ATTRIBUTES OF ALTERNATIVE READING INTERVENTIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED READING PROFICIENCY AMONG SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2012

Date of final oral examination: 10/22/2012

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I want to acknowledge the following people whose support, patience and encouragement made my work possible:

My husband, Jack,
and my children, Tom and Maggie,
for their patience, flexibility and sacrifices…

My parents, Joyce and Pete,
who always made me believe I could
accomplish my goals…

My advisor, Dr. Carolyn Kelley, who is truly a
master educator--encouraging, challenging,
mentoring and believing…

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Chapter One

Introduction

One of the most significant policy effects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of January 2002 has been an awareness and intolerance of the large gaps in student achievement among subgroups of students throughout the United States. Specifically, secondary students with learning disabilities and English Language Learner (ELL) students are significantly lagging behind non-disabled and English proficient students. As a component of NCLB, schools must demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) which specifies rates of proficiency in both reading and math each year. This applies not only for all students, but for all subgroups of students as well. Under NCLB, by the year 2014, all students, from special education to ELL to economically challenged, must be 100% proficient in reading and math. Proficiency is defined as demonstrating competency over a challenging subject matter including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter. Failure to meet AYP could result in a loss of federal aid to local school districts, not to mention the loss of public trust that such failure can bring.

Although most would agree that gaps in achievement are not acceptable for any students, this lofty requirement is an area of great concern for many school officials. This is particularly true at the secondary level, where the numbers of students in these subgroups continue to rise; yet proficiency levels in reading and math continue to reveal large gaps. No Child Left Behind has brought serious attention to achievement problems

in our educational system, and the need for solutions is urgent. With proficiency levels continuing to rise each year under NCLB and continuing concerns with difficulty closing these achievement gaps, many states are bringing forth requests for waivers from the legislation, and several have been approved. Despite these waivers and the movement toward new national assessment tools, the achievement gap problem continues and will continue to exist. Waiving NCLB and AYP won't make that problem go away. In fact, in Wisconsin, the Department of Public Instruction has posted a draft waiver proposal, "Accountability Reform Overview, 2012." This overview outlines a number of accountability changes including college and career readiness expectations, educator effectiveness systems and assessment. "Subgroup accountability" remains a priority. Specifically, "schools and districts will be held accountable for outcomes in four priority areas…student achievement, student growth, on-track to graduation/postsecondary readiness and **closing achievement gaps**" (4). The need for solutions, despite NCLB and waivers, is still urgent.

There is a strong correlation between low achievement in literacy and high dropout rates, poverty, and underemployment (Irwin, 2002). Furthermore, "the societal implications of widespread adolescent illiteracy are sobering…young adults who either graduate with low literacy skills or drop out of school have little chance for employment…and are more likely to end up on public assistance…or in a correctional facility" (Fleishman, 2003,). Policymakers describe the problems of American secondary schools as a crisis in that low literacy achievement is a barrier to America's economic growth and stability.

> "Literacy is changing because the economy is changing. The United States has become a so-called knowledge economy or informational economy, in which mental labor has replaced physical labor and making information and ideas, has replaced making things as our main economic pursuit. Human capital is now regarded as more valuable than land or even money, so literacy has become a hot commodity" (Brant, 2003, 245).

This economic crisis, along with the achievement expectations of NCLB and ESEA Flexibility Waivers, leave literacy as one of the most critical items on a principal's agenda (Booth & Rowsell, 2002). In particular, the reading achievement of subgroups of students such as ELL students and students with learning disabilities is of the utmost concern because they are significantly underperforming. School leaders must focus on effective reading instruction for these subgroups of students in order to meet the national expectations as well as prepare all students for a changing economy and a new world of workplace skills.

To address the literacy problems of young adolescents, researchers and educational experts have developed new programs in an effort to effectively raise reading achievement levels. One program that has garnered national attention is Scholastic's READ 180, a research-based reading intervention program. Beginning in 1995, Dr. Ted Hasselbring, in collaboration with Vanderbilt University, devoted ten years of research to READ 180, specifically exploring the power of technology in reading intervention. The program combines the instructional elements of block scheduling, multi-leveled reading materials, and direct instruction with technology. This technology provides video enhanced background knowledge with computerized, diagnostic assessment of vocabulary and comprehension in order to differentiate instruction. It is a very structured delivery system with specific grouping patterns. READ 180 teachers are

trained to deliver course content and materials in a precise, organized, systematic fashion as designed by Scholastic. Fleishman (2003), in his study of the national reading crisis, asserts that READ 180 has been shown to deliver measurable learning gains for older, struggling readers. Thus, many school districts have purchased this program in an effort to address the achievement gaps mentioned previously. Pamela Thorpe, in her study of the effectiveness of READ 180, acknowledges:

> school districts have set aside monetary resources to pay for the READ 180 intervention …and school principals have organized the school day and student's class schedules to accommodate READ 180's ninety minute requirements for their interventions….these decisions are, on the one hand, a response to the pressure applied from the change in political ideology at the federal level and its subsequent No Child Left Behind legislation, but their decisions also reflect a sincere desire within administrators and teachers to enable children to become effective readers (2003, 9).

Scholastic has published numerous reports and research studies outlining the success of their program, READ 180. Researchers for Scholastic have focused not only on the general population of students, but on subgroups like ELL students and other special needs students. Yet, despite the widespread popularity of READ 180, there are not large numbers of studies that specifically address whether READ 180 has significantly improved the reading proficiency of ELL and LD students and whether that improved reading proficiency is sustained. In fact, some researchers question the validity and reliability of the studies published by Scholastic. Some find it "difficult to believe most marketing information provided to educators by sponsors of literacy products" (Thorpe, 8). For example, Thorpe asserts that some researchers believe that the results and conclusions for their products may be biased. Richard Allington (2002) suggests that,

quite possibly, the essential components of effective reading instruction could be implemented without a costly program. He further contends that research on effective reading instruction suggests that a quality teacher, coupled with increased instructional time, and differentiated reading materials/texts at appropriate readability levels, will produce significant gains in reading proficiency.

Statement of the Problem

It seems essential, given this background on the critical state of adolescent literacy in the United States, the high expectations of NCLB, and the questions about READ 180 research compared to other instructional delivery systems, that further studies must be carefully conducted. In fact, Biancarosa and Snow (2006) in their publication of *Reading Next* specifically ask for further research and extensive study. Similarly, the National Institute for Literacy (2002) asserts

> "it is clear that much research is needed in this under-studied area…experimental and quasi-experimental studies of instructional methods modes for effective reading instructional delivery in middle and high school and specific interventions for struggling readers are needed" (16).

Educational decisions about effective reading interventions for struggling readers must be fully justified and logically compelled by data. For many districts suffering from declining enrollments, budget cuts, and the inability to afford new technology and programs, it seems critical to study whether effective reading programs can be developed at the district level by utilizing existing resources and implementing the research on best practices in literacy instruction for secondary students.

This is an attempt to provide such a study. As a school administrator of a public junior high school, I am compelled to address adolescent literacy problems, not only because of the impact of NCLB, but because I continue to see achievement gaps between subgroups of student populations, and I also see the negative effects that illiteracy has on student academic performance and social and emotional development. Certainly, as a practitioner and researcher, I have a vital interest in the accountability mandates; yet, I also have an interest in studying the issue and the data in order to make sound instructional and budgetary decisions about adopting and implementing various reading instruction approaches and delivery systems for secondary students. Our students deserve the most effective interventions, and we are responsible for knowing what they are.

In 2009, the district reading coordinator, curriculum director and I developed and implemented an instructional delivery system for our students with learning disabilities based on best practices for secondary reading instruction. Specifically it involved reallocating teacher assignments and schedules and restructuring the schedules of struggling students. This, at times, was difficult because the extended time for reading blocks meant that students had to drop elective courses. These electives, for many students, tend to be courses that students struggling with literacy want to enroll in and many times excel in. Yet without an effective reading intervention program, these students will continue to struggle academically in the future, particularly in core content areas that require grade level reading to understand the content.

The program is a language arts ninety-minute block for students with learning disabilities using multi-leveled and high interest texts appropriate to the reading levels of

the students. Teachers design and adapt lessons to meet the needs and interests of the students. They also make decisions about instructional and supplemental materials. Because of this type of teacher driven instruction, job-embedded professional development for the special education teachers was necessary. Most of the professional development was in the way of professional dialogue between teachers, both within and outside the buildings. These special education teachers delivering the reading program, like many secondary special education teachers, have not received significant and necessary training in the teaching of reading, yet they work with the most struggling readers. Other professional development included workshops and in-services on effective reading strategies coupled with, most importantly, opportunities to observe others model effective reading instruction within the teacher's own classroom and in other classrooms.

As another reading intervention, the district purchased the READ 180 program, and it was implemented as an instructional delivery system for the English Language Learners (ELL) in one junior high school and for students with learning disabilities in both junior high schools. Both reading programs included the extended instructional time, certified teachers and multi-leveled materials. However, the delivery of the two programs is quite different. READ 180 is very prescribed and structured, whereas the language arts blocks are much more teacher driven in terms of lessons and materials. Because both the READ 180 program and the language arts blocks have been provided as interventions for different subgroups of students, it provided a tremendous opportunity for a study of their effectiveness. Specifically, the district programming for secondary reading interventions provided a context to study the following:

Research Questions

1. From the perspective of students and teachers, what are the attributes of alternative intensive reading interventions that contribute to improved reading proficiency among secondary English Language Learners (ELL) and students with learning disabilities (LD)?

2. What factors contribute to the successes or challenges of implementing these interventions at secondary schools?

Secondary curriculum directors and principals are desperate for solid research and data to assist in selecting and implementing effective literacy initiatives. The purpose of this study is to provide further information on the attributes of secondary education reading interventions that lead to improved reading proficiency for subgroups of students. In addition, it attempts to address the effectiveness of READ 180, and whether reading proficiency can be achieved through other interventions. This study may confirm that READ 180 is a tremendously effective program as a reading intervention for struggling secondary students, and/or it may provide districts with alternative interventions. The unique aspect of this study is its emphasis on the perspectives of the consumers of reading intervention programs—the students and the teachers.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Judith Franzak (2006) of Montana State University, published "*Zoom",* a comprehensive review of the research on "marginalized" adolescent readers. She asserts that one contributor to the state of crisis in secondary literacy in the United States is the fact that although "researchers have illuminated effective pedagogical practice for improving reading comprehension, that knowledge has not been extensively adopted in classroom practice" (230). Further, reading comprehension means different things to different people, even within the literacy research community (Anders, 2002). Illustrative of this is Myers' (1996) chronology of English education that describes the paradigm shifts in literacy education from a focus on oral literacy in the 1700's, to a focus on decoding and critical literacy, to the current strategic reading approach with its emphasis on teaching comprehension based on what "good readers" do to understand text and explicitly teaching those strategies to struggling readers (Franzak, 2002).

Another significant piece of research in adolescent literacy is from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance Practice Guide, "Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices" (2008). The authors of this report, Kamil, et. al, educational researchers throughout the country, provide summaries of educational research that has been conducted with the goal of presenting specific and evidence-based recommendations that educators can use to improve literacy among secondary

adolescents (Kamil, et al, 1). Several recommendations are presented and labeled as "strong" meaning that many well-designed, randomized controlled trials or well designed quasi-experiments have been conducted that support the recommendations, or one large, well-designed randomized controlled, multisite trial has been conducted that supports the effectiveness of the recommendations. Among the recommendations listed as strong include explicit vocabulary instruction, direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction and most applicable to this study, intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialists (Kamil, et. al, 7).

Both Franzak and the authors of the IES report agree that for some subgroups of adolescents, intensive and individualized interventions are necessary. In fact, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, in conjunction with National Institute for Literacy and the U.S. Department of Education (2002), disseminated a summary of workshops in which they acknowledge that "intervention research must answer the question of which interventions are most effective, for which students, under which conditions" (U. S. Department of Education, 1).

Such is the significance of my study. Many educators, like those in the district of this study, have embraced the research and adopted these recommendations and suggestions for intensive interventions at the secondary level. My study is an attempt to address the questions of which interventions are most effective for the very struggling readers and which attributes of those interventions do students and teachers view as most influential in improving student reading achievement. Reading interventions vary incredibly from secondary school to school. Given the amount of resources required for most of these programs, from personnel to technology to instructional time, it is critical to

determine which programs work, especially from the perspective of the students, particularly the most struggling readers in secondary schools—students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Because the interventions can vary for each subgroup, it is important to acknowledge the specific learning needs of each.

Effective Reading Instruction for Secondary Struggling Readers

There is reason to be alarmed about student literacy at the secondary level. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading results indicate that recent efforts to improve K-3 literacy education are paying off at the fourth-grade level, but these improvements do not necessarily translate into better achievement among adolescents (Biancarosa, 2006, 7). To further illustrate the crisis, Deborah Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons, authors of "*Reading Next" (2007),* a report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York on the state of adolescent literacy in the country, report that about seventy percent of students entering the fifth and ninth grades in 2006 were reading below grade level. The problem reveals a great need to reevaluate how reading instruction is delivered in middle and high schools.

The concept of effective reading strategies for struggling adolescent readers is complex. Moje et. al (2002) assert that many literacy development systems in schools are based on the belief that learning to read ends in elementary school. They further contend that antiquated systems in secondary schools, for the most part, leave the responsibility of reading instruction to the reading teachers or the reading specialist. Donna Alvermann (2001) suggests that adolescents and their specialized needs for literacy instruction at the

middle and high school level often go unnoticed or are at times ignored. The wide belief that secondary reading instruction is an isolated curriculum in secondary schools has, unfortunately, left our young people's literacy skills far behind the pace and needs of an informational age and workplace that demands complex and challenging literacy tasks. According to Joseph Torgeson (2007), instruction for struggling readers must produce substantially more than one year's growth in reading ability for each year of instruction. Unless struggling readers receive instruction this powerful for as long as they need it, their ability to learn from grade-level text will remain impaired.

