers use to make decisions about what strategies and activities to implement each day with the new core reading program?

What approaches or strategies do you think teachers should be using to provide for differences in students?

What parts of the new core reading program do you think the teachers use on a regular basis? Why? (grammar, spelling, phonics, etc.)

What do you think the teachers find is the most difficult aspect of implementing the new core reading program? Why?

What do the teachers find are the most beneficial aspects of this new core reading program? Why?

Perceptions of New Core Reading Program

Do you believe the new core reading program assists the teachers in meeting the state standards and the literacy goals of your school district? Why or why not? Explain.

What do you think are the strengths of the new core reading program?

What do you think are the weaknesses of the new core reading program?

In your view, how prepared were the teachers to implement this new core reading program?

Do you think the new core reading program is implemented differently at different grade levels? Why or why not?

How do you think years of teaching experience influences the implementation of the new core reading program?

What type of professional development were the teachers provided prior to implementation of the new core reading program?

What type of support have you provided so far during implementation of the new core reading program?

What is the districts' mandate on the use of the new core reading program for reading instruction?

How do the teachers make decisions to implement the new core reading program?

How do you influence the implementation of the new core reading program?

What do you believe is the most essential factor (component) to provide effective reading instruction for all students?

Appendix D – School District Authorization Document

School District Authorization Document

Title:	Teacher Instructional Decision Making When Implementing a New Core Reading Program
Researcher:	Mrs. Shelly Bentley 4144 Alison Avenue Erie, PA 16506 Home Phone: 814-835-6897 Cell Phone: 814-449-0196 Email: scbentley@adelphia.net
Research Purpose:	This study involves research. The purpose is to evaluate how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program.
Duration:	This study will be conducted during the April 2007 – August 2007 timeframe.
Procedures:	This study will involve an overview questionnaire for K – 3 staff, and interviews with approximately 12 teachers, as well as an interview with the school administrator.
Risks:	There are no known risks in participating.
Benefits:	Other than awareness of how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program, there are no benefits to participating. There will be no compensation for participating.
Confidentiality:	Only the researcher / interviewer will have access to the teacher and principal responses and answers. Reports of findings will be presented in group form. If direct comments are used in the research document, the teacher will be identified by pseudonym only. The direct name of the school will also not be stated in the research paper.
Contacts:	If you have questions regarding this research, please contact the researcher listed above.
Dissemination:	As a participant in this study, you may request the results of this study when completed. Contact the researcher above for additional information.

I hereby provide permission and authorization for the researcher to conduct the study mentioned above.

Name (printed)   _____Dr. James Jay Tracy_____

Title: _____Superintendent_____

Signature: _____/s/_____

Date: _____April 2, 2007_____

Teacher Consent Document

Title:	How Teachers Make Instructional Decisions When Implementing a New Core Reading Program
Researcher:	Mrs. Shelly Bentley 4144 Alison Avenue Erie, PA 16506 Home Phone: 814-835-6897 Cell Phone: 814-449-0196 Email: scbentley@adelphia.net
Research Purpose:	This study involves research. The purpose is to evaluate how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program.
Duration:	This study will be conducted during the April 2007 – July 2007 timeframe.
Procedures:	This study will involve an overview questionnaire for K – 3 staff, and interviews with approximately 12 teachers, as well as an interview with the school administrator. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed.
Risks:	There are no known risks in participating.
Benefits:	Other than awareness of how teachers make instructional decisions when implementing a new core reading program, there are no benefits to participating. There will be no compensation for participating.
Confidentiality:	Only the researcher / interviewer will have access to the teacher and principal responses and answers. Reports of findings will be presented in group form. If direct comments are used in the research document, the teacher will be identified by pseudonym only. The direct name of the school will also not be stated in the research paper. All documentation will be kept and stored in a secure cabinet for Approximately 3 years.
Contacts:	If you have questions regarding this research, please contact the researcher listed above.
Dissemination:	As a participant in this study, you may request the results of this study when completed. Contact the researcher above for additional information.

I hereby consent to complete the questionnaire for the proposed research study.

Name (printed) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I hereby consent to volunteer to be interviewed for the proposed research study.

Name (printed) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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