Torgeson (2007) and fellow researchers further contend that secondary struggling readers have not been doing very much reading for some time, and most likely, are frustrated and discouraged about not being able to read well. They divide these secondary struggling readers into two distinct groups. The first group, perhaps one to two years below grade level, needs powerful reading experiences to increase fluency and comprehension. The second group contains students with severe reading difficulties extending into basic problems with reading accuracy, vocabulary and strategies. Their needs are quite broad and deep. According to Torgeson (2007), both groups need extended periods of intensive instruction coupled with supported practice in reading, along with writing about and discussing the meaning of text (8).

This range of literacy needs for secondary students is diverse and challenging. Researchers have differing views on the needs of struggling readers. According to Biancarosa and Snow (2006), many adolescents still have difficulty reading words accurately. However, most of the older struggling readers in today's American public schools can read words accurately, but they do not comprehend what they read for a

variety of reasons. Short and Fitzsimmon (2007) report that for some the problem is that they cannot read words with enough fluency to facilitate comprehension. Papalewis (2004) asserts that fluency is one of the several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. Others, though, can read quickly enough; however, they do not have the reading strategies necessary for comprehension. These strategies include the ability to understand the purpose for a text, the ability to find a main idea or theme and/or to repair misinterpretations or errors while reading. Torgenson, et.al (2002) found that reading comprehension tends to move up to a level that is consistent with general verbal skills. Students from low socioeconomic homes may suffer from lower verbal skills. Also, ELL and LD students are likely to have lower verbal abilities. Consequently, Torgenson and colleagues believe that vocabulary development is critical to their reading comprehension.

The traditional reading remediation model for struggling secondary readers, including LD and ELL students, has been a "pull-out" concept with instruction delivered in small groups of about ten to fifteen students. Reading specialists provide direct instruction to students and reinforce it through repetition and feedback (Woods, 2007). Reading comprehension in this model is viewed as a skill that can be broken into subskills such as sequencing, decoding, predicting and finding the main idea.

Current literacy research, however, supports the integration of reading instruction into all content areas. This approach holds teachers responsible for teaching students reading strategies specific to the needs of the content area texts. The current research on literacy for secondary students focuses on reading as an integrated skill with responsibility for reading instruction placed on all teachers. Ippolito et. al (2008) assert

that using texts as vehicles for learning, critiquing and extrapolating from extant knowledge is the domain of the post primary and especially the secondary grades, and that domain is not restricted to language arts classrooms. A critical aspect of secondary reading instruction lies in recognizing that effective literacy skills differ among disciplines. However, overall efforts to encourage every content area teacher to be a reading teacher have not been widely accepted by teachers in the disciplines (Educational Research Newsletter, 2008). Kamil, et. al support this research in that they contend that adolescent literacy is a complex concept because a "significant difficulty in working toward higher levels of literacy involves structural barriers at the middle and high school levels that need to be overcome" (2002, 4). In their review of the research, they found that some teachers circumvent the need for students to read texts by adjusting their assignments or methods of presenting content, rather than assisting students learning the discipline-specific strategies needed for content-area work (Kamil, 5).

Effective Reading Instruction for English Language Learners

Many English Language Learners (ELL) at the secondary level are labeled as struggling readers. Yet, the difficulties ELL students experience are much more broad and complicated than other adolescent struggling readers. There is a wider spectrum of reasons behind their struggling literacy. "In fact, the difficulties ELLs experience are often spread over a vast array of sociocultural, motivational, and linguistic factors" (Alvermann, 2001, 12). Effective reading instruction for these learners, in addition to intensity, must be sensitive to the cultural issues encompassed in their learning.

The statistics regarding the literacy crisis for ELLs are dramatic. Research reports such as *Double the Work (2007)* contend that only four percent of eighth-grade ELLs and twenty percent of students classified as "formerly ELL" scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the reading portion of the 2005 National Assessment for Educational Progress. This means that ninety-six percent of the eighth-grade limited English proficient students scored at a minimal or basic level. Research reports also show that adolescent ELLs with below grade level literacy are most at risk of educational failure. This deserves attention given that five of the six immigration states accounted for over sixty percent of all ELL students in the year 2000. States like North Carolina experienced a five hundred percent growth between 1993 and 2003, and Colorado, Nevada, Nebraska, Oregon, Georgia and Indiana each had more than two hundred percent increases in that time period (Short and Fitzsimmons, 2007). Obviously the current educational system is not prepared to handle the needs of an increasing population of English Language Learners who have unique needs in terms of literacy proficiency.

The main difference between the reading instructional needs of ELL students and other struggling readers is that "instruction and other interventions must recognize that second language literacy development is a complex matter because of the relationship between language acquisition in a native language and literacy levels in a second language" (Short and Fitzsimmons 2007, 12). Some ELL students have literacy levels that are well below grade level in their native language. This has an effect on their ability to achieve literacy levels desired in the second language. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) also suggest that ELL students with a strong foundation in their native language are

making better progress than are those without it. Students with this foundation along with regular schooling have a much better chance for success than those that switch schools and programs. They suggest that instruction and other interventions should take these factors into account but also recognize that second language literacy development is a combination of all these factors.

Similarly, Educational Research Newsletter (2008) reports on five meta-analyses studying the issue of bilingual education. All claim that learning to read in the home language promotes reading achievement in the second language. The reason, their research suggests, is that students taught in their first language read better in the second language due to the ability to transfer. Literacy and knowledge seem to transfer across languages. The research further shows that high quality reading instruction is not sufficient to support equal academic success for ELLs (Educational Research Newsletter, 2008). Vocabulary development is important for all students, but it is particularly critical for ELLs.

Effective Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities have their own unique needs in terms of reading instruction. Rollanda O'Connor (2004) studied reading instruction for LD students and found that there have been many longitudinal investigations conducted to learn about effective delivery of reading instruction for special education students. She asserts that "we have reached a stage in special education research where we know things about effective instructional conditions for students with learning disabilities. However,

this science of educational research and schooling is so hidden" (225). Despite the research and the on-going professional development for teachers based on that research, studies continue to show that LD students make less progress than non-disabled peers (O'Connor, 2004). Further, although teachers can improve their instructional practice in general education settings, whole-class instruction is insufficient to raise the performance of children with LD (O'Connor, 2004).

Historically, for students with learning disabilities, the prevailing assumption has been that if intervention took place at a young age, many of the manifestations of the learning disability would be minimized in later years (Deshler, 2006). Certainly the mandates for Response to Intervention (RtI) are built upon this assumption. RtI places great value in early prevention strategies rather than a "wait to fail" approach. When Congress reauthorized IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) in 2004, they changed the legislation in regards to the identification of children with specific learning disabilities. The change involves a requirement that for the purposes of determining LD eligibility, a school district must implement a procedure that involves documentation of how a child responds to research-based interventions as a part of the evaluation process. Response to Intervention is a multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners. Student interventions and progress are closely monitored with special education placement as a final intervention. Deshler (2006), however, asserts that even if children with learning disabilities receive quality early interventions, in all likelihood their disability will endure into adolescence and adulthood. Consequently, the need for effective instruction for these older students is just as great particularly given the emotional stress that emerges when the academic struggles and failures become greater in the secondary years.

Research supports that one specific challenge must be overcome to assist older students with learning disabilities. It is the role of the special education teachers. In a study of reading instruction for students with learning disabilities, Sharon Vaughn (2002) found that in LD resource rooms, the students spent limited time on reading, and teachers spent limited time on reading instruction (2002). Special education teachers must teach specific skills and strategies to enhance students' effectiveness as learners. Deshler (2006) contends that special education teachers tend to become "support teachers" and get caught in the trap of tutoring LD students in subject matter. This is done at the expense of teaching valuable strategies that will enable students to function independently in content classrooms.

Similarly, O'Connor (2004) asserts that few researchers working with older (LD) students have taken the next step toward the larger goal of fostering the delivery of effective instruction by attempting to change teachers' practices for students with learning disabilities in school settings. In addition, she contends that secondary teachers tend to focus on content or subject matter with few systems in place to focus on intense reading instruction.

> Many teachers find that orchestrating intense instruction in schools is difficult, particularly in the current climate of high-stakes testing and the focus on general education content. Nevertheless, specialized instruction should be provided for students with LD by law, and for many students, reading should be a focus of that specialized instruction (228).

In his study of LD students, Kauffman (1999) found that instruction for these students must be "intensive, urgent, relentless, goal-directed according to individual need and delivered it the setting where it is most effective" (253).

This research on the literacy needs of LD and ELL learners suggests that more intense reading instruction must be embraced by teachers and embedded into the delivery system at the secondary level for these subgroups of students.

External Reading Programs: Scholastic READ 180

Scholastic responded to the literacy crisis and the need for research on literacy instruction. Papalewis (2004) contends that "it is clear that when schools turn from remediation to intervention strategies, poor readers accelerate their growth more quickly" (25). The essential ingredient for intervention programs is the rigor which is necessary to increase acceleration to attain the necessary reading level to function at grade level. The integrated instructional design of the intervention program, READ 180, draws on a specific model of reading instruction. It is based on visual representation, visual information and mental model building (Woods, 2007). This view is based on the belief that effective readers construct meaning and comprehension through mental models (Woods, 2007).

Scholastic published a number of reports outlining their research and the success of their READ 180 program. Their *Compendium of READ 180 Research, 1999-2004,* specifically summarizes scientific research conducted on READ 180 in school districts across the United States and Europe between 1999 and 2004, "including quasi-experimental, correlational, and descriptive studies" (Scholastic, 2005, 5). Furthermore, their reports show reading gains for specific populations and subgroups of students including special education, Native American and vocational education students along with English Language Learners.

READ 180 is a comprehensive reading intervention program and is the result of many years of educational research. Dr. Ted Hasselbring, in 1985, began to study the issue of how technology could be used as a tool to support struggling students effectively (Scholastic, 36). He and his colleagues at Vanderbilt University turned to technology as a means to address reading deficits, namely lack of decoding skills and reading fluency, poor comprehension and inability to process academic language coupled with low student motivation to learn. They created a software program called the Peabody Learning Lab funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. This software became the prototype for the READ 180 Topic CDs, a major component of the READ 180 program. The *Compendium Report* was written by Scholastic in collaboration with Orange County Schools and Vanderbilt University to study and publish the reading achievement outcomes for schools implementing the READ 180 program (Scholastic, 2005, 39).

While Scholastic reports significant achievement gains, other studies report the contrary. Donna Woods (2007) reports that several dissertations that she studied did not find significant reading achievement gains when implementing READ 180 at the secondary school level with struggling readers. Further, Pamela Thorpe (2003), in her study of READ 180, did not find any clear-cut conclusions regarding its effectiveness. This research clearly suggests that more studies need to be conducted regarding the effectiveness of READ 180.

The table provides an overview of the instructional needs of different subgroups of students. They are unique based on their reading and learning needs.

Table 1: Effective Reading Instruction For Students With Learning Disabilities and English Language Learners

Student Population	Instructional Needs
LD	Individualized and Specialized Reading Instruction Based on Disability Comprehension Strategies Fluency Strategies
ELL	Recognition of Sociocultural and Linguistic Factors Transference of Native Language Skills Background Knowledge Vocabulary/Word Recognition

An overview of the essential components of effective reading instruction and interventions for secondary students helps to lay the framework for this study. The reading intervention programs involved in this study embrace the components in varying degrees and implementation.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

A framework for understanding effective secondary reading programs involves a study of the research on the components of effective reading instruction for adolescent learners. More than any other area, school success is dependent on knowing how to read and understanding what is read (Vaughn, et. al, 2002). Yet many learners, specifically students with learning disabilities and English Language Learners, lag behind others in reading proficiency. One of the main reasons, according to some researchers, is the "disparity between their reading ability and the required reading materials in middle and high school" (Mastropieri, et. al, 2003). Many struggling readers at the secondary level read at a fourth or fifth grade level, but many adopted textbooks are at grade level or even higher. Given that in many classrooms a major instructional resource is the textbook, struggling readers not only fall further behind, but their self-confidence and self-esteem fall apart. To further the problem, content textbooks do not typically present material in a reader-friendly fashion; rather, many contain densely worded paragraphs with an overwhelming number of facts and details (Mastropieri, 2003). Giving secondary students materials that they cannot read leaves them disengaged, frustrated, and at times, angry.

Another reason for reading achievement gaps is the lack of time for instruction and practice. Secondary readers who are struggling do not always have reading materials in the home and/or support for reading practice. Reading is a skill that requires practice

using reading materials at the appropriate level. Only then will students improve their fluency and their comprehension (O'Connor, 2004).

Researchers studying reading instruction for special education and/or ELL students claim that students who are the lowest readers make few, if any, gains unless provided intensive intervention instruction (Torgensen, et. al, 2001). The key here is that intervention is not remediation. Intervention means a different delivery system, alternative strategy and approach rather than more of the same instruction at a lower level or slower pace, which for many schools, is what remediation entails. Torgensen (2001) also asserts that the most efficacious treatments for improving reading instruction are the ones that have the greatest number of effective components and features during comprehension strategy instruction.

Research shows that these three components—instructional time, appropriate readability materials and effective strategic instruction—are essential for successful reading interventions for adolescents. All are integrated into the reading intervention programs of this study in varying degrees. The following outlines the rationale for each component, and how each is embedded into the programs involved in this study, READ 180 and language arts blocks.

Instructional Time

Richard Allington (2002) asserts that extensive reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency. This, he asserts, involves extensive practice and the opportunity for older students to consolidate the skills and strategies that teachers work to

develop in their students. Providing secondary struggling readers with time to read is essential. Without time for application and practice, instruction on reading strategies is simply not effective. The *Reading Next* (2006) report supports Allington's assertions that no reading intervention will be successful if instruction is limited to forty-five minutes per day. The panel strongly argued the need for two to four hours of literacy-connected learning daily (20). Effective reading instruction must allow for the instructional time necessary for intensity. Donald Deshler (2006) states that a key factor affecting learning is both the amount of time in instruction and how effectively each instructional moment is used in engaging students in activities that contribute to learning.

In the two junior high schools involved in this study, both READ 180 and the language arts blocks, provide a two period block, ninety minutes, for students. The READ 180 program requires a very structured and prescriptive use of this instructional time—whole class introduction followed by three rotating stations of small groups of students. One station involves vocabulary development and individualized assessment (Scholastic Reading Inventory) through the use of instructional technology. Another station involves individual reading time using individualized reading material at students' reading level, and the final station is small group direct instruction by the READ 180 teacher. In the language arts classroom, the two period block time is primarily teacher driven. Students do have individual reading time, yet much time is devoted to instruction in reading strategies. Within this intervention, instruction is much more at the discretion of individual teachers.

From a general financial perspective, the READ 180 program costs approximately $50,000 for startup plus annual fees ($2100/year/school) for implementation at each of

the two junior high schools in the district. READ 180 serves roughly thirty five to forty junior high school students each year. The LD reading program requires the staffing costs and professional development opportunities associated with the program, which are district budgeted items. The two hour blocks serve roughly twenty junior high school students at one of the junior high schools. Single period reading programs also serve ELL students and students with learning disabilities; these students are reading at a level above the students enrolled in READ 180 or the two period block.

Explicit Reading Instruction

Several research studies identify the single most important variable to improved achievement is the quality of the instruction. "Effective teachers manage to produce better achievement regardless of which curriculum materials, pedagogical approach, or reading program they use" (Allington, 2002, 740). Allington asserts that quality teaching involves direct and active instruction that includes the demonstration and modeling of the strategies that good readers employ. He argues that there is a lack of consistency, in fact downright misinformation, on what constitutes good teaching. Some consider good teaching to be little more than assignment and assessment. "Somewhere along the way, active teaching…explicit explanation, direct teaching---have been lost in the shuffle of thinking about classroom instruction" (Allington, 2002). His studies reveal that exemplary teachers routinely give direct, explicit demonstrations of the cognitive strategies that good readers use when they read. They model the thinking skills that readers use to decode words, to self-monitor and to summarize.

Taylor (2000), in his work, describes quality reading teachers as those who can craft explicit demonstrations of reading skills and strategies. The offer:

> models of useful strategies—decoding, composing and self-regulating strategies---as separate lessons to the whole class, to targeted small groups and to individual students in side-by-side instruction. In fact, it is this plethora of instructional activities that truly sets these teachers apart and explains much of their effectiveness with lower-achieving students (86).

There is great power in active teaching, but expert teaching requires knowing how to teach strategies explicitly and how to foster the transfer of the strategies to students' independent use of them while engaged in reading (Allington, 2002).

Allington further emphasizes the importance of classroom talk in quality teaching. He asserts that exemplary teachers foster much more student talk. The talk is purposeful—problem-posing and problem-solving talk related to curricular issues. Yet, the dominant and traditional nature of talk in the classroom is a teacher posing questions, students answering, and teachers verifying or correcting. The classrooms of high quality teachers, Allington suggests, contain teachers and students discussing ideas, concepts, hypotheses and strategies with one another. "The classroom talk is highly personalized, providing targeted replies to student responses. Teacher expertise is the key, not a scripted, teacher-proof instructional product" (Allington, 2002).

Both READ 180 and the LD teachers in the reading intervention programs in this study have been provided with professional development in reading instruction, again one much more structured and prescriptive than another. One requirement of the READ 180 program is that the instructor participates in training provided by Scholastic. This training focuses mainly on correct and necessary implementation of all aspects of the

READ 180 program. Within the training the fidelity of implementation is strongly emphasized and considered absolutely necessary to realize reading gains for individual students. The professional development provided to the other reading intervention teachers has been through modeling and workshops with the district reading specialists and/or outside professional development experiences. The focus has mainly been teaching instructors more about effective reading comprehension strategies and how to teach those strategies to struggling readers.

Multi-leveled texts

As discussed earlier, educators need to give students reading materials that they can read and comprehend. Allington asserts that in order for secondary students to be independent, proficient readers, they need to be able to read with a high level of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. This means moving from whole class instruction with all students reading the same text, to differentiated instruction with students reading materials that fit their reading level. This belief must hold true for all content areas. Too often reading and writing instruction for secondary students focuses solely on works of literature which requires a different set of reading skills than a content area textbook. The important aspect of leveled reading, according to Biancarosa and Snow (2006), is that teachers provide scaffolding for engagement at every ability level in the class and promote better oral language and content area skills. Students can learn about content if they are able to read about it. This is not to expect that content area teachers become reading teachers; rather it is an expectation to teach students the different approaches to

reading texts and printed material in their specialized area. Allington found that exemplary teachers

> rejected school and district plans that put the same reader, tradebook, textbook or workbook on every child's desk…Too often they had to search out appropriate instructional texts and materials on their own because the one text that the school or district provided was not of appropriate difficulty for most students and failed to offer the sort of accurate and engaging information that might entice students into sustained and effortful study (Allington, 2002, 747).

Embedded into this scaffolding is student choice. A large-scale study of middle school readers conducted by Ivey and Broaddus (2001) indicated that choice and availability of reading material were prime motivating factors influencing the students reading.

Both the READ 180 and the LD reading interventions in the school district of this study provided varied levels of reading material for students. One large cost of the READ 180 program, in addition to the technology hardware and software requirements, was the purchasing of reading materials developed by Scholastic and included with the program. The LD programs also provide multi-leveled texts, purchased through a secondary reading grant, but those materials were purchased at the discretion of the reading specialist and teachers based on readability levels and high-interest to adolescent learners.

The Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), part of READ 180, has been embraced and purchased by the district to assess all students in grades 7-9 as a universal screening tool through Response to Intervention (RtI). Its technology component allows for efficient administration and immediate results. All students and teachers receive lexile scores that provide a system for students to access a book at their reading level and for teachers to assure that students have books available at their appropriate levels. The SRI

is also used as a tool to measure student growth over time. In this district then, the SRI along with the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam, are used to identify the struggling readers in grades 7-9, and then provide effective and appropriate interventions, of which there are many, dependent on the student subgroup.

This study is an attempt to determine, from the perspective of students and teachers, the attributes of these various reading interventions that contribute to improved reading achievement. The reading interventions in place for secondary students all incorporate the above mentioned components of effective reading instruction. READ 180 is a very structured, systematic reading program with curriculum that incorporates the use of technology. The program requires a standardized delivery system and full implementation of all the components of the program. The other approaches are more teacher-driven. The curriculum and teaching strategies are not as prescriptive. Rather, the delivery system provides blocked instructional time and district purchased multi-leveled reading texts. The major difference is that the latter approach involves more teacher-driven curricular decisions and instructional strategies.

Allington (2002) asserts that, in the end, it will become clearer that there are no 'proven programs,' just schools in which we find more expert teachers, teachers who need no script to tell them what to do. Yet, READ 180 sales have skyrocketed with many successful results and studies. Franzak (2006), in his review of literacy research, concluded that not enough is known about effective teaching for struggling readers. He contends that researchers need to "seek to understand adolescent literacy learning in authentic school and nonschool settings and situate achievement in terms of a range of literacy practices that address the highly mediated and textualized world we inhabit"

(234). A study that involves the implementation of different delivery systems with struggling subgroups of students such as ELL and LD students could give valuable insight into what is best practice for these students, not only for achievement gains, but also for self-confidence, reading engagement and reading independence. Given that both interventions in this study implement evidence-based practices, it is important to study the specific factors within the reading interventions themselves and within the classrooms that may or may not contribute to students' successes. Franzak (2006) contends that current federal definitions of research require rigorous experimental evaluation. However, he suggests that "the picture would be incomplete without the thick, rich description offered by qualitative researchers who can document the complex interactions in the classroom and the lived experiences of adolescents as they engaged in a multi-textual world in school" (328). My study is an attempt to provide a small but meaningful picture of just that.

Table 2: Conceptual Framework: Elements of Effective Reading Interventions

Elements of Effective Reading Programs	Students With Learning Disabilities	English Language Learners
Explicit Instruction	Individualized, Specialized Reading Instruction Based on Disability Direct and Explicit Instruction on Comprehension and Fluency Strategies	Recognition of Sociocultural and Linguistic Factors Direct and Explicit Instruction to Improve Background Knowledge, Vocabulary, Word Recognition, Comprehension and Fluency
Extended Time	Extended Periods for Direct Instruction and Time to Read	Extended Periods for Direct Instruction and Time to Read
Differentiated Reading Resources	Multi-Leveled Resources Lexiled Resources High Interest Resources	Multi-Leveled Resources Resources to Build Background Knowledge High Interest Resources

Chapter Four

Qualitative Methods

Research that assists in identifying effective reading interventions for students with special needs is a tremendous benefit to educators. All students need to be able to read proficiently and critically in a global and competitive world. We as educators have an obligation to implement the most effective reading programs for our students to prepare them for success.

In response to the literacy crisis prevalent among adolescents in the United States, the National Institute for Literacy (2002) issued a report demanding that “we need to

design interventions that inherently contain the attributes that would facilitate their being taken to scale (5)." The authors of that report further assert that much of what researchers develop may be highly effective in a research setting, but too cumbersome to implement in the real world. In order to best understand the setting and conditions under which students learn, researchers must be in the schools and classrooms. The development of instructional models, along with data gathered that includes careful sample characterization, can help to identify which models work best for students, classrooms and/or schools.

The design and methodology for this study is intended as a response to these demands. It is an attempt to discover the attributes of effective reading inventions from the perspectives of successful students and teachers. It is the hope that other educators may be able to gain insight into the factors that contribute to an effective intervention. Given tight budgets and increased costs of educational programs and their implementation, it is imperative to make good decisions based on effectiveness.

Epistemological Lens

Epistemologists ask what criteria must be satisfied for something we believe to count as something we know, and even what it means for a proposition to be true. The epistemological lens for this study is not in its qualitative versus quantitative debate, nor in its objectivity versus subjectivity debate, nor its validity/reliability debate. Rather the epistemological lens is a pluralistic perspective looking at struggling students as the

central focus with a desire to make a difference in the field as a result of the research (Capper, 1999). While many studies of reading intervention effectiveness involve large scale quantitative data collection, this study is intended to hear the voices and perceptions of the consumers of these programs. School district leaders, particularly principals, have a great amount of influence over, and responsibility for, the adoption of instructional programs. A quick look at just a handful of secondary schools shows a vast array of different secondary reading programs from READ 180, to Readers/Writers Workshops, to REACH, SOAR, etc. Districts adopt reading programs with the intent that it will be effective for all their struggling readers. Yet, as outlined in the previous chapters, the students have great variance in their reading difficulties and learning needs. Thurs, some students make impressive gains, and others do not. We need to understand the needs of our different learners, specifically ELL and special needs students, and be responsive to the realities of what happens in the classroom, from both the student and the teacher perspective.

Design

It is important to recognize and take into account all purposes for a research study. There are three district purposes that drive studies—practical purposes (a focus on accomplishing something), research purposes (understanding something/gaining insight into what is happening and why), and personal purposes (a desire/curiosity/burning question about a phenomenon or event) (Maxwell, 1998).

The design used for this study is distinctly related to all three purposes. As a principal, I have certain professional and personal motivations. I have a specific agenda

in that improved reading instruction for underachieving junior high students, specifically students with disabilities and ELL students, is critical for me to study, due to the need to improve student achievement and to meet the mandates of NCLB. The achievement gaps between these subgroups of students and non-disabled and English proficient students continue to be wide.

Regardless of the future of No Child Left Behind and the Flexibility Waivers, the achievement gaps among subgroups of students at all levels K-12 must continue to be recognized and addressed. Thus, there is both a practical, research and personal side to my study. The results of this research could provide further information to guide instructional decisions and improve programming for these groups of students, not only at my school, but potentially at other schools as well. It is my hope that this study will assist other administrators in making sound decisions on reading interventions for secondary students, sound from the standpoint of both academic effectiveness and fiscal responsibility.

The main research question behind my study directed its design. Specifically, I wanted to gather the perspectives of students and teachers relative to the different approaches to reading instruction for different subgroups of student populations, ELL and LD students. Two junior high schools lie within a mid-sized school district in central Wisconsin, with a K-12 student enrollment of approximately 7500 students. There is a special education population of roughly 13%, and an ELL population of roughly 8% at each of the junior high schools. Both subgroups of students, similar to most secondary schools in Wisconsin, show significant gaps in reading proficiency as compared to their nondisabled and English proficient peers. The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts

Exam results of 2008-2011 indicate that less than half of students with disabilities performed at a proficient level while even less of ELL students performed at a proficient level.

There have been different reading intervention programs available to junior high school students in this district. Most have been in the implementation stages for two to three years, yet WKCE student achievement data has not revealed any significant group gains, nor has it revealed any specific strengths of one reading intervention over another for any particular group of students. Yet, effectiveness cannot be determined by aggregate test data alone. After disaggregating the data, it was discovered that many individual students made significant reading gains and improved reading proficiency at a rather significant speed. A study was needed to attempt to understand the factors that contributed to this significant improvement in reading proficiency and whether it was the characteristics of the reading intervention, or of the reader, or of the teacher that mattered most.

Two groups of students were participants in this study. Both groups were comprised of seventh grade students. The differences between these groups included the school attended, the specific reading intervention program enrolled in, and the individual teachers of each intervention. The following table outlines the different reading interventions that were available for specific subgroups of students at each junior high school.

Table 3: District Junior High School Reading Interventions Fall 2010

Junior High School A

Reading Intervention	*Grade*	*Students Serviced*
READ 180 (Two period block)	7	English Language Learners
READ 180 (Two period block)	7	Students with Learning Disabilities
Block Reading Intervention (Two period block)	7	Students with Learning Disabilities

Junior High School B

Reading Intervention	*Grade*	*Students Serviced*
READ 180 (Two period block)	7	Students with Learning Disabilities
Reading Strategies (One period class)	7	English as a Second Language
Reading (One period class)	7	Students with Learning Disabilities

This table demonstrates not only the great variety of interventions, but also the lack of consistent application to specific subgroups of students. As outlined, both schools utilized the READ 180 program. Both used it as a reading intervention program for students with learning disabilities. However, one section of READ 180 was also provided at one school for ELL students exclusively. The READ 180 intervention

program required scheduling the students into a two period block. It further involved utilizing technology and specific implementation strategies outlined by Scholastic. One of the junior high school also implemented a two hour language arts block for students with learning disabilities. The final interventions were one single period of reading pull out classes, specifically one section for students with learning disabilities and one section for ELL students.

Two of the teachers of the READ 180 programs were certified only for teaching students with learning disabilities. The teacher of the READ 180 program for ELL students was certified as an English and as an ESL teacher. Another group of ELL students was enrolled in a traditional one hour ESL reading class taught by a teacher certified in both ESL and German. The group of LD students enrolled in the two period block was taught by a certified special education teacher using multi-leveled books, both fiction and nonfiction. The curriculum and strategies were much more teacher-directed.

The main differences, then, between the READ 180 and the other reading programs were the background/certification of the teachers, the specific READ 180 technology and implementation strategies and the amount of time devoted to the intervention which was either a two period block or single period class.

The study involved identifying seventh grade students who made reading gains while enrolled in one of the intensive reading intervention programs at either of the junior high schools in the district. Seventh grade students were chosen because they were all new to the educational environment and to the reading programs at each junior high. Both student and teacher interviews were the main source of data. These interviews were completed at the end of the student's seventh grade year after approximately 8.5 months

of instruction and enrollment in the reading program. The teachers were interviewed at the same time, after 8.5 months of teaching the various reading intervention programs.

While a small sample size of both students and teacher and interview dependent data it was my hope that the analysis could prove useful. This design can be viewed as a situation in which "stakeholders provide contextually meaningful information, and their responses are the primary source of analysis" (Wholey, 2001, 87). Gathering stakeholder perspectives as an approach to inquiry is widely done in the social sciences (Conrad, 1989). The design involves a structured approach. Structured approaches can help to ensure the comparability of data across sources and researchers, and are thus particularly useful in answering variance questions, questions that deal with differences among things and the explanation for these differences (Maxwell, 1998).

A central component for much of educational research is the study of effective instructional practice or best practice. One way to further this type of educational research can be through the use of a multi-site study that could, ideally, result in a greater understanding of the factors that led to student success in different interventions. This study design examined different reading interventions, most based on the same three evidence-based practices: extended time, multi-leveled texts and strategic reading instruction. It was the hope that the results may provide valuable insight by extrapolating variables that affect student success. The multi-site study design was established to examine similar grade students and teachers with similar assignments within intensive reading intervention programs and their perceptions of the attributes that contributed to their own reading or teaching success. This type of design could result in

the identification of effective reading intervention programs which can migrate from these classrooms to other classrooms with similar types of students (Brown, 1992).

Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for the study. Because the study involved identifying the attributes of reading programs that have led to students' increased reading proficiency, students who demonstrated improved achievement were chosen for the study. Students were chosen based on their enrollment in one of the reading programs, READ 180, a two hour language arts block or a one period reading class. They were also chosen based on characteristics that were particularly relevant, subgroup status and improved reading proficiency. To have "substantive representativeness" in the study was important in that the contextual characteristics of the population thought to be theoretically relevant are included in the sample (Haworth & Conrad, 1997). A small sample that was systemically selected for typicality and relative homogeneity provides far more confidence that the conclusions adequately represent the average members of the population than a sample size that incorporates accidental variation (Maxwell, 1998).

Because I am an administrator at one of the junior high schools, to comply with human subjects review requirements, I requested the participation of one of our local university partners in education to reduce bias and to avoid any issues with status relationships. I partnered with a psychology professor at the local university. We, for

several years, have provided service learning opportunities for her university students, and our junior high students receive valuable tutoring and mentoring from her university students. To further our partnership, the university professor assigned a research assistant to complete the necessary tasks involved in this study to provide a firewall between myself and the participants, and to assure that participants did not feel pressured to participate. Her involvement also relieved any participant anxiety that could happen if I, as the principal of the building, would be conducting the interviews.

All participation in the study was voluntary. The graduate research assistant from the university obtained consent from the participants and the parents. A consent form was translated into Hmong and was provided to parents as needed. The research assistant completed the Human Subjects Protection Training Tutorial at the local university. In addition, the school district reviewed the research protocol and agreed to participate in the study.

Overall, there were 48 students enrolled in seventh grade reading interventions between the two junior high schools. Of that group, 22 met the criteria for the study, namely demonstrated improved reading proficiency using the SRI data at the end of only 8.5 months enrolled in his/her assigned reading intervention. To assure that the lexile gain was not merely a result of poor effort at the first administration of the SRI, each student's data was triangulated to assure that both administrations of the SRI correlated somewhat with the WKCE test history of the student. It was important to assure, at accurately as possible, that the lexile gains were a true reflection of improved reading proficiency. We were confident that the lexile gains were genuine after analyzing each

student's previous WKCE proficiency levels which was the only data available to use as a comparison.

Of that group of 22 possible participants, only nine students returned the necessary consent/assent forms to be included in the study. Therefore, the nine students included in the study represented a thirty percent response rate from the qualified participants.

The research assistant explained the study to each participant and each participant's parents. Parents signed informed consent and students signed assent. Further, teachers of the various reading programs were interviewed by the research assistant to gather data on their perceptions of the successes and challenges of the different reading interventions. Their participation was voluntary, and they also signed informed consent. School district, parent and individual student approval was secured. Parent permission was obtained and documented to allow the research assistant to analyze the students' achievement data for inclusion in the study.

The targeted teacher participants were those teaching READ 180 and those teaching the other reading intervention programs. Their age range was 40-55 years of age. Five teachers were interviewed: four were Caucasian, one Hmong. All were female. They were selected to be involved in the study based on their assignment to each reading intervention. It was my hope and expectation that this would provide adequate data to be analyzed in an effort to find common themes in conjunction with the research questions.

The targeted participants were seventh grade students, all enrolled in either the READ 180 program or another district reading intervention program. The students were

12-13 years of age. The majority of the subgroup of students with disabilities was Caucasian; the majority of the English Language Learner subgroup was Hmong. Students were specifically selected for the study based on their performance on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Exam, the Scholastic Reading Inventory data and their course grade reports. Not all students with the highest lexile growth chose to participate in the study. Either parents did not sign the consent form and/or the student chose not to submit a consent form for whatever reason. Therefore, two students with lower than a 75 lexile growth were chosen based on their improved WKCE proficiency levels solely.

Table 4: Student Sampling Data

School/Student	Reading Intervention	Lexile Growth*	WKCE Proficiency Level**
BF 1--ELL	READ 180	98	Proficient
BF 2—ELL	READ 180	70	Basic
BF 3—ELL	READ 180	87	Minimal
BF 4—LD	READ 180	88	Proficient
BF 5—LD	LD Block	144	Basic
BF 6—LD	READ 180	89	Basic
PJ 1—ELL	ESL Reading	52	Proficient
PJ 2—ELL	ESL Reading	125	Proficient
PJ 3—LD	LD Reading	88	Proficient

*Lexile Growth=growth from September 2010 to January 2011. Lexile growth of 75 is equivalent to one year reading growth

**WKCE—Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam Proficiency levels are minimal, basic, proficient and advanced

While several of these students still remained at the minimal or basic proficiency level of the WKCE, these levels were an improvement from the previous year. Further, several of the students who remained in the same proficiency level did make gains within that level. The minimal and basic students were not far from advancing to the next proficiency level.

Student participants were interviewed for one half hour to one hour and interviews were conducted by the university research assistant who transcribed all student responses. They were asked to answer questions about their reading success, their reading program and their reading behaviors. The interviews took place in private conference rooms at each of the two junior high schools. Similarly, teacher interviews took place in private conference rooms, and their interviews were much longer. They agreed to the interview and were aware of its purpose.

Having a research assistant in the study allowed for all interviews to be private and confidential. Interviews were coded such that names were not attached to any responses. All coded interviews and data were submitted to me without students or teachers' names nor did the data contain any direct or indirect identifiers.

Ethical Considerations

This study involved seventh grade students from two subgroups of the K-12 school district student population, students with learning disabilities and English Language Learners (students from homes where English is not the first language spoken). The study involved these two subgroups because they are significantly lagging behind non-disabled and English proficient students in the district, phenomena that is similar across the United States. This study was an attempt to provide information on effective literacy initiatives specifically for these subgroups of students. Thus, inclusion criteria was based on data that reflected improved reading achievement, specifically improved proficiency in reading on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam, significant growth on the Scholastic Reading Inventory and positive effort grades as assigned by classroom teachers.

As indicated earlier, research bias can take place when a researcher is as close to the study as I was. However, the main purpose of my study was to study the impact of different programs to help make sound instructional decisions. I had no interest in determining the success of one teacher over the other; rather, I had an interest in finding the most effective program to meet the needs of different struggling students at the junior high school level. I was also very interested in assuring fiscal responsibility given the costs of READ 180 and the resources associated with two hour blocks of instructional staff time.

Because some subjects were students and teachers in the school of which I was the principal, there was potential for risk due to status relationships. However, the

research design specifically focused on students who were successful and their teachers. The design of the study was not supervisory or evaluative. To minimize any possible risk, the research assistant from the university recruited the participants, obtained consent and conducted the interviews. I only received the interview responses which were coded for both students and teachers to maintain confidentiality.

As described above, this research study involved only teachers, students and their parents who agreed to participate. Further, student selection into the study was based on positive and successful performance that the student demonstrated while enrolled in the reading program. Teacher involvement in the study was completely voluntary. Questions asked of teachers revolved around their input as to the attributes of the reading programs that have contributed to their student's reading improvement. Further, the status relationship issue was addressed through the involvement of a third party, a graduate assistant, who recruited participants and obtained all consents including students, their parents and the teachers. This individual also transcribed the data and coded all responses to maintain confidentiality and to avoid any pressure on participants.

There was great care to assure that participants felt free and comfortable participating in the study, sharing their experiences and discussing the questions. It was important to assure that questions were answered truthfully and honestly, not answered based on what the participants felt was the desired responses. It was also important to provide the context for teachers to give their input into the factors leading to their students' success. Extreme effort was given to creating a context for this kind of dialogue. The fact that students were chosen based on their own success, and the teacher

based on their own students' successes, contributed to rich discussions and honest reflections rather than any feelings that there were right or wrong answers.

It was noted that most of the participants felt good about being selected for this study. They were told that they could possibly contribute to a study that will provide information about successful reading interventions for secondary students. Their involvement in such a study could help contribute to educational instructional changes that would benefit other students.

Data Collection

The first part of the data collection for the study included an analysis of student achievement scores to determine participants for the study. It involved compiling achievement data using multiple assessments. The assessments, the Scholastic Reading Inventory, and the WKCE, are considered to be quite reliable (Department of Public Instruction, 2010). The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Exam scores roughly a .9 in classification consistency (Department of Public Instruction, 2010). It is also high in inter-rater reliability, which is particularly important for the constructed response and writing sections of the assessment. With a sample size this small, any growth or decline cannot be considered statistically significant; however, it can add to the overall picture.

The research assistant who selected the participants was given school district approval to review student achievement data for each of the students in the reading intervention programs at each junior high school. The assistant reviewed the WKCE scores from Fall 2010 and the growth demonstrated over two administrations of the

Scholastic Reading Inventory, the first in the September 2010 and then in January 2011. She compiled a list of student who showed improvement in WKCE reading proficiency from September 2009 to September 2010. The more important variable for participation in the study, though, was lexile gain as reflected from the fall to spring administration of the Scholastic Reading Inventory. Students who demonstrated a 75 lexile gain or more over the five month period were targeted. This is because a lexile gain of 75 can be equated to one year of reading growth, based on Scholastic. Students with a gain of 75 or more were certainly making good progress in their particular program and thus were strong candidates for participation in the study. The lexile growth was held as a more desirable piece of data to demonstrate reading growth because the WKCE scores were administered in the fall, specifically in the month of November. At that time the students were enrolled in their reading program for only two and one half months. As mentioned the Scholastic Reading Inventory measured reading proficiency growth at the beginning of the intervention and then five months into the program.

Development of Research Instrument

The process used to design the research instrument for the students involved exploring several reading surveys used by teachers of adolescents. The main goal was to ask questions specific to the components of each reading invention that would spark conversation and details from the students. The questions needed to be open-ended allowing the student to elaborate on his/her experiences, yet at the same time they needed to be simple enough for the student to understand and feel comfortable responding.

The process used for the teacher instrument was different. Great care was taken to develop questions that were inviting in nature without any hint of judgmental or supervisory intent. Thus, most questions involved asking the teachers' opinions about the intervention programs, focusing on the success that their students had in their classrooms. The questions were also designed to allow freedom for both students and teachers to elaborate on their ideas, as outlined in Appendix

Interviews

During the interviews, the research assistant was directed to probe student responses, specifically within the theme of student self-confidence in reading, student engagement in reading and specific aspects of his/her reading program that he/she felt was most helpful. This was an attempt to gather as much information as possible in order to provide an in depth context in which to look for recurring topics, themes, factors or feelings.

Students were asked how the program has increased their reading comprehension skills. They were asked if the program has increased their desire to read independently and outside of school. Further, students were asked whether they believed their reading program positively influenced their reading success in other content classes.

Teacher questions were aimed at describing the characteristics of the reading program that, in their opinion, contributed to the success of the students. Teachers did not know the identity of the students in the sample nor how many were included. They

were simply told that one or more of their students were chosen because they had demonstrated growth during their eight months in the reading intervention.

Data Analysis

In an important sense, case study investigators practice "analysis" during data collection (Maxwell, 1998, 89). Triangulating the evidence is already an analytic process, and it occurs throughout data collection (Yin, 1994). Contextualizing strategies can be used to understand the data in context, helping to identify the relationships among the different elements of data collected (Maxwell, 1998). Rather than specific coding strategies and/or fracturing strategies, the qualitative data as a whole was examined in this study.

In this study, while not the data collector, I was the recipient of the transcribed interviews and subsequent conversations about these interviews. For the research assistant, transcribing each word of the seventh grade students was not a difficult task. Understandably their answers were direct and to the point, and so every word was transcribed. I had prepared the research assistant for this probability, and she was comfortable probing further to get directly to the research question, the attributes of the reading program that the students felt were most beneficial. The research assistant and I had conversations after these student interviews were completed, and she felt that she "got the most" out of the students. It helped that she was very clear about the specific question we were asking, and the other questions, namely how the students felt about

reading after the intervention and how their reading intervention helped in other classes, helped to bring further context to the main research question. All student interviews were completed during their study hall time, so there was adequate time to probe. Further, they were all completed during a two week period, so I was able to analyze all interviews and ask any clarifying questions of the research assistant. The data was analyzed as a whole, comparing student responses to each question and reviewing the answers as a whole to determine common themes.

Similarly, the teacher interviews were transcribed with all data analyzed as a whole. It was important to look at the context of each answer because questions and answers overlapped. Again, it was analyzed to determine common themes and/or widely differing responses to similar questions.

The information, a combination of qualitative data on the students' learning experiences and the teachers perceptions of those experiences, allowed me to analyze recurring themes, learning activities, student and teacher behaviors that they believed to be the most important and effective attributes of the different reading intervention programs. With limited resources for education and with a profound need to improve reading instruction and proficiency in LD and ELL students, I believe this study is beneficial to educators with similar concerns and similar responsibilities for student achievement for all learners.

The level of analysis for the study was at the individual student and individual teacher perspective. Individual student responses were analyzed and compared to each other and to each program. Teacher responses were compared to each other and analyzed

in relation to their reading program and their particular certification, background and experiences.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design

While a strength of this research involved obtaining perspectives from successful students and teachers themselves, it did bring inherent weaknesses. The research assistant quickly realized that each student question required constant probing to really dive into what the students found successful or not regarding the individual interventions. Seventh grade students, particularly those who have been struggling in school, can feel intimidated when talking with an adult about their own learning. Further, although the research assistant remained positive, upbeat, and nonthreatening or evaluative, she was still a stranger. In some cases despite varying levels and strategies of probing, the research assistant felt that students could have shared more about their experiences and their feelings about their reading classes. Some were just nervous.

The research assistant felt most of the teachers were very willing to elaborate and provide personal perspectives about the programs. Despite the fact that the teachers were chosen based on their success with students, one held back more than the others when specifically asked to make judgments or give personal opinions about the intervention.

Chapter Five

Findings—Research Question One

From the perspective of students and teachers, what are the attributes of alternative intensive reading interventions that contribute to improved reading proficiency among secondary English Language Learners (ELL) and students with learning disabilities (LD)?

Student Perspectives

Attributes of READ 180 Contributing to Improved Reading Proficiency

Five students interviewed were from the READ 180 program, representing both of the junior high schools. This was not because the students in READ 180 as a whole made greater gains; rather, the consent of the students and parents was of a greater return than other programs, for whatever reasons. Of the five students interviewed from the READ 180 program, three were English Language Learner students and two were students with learning disabilities. It became very evident that there was a clear difference in what the students in the two subgroups believed to be the attributes that contributed to their reading gains.

Vocabulary, Fluency, Pronunciation

The three English Language Learner students all referenced the specific reading skills of vocabulary development, pronunciation and reading fluency when asked about their improvement in reading while enrolled in READ 180. The students were asked what about the READ 180 program they believed helped improve their reading. Specifically, one student answered, "The vocabulary mostly…" The other two students answered, "Reading to myself and out loud" and "Reading out loud in class and spelling and speaking the language better." The students' answers to the second question supported this emphasis on skill development in that the students were asked if their improved reading skills helped them in other classes. All three students again specifically referred to pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary. One student stated that her skills "helped a lot in science…it is easier to pronounce words now and not as scary when reading in classes." Another student wrote that his/her skills have helped him/her "in all of them. I can sound out words better, able to recognize words more quickly and can use context clues."

The common emphasis on specific reading skills was clear. I expected that the students would also mention improved comprehension. Clearly these are ELL students who have language needs. In their responses, better reading meant better pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary. This would suggest that for these students, these skills were the most important and their improvement of these particular skills equated to success.

Comprehension

The two students with learning disabilities that were enrolled in the READ 180 program emphasized the learning activities and their improved comprehension skills over vocabulary development, fluency or pronunciation. Specifically, when asked what about READ 180 helped improve their reading, one student specifically mentioned READ 180 learning activities, the READ 180 sessions on the computer and the independent reading. The other student mentioned the small groups and the fact that they talked to other students and to the teacher during this time. Further, when asked whether they believed their improved reading skills helped in other classes, one student stated, "Yes, definitely, mostly science and social studies, it has made it a lot easier to understand stuff." The other student stated that "Science and math have been helped a lot because I can read them and understand them much better. It is easier to understand everything that goes on in other books now."

There was a very clear difference between ELL and LD students' responses in reference to what about READ 180 made them better readers. The ELL students emphasized language. Their responses focused solely on reading skills without mention of comprehension or understanding. It was very clear that what these students believed constitutes good reading, which was recognizing the words, reading them quickly and saying them correctly. The students with disabilities, however, did not mention any of these skills. Their responses focused on the program structure and more importantly, on comprehension and understanding. For the LD students, understanding what they read is what made them successful.

All five students, over the 8.5 months in the READ 180 program, made similar lexile gains, between 70 and 98. Neither subgroup showed more significant gain over the other. So, while their gains were similar, the attributes of READ 180 that they believed contributed to their success were very different based on the subgroup.

Engagement and Confidence

Several interview questions focused on student engagement and self confidence in reading. Again, there was a difference in responses between READ 180 ELL students and READ 180 students with disabilities. Students were asked if reading had become easier for them since enrollment in the READ 180 program. The ELL students' responses again focused on vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. One student mentioned that he/she "can pronounce more words and has a bigger vocabulary…I can sound out words." Another student stated that reading is a "little easier, mostly with long words or complicated topics…It is not as scary to read anymore."

The two students with learning disabilities both specifically mentioned the word "understand." When asked if reading had become easier since enrollment in READ 180, one LD student stated, "Yes, very much, it is more fun now and I look forward to it, I can understand what I am reading better." The other student stated that he/she "can understand better and make more sense of everything." Confidence for these students again was different based on subgroup affiliation, with ELL students identifying language based skills and LD students identifying comprehension skills.

However, when asked about engagement, all five students in READ 180, regardless of subgroup, responded very similarly. I made an assumption during analysis

that their responses of "liking" their program and their "feelings" about the program could be associated with engagement, knowing that the concept of engagement may be difficult for these students to grasp. Also, I made an assumption that what they liked best about their reading program would allow me to analyze the level of engagement.

Students were asked the open question, "What do you think about your reading skills?" The following are the five responses:

"Reading skill has improved, but still wants to be a little better."

"It has gotten much better than it used to be."

"I think I am getting much better, and faster at reading."

"Doing a little better, like to read outside of class now."

"Improving a lot, need more work, but very good overall."

Further, all five READ 180 students responded similarly when asked about their feelings toward reading. When asked, "How has your feeling about reading changed since enrollment in READ 180," the five students responded in the following manner:

"Much more confident, and reading is more enjoyable. I like everything about reading now, I only liked a little bit of reading before."

"I kind of like reading now, used to not like reading at all."

"I like it a little more now than I used to."

"I like reading a lot better now. I look forward to READ 180 class."

"I usually didn't really like reading, but now I definitely like to read."

Finally, all five students had the exact same answer when asked about the best part of their READ 180 class. All five students made reference to silent and/or independent reading:

"Reading a book I like silently to myself then telling friends about it if I like it."

"Reading to myself is the best part."

"Reading to myself is the best because I do not have to talk out loud."

"When we get in small groups and go on the computers. Also when I can read by myself."

"Independent reading is the best."

It was quite significant that all five students in the READ 180 students identified independent reading as the "best" part of their reading program. Whether these students find little time to read outside of school, or lack the support or encouragement to read outside of school, or both of the above, the increased instructional time provided students with more time to actually read during the school day, and it is that attribute of the program that they felt was "best." These answers, from the students themselves, support the research emphasizing that increased instructional time during the day is needed for students to spend time and practice reading.

It was also quite apparent that student engagement and confidence was quite high for the students in the READ 180 program. All five students responded that they have gotten "much better" at reading and "like" reading much more.

I made the assumption, in my analysis of the data, that the extended time in the reading intervention had an influence on the students' positive comments about independent reading because it was a daily part of their reading intervention program. Similarly, the students' positive responses about their improved skill and improved desire to read seemed to be influenced by the leveled high interest reading material and the active rotational nature of the READ 180 delivery system. Whether the student was an ELL or an LD student, engagement and self-confidence were mentioned frequently. So, while students' perceptions of skill development differed, they all felt that the READ 180 program contributed to engagement and self-confidence in their reading proficiency.

Table 5: Student Responses to Attributes of READ 180

	Fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary	Comprehension	Engagement	Self Confidence	Teacher
English Language Learners	Frequently Mentioned	No Responses	Frequently Mentioned	Frequently Mentioned	No Responses
Students with Disabilities	No Responses	Frequently Mentioned	Frequently Mentioned	Frequently Mentioned	No Responses

Attributes of Language Arts Block Contributing to Improved Reading Proficiency

One student interviewed was enrolled in a two hour Language Arts block. The time devoted to the reading program was the same as READ 180 (a two period block), but the instruction was not as prescriptive. The delivery system was more teacher-

directed without the structured twenty minute rotations as in the READ 180 program. The teacher of this delivery system emphasized the modeling of reading skills and the monitoring of students practicing these skills.

The student interviewed from this reading intervention was a student with learning disabilities, and like other students with learning disabilities in the READ 180 program, this student emphasized that many subjects were easier to understand and textbooks were easier to read as a result of his/her improved reading skills. Further, when asked whether reading had become easier, this student stated, "Yes, in every way….I can pronounce more words and everything makes better sense." Finally, this student, similar to all the students in the READ program, "thinks (his/her) skills have gotten much better….(he/she) likes to read now, never used to." Both pronunciation and comprehension were mentioned as important attributes leading to this student's success.

One significant difference in this student's response was related to the delivery system of this reading program. This student, unlike the READ 180 students, mentioned the teacher. When asked what about the two hour language arts block did he/she believe helped improve his/her reading, the student responded, "Basically everyone reading one book together and the teacher is telling to look at the words as they read along. Looking at words while listening to the tapes is helpful. After that independent reading helps a lot."

While both READ 180 and the two hour language block have extended time and multi-leveled texts, the only student to mention the influence of the teacher was the student enrolled in the two hour language block. Not one of the five READ 180 students at either junior high school mentioned the influence, abilities or specific actions of the

teacher. Rather, for the READ 180 students, the components of the intervention were outlined and mentioned as main contributors to improved reading proficiency. Interestingly, the student in the language arts block realized the second highest lexile gain of all students in the study. This particular student was also at the lowest proficiency level based on the WKCE. While this cannot be conclusive at all, it is interesting to note that the language arts block student was the only one to mention any teacher behaviors.

Table 6: Differences in Student Responses—READ 180 vs. Language Arts Block

	Fluency, Pronunciation, Vocabulary	Comprehension	Engagement	Self Confidence	Teacher
READ 180	ELL—Frequently Mentioned LD—No Responses	ELL—No Responses LD—Frequently Mentioned	ELL-Frequently Mentioned LD—Frequently Mentioned	ELL-Frequently Mentioned LD--Frequently Mentioned	ELL-No Responses LD—No Responses
Language Arts Block	ELL—N/A LD—Frequently Mentioned	ELL—N/A LD—Frequently Mentioned	ELL—N/A LD—Frequently Mentioned	ELL—N/A LD—Frequently Mentioned	ELL—N/A LD—Frequently Mentioned

The LD student in the Language Arts block exceeded the lexile gains of the ELL students by a significant amount, 144 vs. 70-98. The above table outlines the similarities and differences in responses of the two subgroups enrolled in each of the two blocked reading intervention programs. The main difference between these two interventions was the emphasis on comprehension and the acknowledgement of teacher behavior/actions. The language arts special education teacher had received specific professional

development from the district reading coordinator at the onset of the block program. The coordinator had modeled reading strategy instruction in the classroom with the teacher's own class. The professional development of the READ 180 teachers, on the other hand, was provided by Scholastic representatives, mainly emphasizing how to use the materials and programs with fidelity. While this study is very limited in terms of sample size and extent of the responses, there were some interesting differences in teacher preparation and this difference was noticeable through the student interviews. Students in the READ 180 mentioned specific reading activities that were emphasized daily and extensively in the program, while the student in the LD language arts block mentioned more teacher involvement and actions.

Attributes of a Single Period Reading Class Contributing to Improved Reading Proficiency

The students in the one period reading class were separated by subgroup; one class for students with learning disabilities and one for ELL students. What was most interesting about their responses to the questions was the very little that they said. Their answers were not nearly as specific or in depth as the students in the other two hour block intervention programs. Further, while there was a distinct difference between the ELL and LD students in READ 180 in terms of what they believe constituted good reading (vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation vs. comprehension), these two students did not demonstrate any similarities to each other in terms of subgroup status or program, nor were their answers consistent with the responses from their like subgroup in READ 180.

When asked the question about what component of their reading intervention helped improve their reading, the ELL students' answers ranged from

> "We do lots of vocab words and you have to write and decide whether the word is a verbs, noun, etc and you have to do projects and talk about words. Poems help and then describing pictures corresponding with poems are helpful."

> The other student, in the same intervention and the same class, mentioned that "he/she's been reading a lot of articles and then writing a summary about it. That has made me a much better reader."

Clearly, these two students identified a wide variety of components of their reading class that contributed to their success, from vocabulary instruction, to poetry, to grammar instruction, to summarizing techniques.

Similarly, the third student interviewed was from a one period reading class for students with disabilities. This student made significant progress in reading proficiency, yet, when asked about what in the reading program made him/her successful, he/she stated, "Going to the library and paying more attention in class."

Students in the single period class were not as aware of, or as succinct about, the dimensions and components of their specific reading intervention program as were the READ 180 students and two hour language arts block students. Further, they did not provide specific examples of the skills that have made them better readers.

All students in the single period reading classes believed that their improved reading skills helped them in other classes. Again, the answers were very brief without

much description. Mainly the students stated that they could understand classes like math and science, and they could read faster. Interestingly, when asked if reading has become easier for them, the following responses were given:

> "Yes, I don't have to re-read the sentences as much as I used to."
>
> "Yes, I can understand more vocab words and if I need to look up a word in the dictionary, I know how to do it now.
>
> "Yes, by reading books over and over again, I have gotten better."

These responses were reflective of a more traditional reading class, identifying dictionary usage to enhance vocabulary and rereading books to improve comprehension.

From the perspective of students in these reading interventions, language skills and comprehension fared as very important to their success, and those responses were consistent from the READ 180 and language arts students. English Language Learners emphasized language skills, and students with learning disabilities emphasized comprehension. Both subgroups were successful in these areas regardless of READ 180 or the language arts block. The students in the single period classes were not nearly as succinct or consistent based on subgroup affiliation. Nor did their answers reflect best practice in reading instruction. It seems evident that the time associated with READ 180 and the blocks provided students with opportunities to learn strategies, practice and receive immediate feedback. Their focus on independent reading is directly correlated to the extended time they have in these blocks.

These findings support the literature review provided earlier that outlines the specific instructional needs of different subgroups of populations. READ 180 provided ELL students with the needed emphasis on language--fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary. The language arts block intervention supported the need for comprehension and the research that these students need intensive and goal directed instruction, focusing solely on reading. The significant difference between the blocked students and the single period class students was that the students with extended time seemed very aware of specific reading skills from fluency to comprehension, and they were very consistent and positive about their independent reading. The students in the single period class mentioned class activities more than specific knowledge or skills. They did not succinctly portray their improved skill and desire to read more as did the blocked students.

Teacher Perspectives

Attributes of READ 180 Contributing to Improved Reading Proficiency

Three teachers with distinct and varying backgrounds and different subgroups of students assigned to them were interviewed specifically in regard to the READ 180 program. One teacher, with a background in English and ESL, used the READ 180 program with seventh grade ELL students. The two other teachers, with certification in

learning disabilities, taught seventh grade students with learning disabilities using the READ 180 program.

Instructional Time

The very first response from all three READ 180 teachers, when asked what, in their opinion, were the main factors that contributed to the success of several students in their READ 180 class, identified the time and structure associated with the READ 180 program. The following were the first responses of these teachers:

> "Time frame—the program is very highly structured"
>
> "The time, the separation of and distribution of the time"
>
> "The time, the change in the program during class is vital"

Prior to their assignment to the READ 180 or language arts block intervention programs, these teachers taught single period ELL pull out or single period LD pull out classes. After two years into teaching in a double period block, the READ 180 teachers felt that the extended time made a difference in student success. They all identified time as the most important attribute contributing to improved reading proficiency in their students. Further, all three teachers identified that the program structure of READ 180, specifically the twenty minute rotations, were also important to student success. They were consistent in their perspective because all of them identified that it kept students motivated and engaged.

> "The students don't sit around doing one thing, especially one thing they don't like for a long period of time. The rotations during the class continue to motivate them. If there is something a student does not do well at, I am able to assess the child and move to something else that will help them better."

> "It keeps students engaged for a good 90 minutes. The class room is set up with 20 minute small group along with whole group. The program gives opportunities kids wouldn't normally have (kids can have attention in small groups…one to four, one to six). Time goes by quickly, and if students are still working/super engaged in something, they can go a bit longer."

> "It forces the kids to do independent work and spend time on things they might not normally. Having the smaller groups is great so that you can work one on one."

For these teachers, the strengths of READ 180 for adolescent readers are the extended time and the prescriptive structure. Their answers focused on the fact that the additional time allows for more individualized attention. Also, the structure of the READ 180 program kept students engaged and on task due to the movement, the rotations, the variety of activities and the flexibility.

This type of structure could have been set up without purchasing the READ 180 program. However, these teachers had not implemented that kind of delivery system in the past, nor had they ever been involved in block schedules with a rotational structure,

diagnostic and prescriptive assessments and multi-leveled texts. The READ 180 program was particularly beneficial to them as it clearly provided an outline and a script for delivering the curriculum and the learning activities. Their answers revealed this. They focused on time and rotations as contributors to students' successes. While these attributes could have been developed and implemented without READ 180, these three teachers, of no fault of their own, did not have the background, training or exposure to that type of increased instructional time or delivery system. This could explain their strong and consistent emphasis on time and structure.

Student Motivation and Engagement

The second common theme in reference to attributes of READ 180 that contributed to student success, from the perspective of teachers, was student motivation and engagement. The teachers were asked to describe, in reference to the students who have demonstrated significant reading gains, the level of student engagement of those students in their reading program. All three identified extremely high student engagement.

> "One of the best things I have seen in the classroom. They are very motivated because they have room for creativity. I am able to change things up better than I thought I could leading to high student motivation. Everyone is engaged, even if they don't want to be."

Similarly, the other two teachers confirmed a very high level of engagement in the READ 180 program. They identified that the small groups kept students talking and participating, specifically about books they were reading. When asked to describe student motivation in their reading program, the teachers stated that hands were up all the time and students were excited about what they were reading and learning. One teacher stated that "everything has changed regarding motivation." Another stated that "she finds that even if they don't want to talk, they end up participating because they are happy and excited about what they are learning."

Regardless of teacher background/preparation and the subgroup of student population, the teachers using READ 180 identified time and structure as key attributes that contributed to their students' success first and foremost. Teachers attributed the structure of READ 180 as contributing to these responses. READ 180 requires a two period block. The program is structured such that class begins with a large group learning activity and then students rotate, in small groups, through three stations. One is a small group interaction time with the teacher specifically discussing reading material and providing instruction on reading and writing skills. Another station is independent silent reading of a book of their choice, and the third station is at the computers where students work through a series of assessment/diagnostic programs on spelling, word recognition and other reading skills. All teachers identified the variety of these activities and the outline of the time as contributors to highly engaged and motivated students. Further, the structure of READ 180 was a common theme when teachers were asked about the strengths of this reading intervention. All three mentioned the way the classroom is set up, the movement, the rotations and the active involvement. READ 180

software is designed to engage students in individualized and adjusted instruction (Greenleaf, et. al, 2002). It was designed also to increase student engagement with videos that build background and/or activate knowledge to increase their ability to create mental models as they read text. In their answers, engagement and motivation was a direct result of the time and structure of the program.

Despite the emphasis on time and structure, there was a slight difference between the teachers with special education certification and the teacher with English/ESL certification. The special education teachers emphasized the structure of READ 180 slightly more than the English/ESL teacher. The special education teachers found the variety, movement and participation to be the highly effective attributes. While the English/ESL teacher highlighted those elements, she also emphasized the engaging materials, the leveled books, the diagnostic software and the step-by-step processes that help the students become stronger readers. This may reflect the more in-depth background to teaching reading/literature that comes with an English/ESL certification than with a certification in special education. READ 180 provides highly structured curriculum and plans. Thus, a teacher without a reading or English background has a built in and strong framework by which to deliver the reading intervention. This was evident in the answers to the question on how the teachers manage instructional time in READ 180. One special education teacher stated:

> "Everyday whole group, small group and computer time and rotate. Time management is easy because it is such scholastic, structured program. There is not much room for deviation from the specific program."

The English/ESL teacher stated:

> "Since there is plenty of time, management of time is not that hard…Start off with the basics such as finding out how the kids are, how their days are going, what is new in their lives, etc…Roll into what the project of the day is or what they will be learning today and just go from there.."

Teachers' backgrounds seemed to have an influence on their perceptions of the attributes that contribute to improved student reading proficiency. READ 180 was a guide for good instruction for LD teachers who had not had formal reading instruction preparation and background, by no fault of their own, but by virtue of their certification. The teacher with more background/preparation in English and language instruction emphasized more details about effective instruction than the LD teachers. That teacher's responses demonstrated a desire to build in/personalize activities, at times deviating from the prescriptive directives of the READ180 intervention.

The teachers were also asked to identify any affective changes they have seen among the students who have made significant gains in their reading proficiency. All three teachers mentioned confidence as one of the major changes.

> "Increase in confidence is a huge component which comes with gains in reading proficiency…If they do not know, they don't ask, so having increased confidence promotes feeling comfortable enough to ask questions in the classroom and being

able to do their work. They do not know how to do all work, but learn to ask for help."

"They now have a much more positive outlook on reading and school in general. Much more confident and relaxed and it is very neat to put students on the offensive as opposed to the defensive regarding reading."

Student confidence was specifically mentioned by all the READ 180 teachers. While extended time and outlined activities was held in high regard, the specific reference to the increased engagement, motivation and confidence was quite significant. The assumption is that the extended time and structure was an important variable to improved engagement, motivation and confidence.

Assessment

Another common attribute of the READ 180 program that was mentioned by all three teachers was the assessment system inherent in the intervention. The teachers mentioned that student performance was monitored constantly through the program, and this feedback allowed teachers to immediately and effectively assess the areas of individual student need. This feedback allowed personal interactions with students based on their academic needs. Again, these responses were reflective of the frequent, daily assessment tools inherent in READ 180 that allowed teachers to personalize and individualize instruction immediately with the computerized diagnostic results. These teachers had not had these kinds of frequent and immediate assessments in their past

experiences, much less assessments that individualize instructional needs for students daily.

Application

READ 180 teachers were asked if they believe their students who experienced gains in reading have experienced similar performance gains in other content areas. Answers were quite positive by the two teachers in their second year of teaching READ 180, and less so by the teacher in her first year of teaching the program. The experienced teachers indentified vocabulary development and confidence as the major reasons for improved performance in other areas.

> "Students use context clues that they learn in READ 180 to help them understand other subjects."
>
> "Comprehension helps vocabulary in all other areas of school and life."
>
> "Students in READ 180 have improved as far as participation in other classes goes…they also seem to become more vocal in class the longer they participate in READ 180."
>
> "Learning to understand and hold their own ground in other content areas."

In these responses, comprehension fared more highly than the specific reading skills that the students themselves had mentioned quite frequently. From the teacher perspective, the skills learned in READ 180 not only assist in comprehension in other content areas, but improved confidence and participation as well.

All three teachers were asked what they have learned about adolescent literacy as a result of teaching READ 180. Again, the overwhelming theme involved student engagement. Specifically, they responded:

> "The biggest thing is just getting them hooked in the beginning. The motivational factor is huge, giving them the confidence so they can get through the text."

> "It has to be something that engages their attention, their likes and dislikes….as long as they are interested in it, that will lead to better comprehension and desire to read and motivation."

The teachers did not attribute any of their own behaviors or activities as motivational or engaging to students. READ 180, its time, variety and inherent management system, is the "something" that gets them "hooked" and "engaged at the beginning."

Attributes of Language Arts Block Contributing to Improved Reading Proficiency

Instructional Time

One LD teacher was interviewed who taught a two period language arts block to seventh grade students with learning disabilities. There are parallels in her answers when compared to the READ 180 teachers, specifically the emphasis on the increased time and the leveled reading materials. When asked what the main factors of her reading

intervention that contributed to her students' improved reading proficiency, this teacher stated that the extra time in class to read was essential. Further, she mentioned that having the extra time allowed students to get comfortable, ask questions and have time to do their work. In addition, having books coded for reading level allowed students to not only have the freedom to choose, but the system to find books by which they can read with success.

The LD teacher and READ 180 teachers all identified time as the major attribute leading to student success. Both programs require two back to back periods of instruction. Their responses about time correlated with their students. The teachers emphasized time as a contributor to improved proficiency and the students emphasized the time as a contributor to more independent reading. For students the time allowed them to practice, leading to increased enjoyment of reading. For teachers, the extended time provided for improved instruction as well as practice.

Student Motivation and Engagement

While READ 180 teachers identified high student engagement and motivation as a result of the structure of the program, the language arts block teacher identified high student engagement and motivation as a result of individual student performance. When asked to describe the level of student engagement and motivation, she stated:

> "Students came into the program with a strong interest in learning and getting better at reading....The wide selection of books makes engagement easier."

Similarly, when asked about the affective changes she saw among students who have made significant gains in reading, she responded:

> "When the students see their gains on things like state tests, they seem surprised and proud….Slow readers are often excited to see that just because they read slow does not mean they are bad readers…In gaining proficiency, some students seem to have increased confidence levels leading to more reading out loud in class, and being more vocal in one-on-one situations.'

While activity, movement and rotations were identified as highly engaging and motivating attributes of READ 180 teachers, the LD language arts teacher emphasized instructional materials and performance. This particular teacher had a different preparation and professional development experience than the READ 180 teachers. Individual training had been provided by the district reading coordinator. Although certified in learning disabilities, the language arts teacher's background included more training in strategic instruction and the implementation of instructional blocks of time, unlike the READ 180 teachers. This could explain why there was such an emphasis from the READ 180 teachers on reading skills, classroom structure and management. They had not had the same type of training. The LD teacher, on the other hand, had been trained in planning and executing lessons in this type of delivery system right in her own classroom with her own students.

There was evidence of this difference between these two sets of reading intervention teachers in their responses relative to managing instructional time. The

READ 180 teachers emphasized that the prescriptive structure of the program activities (the rotations, the computer software, the independent reading) was easy to implement. The LD language arts teachers mentioned very different instructional activities:

> "Class time involves doing a lesson together and discussing/learning about skills such as visualizing, questioning, predicting, comparing, making connects and monitoring comprehension…Class also includes group reading, individual reading time, read out loud and vocabulary."

This response clearly portrays knowledge of effective reading strategies and informal assessment techniques. Further, she planned these lessons, executed them, and differentiated instruction. Rotations, activities and materials were not prescribed as in the READ 180 program. The research based reading strategies (visualizing, predicting, making connections) identified in this teacher's answer above were not mentioned by any of the READ 180 teachers.

Assessment

In the language arts block, assessment was more teacher-driven in that students read to the teacher, the teacher listened to students read out loud in class, and the teacher observed what types of books students chose. This teacher mentioned the Scholastic Reading Inventory as a useful assessment tool, but only after discussing these other types of assessment activities. SRI was not driving the instruction; informal assessment was used more to differentiate for the readers. This teacher took more ownership of knowing

the students using informal assessments. Again, this was due mainly to the teacher's training in using these methods in her classroom.

Attributes of a Single Period Reading Class Contributing to Improved Reading Proficiency

The final teacher interviewed was a teacher of students with learning disabilities, a single period reading class. Her responses varied greatly from the other teachers interviewed. When asked about the main factors of her reading program that contributed to her students' improved reading proficiency, she identified the specific goals that they have in class. "We use the students IEP to help keep on task with what needs to be learned when." The other factor she identified was the teacher-student relationships. "Socially connecting with the student seems to be huge, especially in the beginning and when the students have severe disabilities."

Most responses from this teacher revolved around individualized instruction. When asked to describe the student engagement and motivation, she stated that motivation was high and that they were excited to be there because they felt safe and felt free to be themselves. They were a part of their own goal setting which they enjoyed. When asked about how she managed instructional time, the teacher identified that she split time between whole group instruction, small group instruction and silent reading. She spent much time outside of class thinking about students individually as she planned for the next class. The strengths of her reading program, she believed, were the high

individualization, IEP driven instruction, strong relationships and one on one student contact time.

The perspectives of teachers were quite different, specifically between those delivering the READ 180 and the language arts blocks and those teaching single period classes. The READ 180 and language arts teachers were succinct and consistent in their identification of time and student engagement as important attributes that led to improved proficiency. While not using the exact same words, the students had similar perspectives. The students liked independent reading and that contributed to more reading. Further, they indentified specific reading skills that were a result of their program, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation for ELL students, and comprehension for the students with learning disabilities.

The perspectives of the teachers and of the students in the single period classes were much more scattered with less mention of specific reading skills and/or research based practices. This is not to say that the instruction was ineffective because several students made significant growth. The responses were just less consistent about specific attributes than the teachers and students of the other interventions. The main difference, then, is that the students in the two hour blocks, based on their own responses and their teachers' responses, experienced a delivery system and instruction that was succinct and based on best practice. Further, their responses were quite high in self-confidence and engagement. The single period class students and teachers did not respond as consistently about best practice, and that seems to be due to differences in teacher autonomy over the curriculum and activities of a pull out program.

As an overview, the following general themes were exposed from both students and teacher s interviewed in this study:

Student Perspectives

Blocked Interventions—Time/Confidence/

Engagement (Like)/Independent Reading

READ 180—Vocabulary/Fluency/Pronunciation

LD—Comprehension

Single Period Interventions—Less consistent responses/Less in depth responses

Teacher Perspectives

Blocked Interventions—Time/Student Engagement/Confidence

READ 180—Structure/Assessment/Activity

LD—Strategic Reading Practices/Informal Assessment

Single Period—Individualization/Relationships/Student Concerns

Implementation—Successes/Challenges

External vs. Internal

Financial Considerations

Professional Development

Chapter Six

Findings—Research Question Two

What factors contribute to the successes or challenges of implementing these interventions at secondary schools?

A recurring theme or factor that contributed to the success of implementing these interventions, from the perspective of the teachers, was the prescriptive and outlined nature of READ 180 as well as the extended time provided in both interventions. All five READ 180 teachers emphasized that implementation of READ 180 helped them learn more about teaching reading and how to better implement reading instruction. The language arts block teacher also identified the devotion of extended time as a factor.

Yet, at the same time, these factors also posed challenges for teachers. All five teachers in the study were asked about the challenges they faced in the implementation of their reading intervention programs. The responses differed greatly between the READ 180 teachers and the teachers of the other reading interventions.

Autonomy vs. Fidelity

The READ 180 teachers all identified that they experienced a large learning curve when implementing the READ 180 program. Specifically, they all believed that there

was an overwhelming amount of information and materials that encompassed the program:

> "Initially, there were lots of questions….there were so many pieces to the puzzle of READ 180…just needed time to figure it out."
>
> "Still learning and continuing to keep up with it….it is so huge and there is so much information that comes with READ 180."
>
> "Pretty much the fact that there was limited training and basically no background…The second training was very helpful."

READ 180 involved training outside the district by representatives from Scholastic. The training focused mainly on fidelity in implementation, using the curriculum, technology, materials and activities exactly as prescribed. Fidelity was a common theme in teachers' responses. All teachers felt pressure to make sure that they learned all the facets of the program to assure that they were implementing it appropriately.

While the READ 180 teachers mentioned program knowledge and fidelity as challenges, the teacher that taught the other two hour block emphasized time management as the most challenging aspect.

> "Structuring the time in an effective way….the two hour block, how the time was going to be used….how to break it up and keep attention of the students and keep them on task for two hours…It was hard to work with students individually at first since there was a lot going on in the room."

The final teacher who taught the one period reading program for students with learning disabilities mentioned the students as the biggest challenge.

> "I have some of the lowest level learners who have extenuating disabilities. They often have poor attendance and in general it is hard to conduct class. They have many social and emotional needs that need to be addressed instead of reading sometimes."

There was little consistently between the READ 180 teachers, the language arts and the single period teacher in terms of the greatest challenges in implementing the various reading interventions. The many facets of READ 180 were identified as difficult but at the same time were identified as contributing to high student engagement. Effective use of increased instructional time was identified as difficult by the LD teacher, who didn't have the built in curriculum and materials that READ 180 provided. Finally, the teacher of the single period class identified the extensive and varying needs of the students as the main challenge.

Training/Professional Development

The amount of background and preparation to teach a reading intervention program was quite pronounced as a significant challenge in the teachers' responses. The teacher responses varied from highly technical language about effective reading strategies and best practice to very little mention of instructional strategies. When asked what they

learned about adolescent literacy as a result of involvement in their specific reading intervention, they responded in very different manners. One READ 180 teacher commented in a very general and non-specific manner:

> "I have learned that I do not know quite as much as I previously thought about reading."
>
> "Maturity levels vary drastically and typically the more mature a student acts in class indicates higher levels of reading."
>
> "READ 180, as much as I know about reading has taught me lots...The specifics in the book have taught me to be a better teacher."

The other two teachers, though, responded in a very technical and highly specific manner.

> "Too much to fit into this interview…..Making them understand reading is not easy, and reminding myself that reading is not an easy thing to learn…..It takes lots of practice, patience and hard work….There are so many pieces to teaching reading….The motivational factor is huge and giving them the confidence so they can get through the text….Also, the vocabulary study is huge, and you have to practice it and do it every day…"

> "It has to be something that engages their attention, their likes and dislikes, there are so many components to it and each kid is so unique….As long as they are

> interested in it, that will lead to better comprehension and the desire to read…If they like you, the teacher, they will want to do it to get your approval."

These highly technical answers were from teachers who both taught the READ 180 program, one from each of the junior high schools. Further, one used the READ 180 program with ELL students and the other with students with learning disabilities. One of the teachers had an ESL and English certification background, and the other a special education certification. The more general answers came from teachers who all had certification in special education, specifically learning disabilities.

Teacher background, preparation and training were certainly a factor from the perspectives of the teachers. It had to do with the structure or delivery of the reading intervention as well as the background and strengths of the individual teachers. READ 180 became a means for professional development for those teachers who hadn't had extensive training in reading instruction. Their answers revealed that they learned more about how to teach reading as they implemented the intervention. The multi-leveled materials, diagnostic assessment systems and learning activities improved their knowledge of best practice in reading instruction, and they saw improved student proficiency after implementing those strategies through the use of READ 180.

External Programs—Advantages and Tradeoffs

All five teachers were asked to identify the changes, if any, they would make to their reading intervention program. Not one READ 180 teacher indicated any change related to instructional practice or delivery. Their responses included:

> "No ideas for changes in the reading program…it works out pretty well."
>
> "I would change the "L" shape of the classroom….other than that there are not any changes I would make to READ 180 itself."
>
> "It is an awesome program that keeps kids extremely engaged."

The other teachers, however, identified very specific changes. The teacher of the two period block stated that additional assistance in the classroom would improve the reading program. She had concerns that it was very difficult to give students any one-to-one time when there was only one teacher. It was hard for her to talk to all the students as much as she would have liked. Although all the reading intervention programs had a student-teacher ratio of 10:1 or below, the language arts teacher identified the need for more personnel. Unlike READ 180, instructional time had to be carefully planned by the teacher. There was not a scripted teacher's manual or specific twenty minute rotation as in the READ 180 intervention. In fact there was not even a written district curriculum for the language arts blocks as it was a new intervention program. The instruction was teacher driven based on student need and background knowledge of effective practice.

The teacher of the one-period class for students with learning disabilities indentified materials as the major change. "I would have a lot more books and better organized books. I would have more variety in the types and levels of the books."

The READ 180 program, with its large variety and high number of leveled materials and highly structured program components, was clearly a strength as evidenced by these teacher responses. The READ 180 teachers did not mention any lack of materials nor any need to have additional assistance mainly because the structure of the program kept the students so highly engaged and the small group rotation allowed for individualized instruction. This was further revealed through the question that asked the teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their reading intervention program. All the READ 180 teachers emphasized the time and the structure of the program as strengths. Specifically they all mentioned that the rotations of the program kept students motivated, on task and engaged. One specific teacher mentioned the research behind the READ 180 program.

Time was mentioned as a strength of the two hour language arts block, but it was mentioned as a weakness of the one-period reading class. That teacher specifically stated that there was not enough time to really "drive points home" with the students. She also mentioned that the lack of leveled books was a weakness in her reading program. While time was mentioned as needed, there were also concerns with the ability to use the time. READ 180 made that concern easier for those teachers.

Financial Considerations

The implementation of READ 180 and two hour reading blocks was not without significant financial obligations. The cost of the initial implementation of READ 180 was roughly $50,000 at each junior high school in 2009. This included the initial purchase of computers, software, multi-leveled books for students as well as training materials for teachers. Further, there is a cost each year to Scholastic for maintaining the software and the program, specifically $2100 per year per school. There was cost to the district to maintain equipment. Finally, the program obligated the district to additional staff costs. There was a maximum of eighteen students in each section with a two period teacher assignment per section. This .4 Full Time Equivalency was approximately $32,000 for each section which included teacher salary and benefits.

The two hour language block, while the same in staff costs, did not require the costs to Scholastic or to computers and software. It did involve funding for multi-leveled books; however, funds for the books were secured by the district through a secondary reading initiative federal grant. The district costs for the single period reading classes did not require any additional funding above what had already been in place for many years for students with learning disabilities.

Table 7: Costs Associated with District Reading Interventions

	READ 180	Language Arts Block	Single Period Pullout Class
Instructional Time Staff	$32,000	$32,000	$16,000
Instructional Materials	$25,000	$10,000	Limited—Provided by District
Technology/Software	$25,000 (start up) $5000 yearly	Limited—Whatever Available through School/District	Limited—Whatever Available through School/District

The costs for the initial implementation of READ 180 were significant. There is a yearly charge to Scholastic for maintenance of the software. Technology was purchased through the district and maintained through the district. All staff costs in the table above are approximate based on an average teacher salary, .4 Full Time Equivalency for READ 180 and Language Arts Blocks and .2 Full Time Equivalency for a single period class. Clearly, READ 180 has significant initial funding as well as yearly costs to maintain software, licensing and equipment.

READ 180 is costly to implement and unaffordable for many districts. The staff costs associated with extended time, to implement the READ 180 intervention or a language arts block, are the same? The difference is the structure, materials and technology components that come with READ 180. The time is essential for student growth as both programs contain. Yet, if for districts lacking personnel trained in and

comfortable with implementing effective block instructional reading programs and effective formative assessment systems, READ 180 provides an effective framework for providing research based practices. For district relying on special education funding for teachers to provide reading intensive reading interventions without adequate teacher training and preparation, READ 180 is a sound choice

Sustainability

Data was collected to determine the level of reading proficiency during the same students' eighth grade year, after one full academic year in their seventh grade intervention program.

Table 8: Sustainability

Student	Seventh Grade Intervention	Subgroup	Lexile Growth Jan 2011-Jan 2012	Lexile Grade Level—Jan 2012 Year. Month	WKCE Proficiency Fall 2010-Fall 2011	Eighth Grade Intervention
1	READ 180	ELL	202	5.8	Prof—Prof	English/Reading
2	READ 180	ELL/LD	233	3.9	Basic—Basic	LA Block
3	READ 180	ELL	159	1.6	Min—Min	READ 180
4	READ 180	LD	35	5.5	Prof—Prof	English/Reading
5	LA Block	LD	170	3.0	Basic—Min	LA Block
6	READ 180	LD	(-)113	2.0	Min—Min	LA Block
7	Reading	ELL	23	6.7	Prof—Prof	English
8	Reading	ELL	199	8.2	Prof—Prof	English
9	LD Reading	LD	0	4.1	Basic--Min	Reading

The placement of students into the reading intervention for their eighth grade year was dependent mainly on lexile growth and teacher recommendation. Most teachers moved students from one intervention into another. Of the six students involved in a block intervention program in seventh grade, four remained in an blocked intervention in eighth grade. Most moved from READ 180 to the language arts block. For these four students, this placement supports the research of Greenleaf, et.al (2002) in which they found that

> "students who enter high school reading substantially below grade level will require more than one year of relatively intensive reading intervention to make significant progress toward the grade-level standard in reading…..while it is possible to accelerate reading development in (secondary) struggling readers so that the gap between their skills and the grade-level standard is narrowed…the instructional conditions that accelerate reading growth may need to be extended across several years to make significant progress toward actually closing the gap" (491).

However, for the other two, the movement was questionable. While the students were reading at a fifth grade level, it was still three years below grade level.

For all students little, if any gain was made on the WKCE, yet most students made quite significant exile gains after one full year of the intervention.

Student 1—300
Student 2—246
Student 3—246
Student 4—123
Student 5—314
Student 6—(-) 24
Student 7—75
Student 8—324
Student 9—88

Given that a lexile gain of 50 is equivalent to one year reading growth, based on Scholastic, these students performed quite well. Because more READ 180 students participated in the study, they show significant growth as a group. They were also the students who were at the very lowest proficiency levels at the onset of the intervention.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Nell Duke and Nicole Martin (2011) argue that the phrases "research-based" "research-proven" and "scientifically based" have been misused of late. They contend that a growing number of literacy educators are dismissing research altogether because they believe that it is a "propaganda tool for those trying to push a particular approach to reading and writing instruction"(Duke and Martin, 2011, 9). Their work emphasizes the importance of research as a valuable tool in guiding practice in education, specifically that it can help educators avoid acting on practices that they *think* are correct. Their example is the belief that vocabulary is best learned by looking words up in the dictionary and copying the definitions on paper. Finally, they argue that research helps us to identify blind spots, finding out what we don't know, and to fill in gaps in our knowledge.

This study, while lacking in a scientific base, does have some valuable contributions to make to help improve teaching and learning. The perceptions of students and teachers in regards to what makes a successful reading intervention program provides

another framework from which educators can use as they make important decisions about instruction. Duke and Martin contend that "the educational enterprise is far too complex for one type of research to answer all the questions or meet all the needs" (20). This study, with its small sample sizes and its single survey data collection tool, provides just one snapshot of the varying reading intervention programs in secondary schools and the different perspectives of the stakeholders. It should not be considered as a final conclusion or solution. Rather, it is an inquiry based on two specific research questions. Hopefully the analysis and results are worthy of consideration to other educators.

The previous chapters described the methods and findings of two research questions:

1. From the perspective of students and teachers, what are the attributes of alternative intensive reading interventions that contribute to improved reading proficiency among secondary English Language Learners (ELL) and students with learning disabilities (LD)?

2. What factors contribute to the successes or challenges of implementing these interventions at secondary schools?

Identifying the specific attributes that lead to improved reading proficiency for secondary students is critical given the achievement gaps in our country and the growing financial difficulties district face. Educators must make the best decisions possible with limited resources. The literature review and conceptual framework serve to provide the research behind the most effective literacy practices for secondary students, namely, increased instructional time, direct/explicit reading strategy instruction and leveled

materials. The expectation was that the interviews of the students and teachers, in the reading intervention programs in which these components were embedded, would reveal these components as the most important attributes that led to students' proficiency gains. They did, but there was much more.

The interviews revealed attributes that were indirectly tied to the research. The increased time, the materials and the instruction were components that were identified frequently in both teachers' and students' interviews; yet not as frequently or as directly as would be expected. Other factors including student engagement and motivation, teacher preparation and professional development, and program structure were just as prevalent as contributors to student success.

Guthrie, et. al (1996) found, in their work, that successful reading teachers provided direct instruction in gaining the main idea from paragraphs, summarizing by modeling how to locate topic sentences and supporting information (350). They further assert that

> Without the presence of cognitive and motivational dimensions together, engagement cannot occur. Teaching for reading engagement is an interlocked composite of teaching practices that support the merger of motivation and strategies (332).

The students who showed most significant improvement in reading proficiency were English Language Learners. Most students in the sample were ELL students enrolled in the READ 180 program, yet a few were enrolled in a traditional ESL program. The READ 180 ELL students' interviews were much more rich and comprehensive than the other students. These students, for their age, provided detailed

information about their own reading deficiencies and significant insight into the components of their reading program that helped them improve, mainly vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. While many of these students remained at the minimal and/or basic proficiency level by the end of the year, their growth, as identified by the Scholastic Reading Inventory was noticeable. The following are key findings that emerged through reoccurring themes and factors in both student and teacher interviews.

Key Findings

1. *For secondary reading intervention teachers lacking preparation and/or background in reading instruction, externally developed programs like READ 180 contain program attributes that can provide a means to deliver appropriate instruction.*

This study supports, in small way, the research that suggests that we do not provide adequate professional development for teachers in classrooms with the most struggling readers. The study further suggests that READ 180 has been effective as a professional tool, based on both teacher and student interviews, because it contains prescribed and structured intervention strategies that provide the teachers with a guide to implement research based practices. Teacher responses to the questions about program implementation led to some clear conclusions. All individuals teaching the READ 180

program commented about the structure, variety of activities and extent of reading materials offered. Consequently, because of the structure of the READ 180 program, (the twenty minutes rotations, the individual computerized learning activities and assessment, the quiet independent reading time and the small group discussions), teachers felt that students were more engaged and they were able to address individual students needs.

The teacher teaching the two hour block language arts commented frequently about difficulties filling the time and developing the learning activities. The language arts blocks, teacher driven without the structure and guide of the READ 180, were not as strongly endorsed by either student or teacher.

In many secondary schools, students with learning disabilities and English Language Learners are enrolled in pull out reading programs taught either by an ESL teacher or special education teacher. Research suggests that our most struggling readers are most typically taught by secondary teachers who are the least prepared to teach reading. This study confirms that. Traditional secondary programs for learning disabilities and ELL students have focused on providing support for students to be successful in the regular education setting. This support is typically called the "resource room." They have mainly been tutoring/support programs to assist students on assignments/projects/tests in the regular education environment. Little attention was typically given to the fact that these students simply cannot read nor comprehend the text or directions for assignments. Further, they cannot write at the level expected in the mainstream environment. Resource rooms were a means to assist students in the mainstream regular education environment rather than a place to provide instruction on the reading skills necessary to be successful. These specialized teachers, both ELL and special education, are not only

asked to teach reading, but to develop, implement and monitor Individualized Education Programs or ELL support plans across all content areas. That is difficult work.

Recently educators have responded to the research suggesting that interventions must be in place to bring students to at least close to grade level reading proficiency. Adolescent or secondary literacy has become the focus. In the school district of this study, the emphasis on literacy meant implementing various reading intervention programs including READ 180, blocked language arts classes, reading/writing workshops and ESL English. The journey involved research on effective reading programs, therefore, the intensive reading interventions contained the components of extended time for reading, multi-leveled texts and explicit/direct instruction on vocabulary development, reading fluency and reading comprehension. Yet, the number and variety of reading interventions implemented shows the lack of focus and direction on one program that would be most effective for different learners. Further, not one of the teachers in the interviews had a background in reading instruction; rather, their backgrounds were special education certification, English or ESL certification. Denton, et. al (2003) argue that the key factor underlying successful implementation of reading instruction is how well a teacher integrates these components (comprehension, instruction, vocabulary development, phonological awareness) for individual students. "The consensus reports that the reading wars are over, as it is clear that one philosophical approach does not address the needs of all children" (209). Denton also asserts that explicit instruction does not mean "scripted." While scripted have value in that they reflect carefully constructed instructional sequences, other programs without scripted scope and sequence can be equally effective.

2. *For secondary reading intervention teachers that have been provided adequate preparation for teaching reading, language arts blocks have attributes that can contribute to a successful intervention, particularly for districts lacking the financial obligation associated with READ 180.*

While very small in sample size, this study did provide one example that adequate preparation in the teaching of reading, coupled with extended time and multi-leveled, high interest materials, can allow a teacher to implement an effective intervention without purchasing an external program, such as READ 180.

3. *Time, student engagement and motivation are essential attributes to improved proficiency, from both teacher and student perspectives.*

Extended time in a reading block contributed to improved student engagement, from both the teacher and student perspective. This was quite revealing in this study. Secondary educators must acknowledge and recognize the need to revisit scheduling and requirements in order to provide this extended time. Students must still have opportunities for electives to maintain interest and engagement in school. Yet, reading proficiency must come first. This may require revisiting district grade level requirements in other content areas. Such requirements are important and necessary; yet, we must understand that our most struggling students are students who cannot read, and they need

time in their school day for intensive interventions that involve extended time. We are doing a terrible disservice to our students by not recognizing the importance of time.

4. *The focused attributes of READ 180 provide enrolled students with an awareness of their own deficiencies in reading skills*

Students enrolled in the READ 180 program were students who live in homes where English is not the language spoken, and one student who was in her second year in the United States. These students, at the very low lexile levels and WKCE proficiency levels, made the most significant gains. They also were students who made more positive comments about their reading intervention programs. Their responses revolved around the structured components of READ 180. Their responses to the questions, while limited in language proficiency especially in an interviewing situation, were comprehensive and detailed, revealing an understanding of their own instructional needs and gains. Throughout their answers, specific and essential reading skills such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary development and comprehension and were identified as critical to their own success.

5. *Formative assessment is a critical program attribute for secondary reading proficiency improvement*

Embedded in the READ 180 program is formative assessment; it occurs within the process of teaching and learning in this program. The daily assessment that the students

are involved with in the READ 180 program, whether vocabulary development or comprehension assessments, allowing the teacher to capture students emerging abilities to be supported during the instructional time. Most importantly, it gives teachers that continuous stream of information to differentiate and modify instruction (McLaughlin, 2012). Other forms of formative assessment are included within the READ 180 program daily. The small group and independent reading rotations allow for teacher observation of students reading and talking about text. None of this would work, of course, without the additional time that the two period blocks provides.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study has supported the research that certain subgroups of adolescents, namely ELL and students with disabilities, are lagging significantly behind their peers in reading proficiency and that they are in need of effective interventions. The level at which some of these students are reading makes an effective instructional intervention critical for their future success. This study supports the research suggesting that increased time, leveled materials and focused instruction are essential, and this was identified from the perspectives of both the students and teachers. Yet, it also brings attention to the importance of student engagement and motivation.

The following would be worthy of consideration for policy and practice in secondary schools looking to implement an effective reading intervention program for ELL students and students with learning disabilities:

1. Districts must evaluate what they are asking of secondary special education teachers. The special education teachers in this particular district were responsible for delivering reading interventions to the most struggling students who had significant reading problems. In addition, they were responsible for writing Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for students on their caseload and participating in IEP meetings, evaluations and transitions. Further, they held the responsibility of assuring that those IEPs were delivered appropriately throughout all the students' content areas.

2. Struggling readers, particularly ELL and students with learning disabilities, need extended time during school to read independently. District requirements, scheduling and programming should be considerate of and should revolve around, this need for extended time devoted solely to reading instruction first and foremost.

3. Reading instruction needs for ELL and students with learning disabilities differ. ELL students need more background knowledge experiences, fluency and pronunciation work and vocabulary instruction while many students with learning

disabilities have specific fluency problems preventing their comprehension. Reading intervention programs are not a one size fits all.

4. School administrators must consider the background and preparation of individual teachers when them to reading intervention programs for the most struggling readers. Intervention success is very much based on the extent of reading background of the secondary teacher assigned to the intervention.

5. For teachers who lack adequate preparation for teaching reading to secondary students, READ 180 provides a good foundation. The structured programming, curriculum and materials provide a needed framework for instruction that can allow such teachers to assist students make reading proficiency gains.

6. READ 180 is an engaging program for students for the following reasons:
    a. The 20 minute rotations provide students with variety and movement.
    b. The computer learning activities provide students with activity, immediate feedback, opportunities for self correction and immediate reports of individual progress.
    c. The multi-leveled and high interest books are inviting to students. Students are aware of their lexile levels and the system of that self-knowledge, along with coded books, makes it easy for students to match themselves with high interest and appropriate text.

d. The quiet 20 minute time for independent reading is an activity that many of the students do not get outside of school.

7. READ 180 seems to be an appropriate reading intervention specifically for ELL students. ELL students enrolled in the READ 180 program made significant gains. The wealth and variety of vocabulary and background knowledge embedded into the program is of benefit to these learners as it meets their vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation needs.

8. Districts must devote time and energy to delivering programs that are grounded in research and based on the needs of specific learners. Our subgroups of populations have varying needs for reading instruction, and one specific external or internal program may not meet all of their unique needs.

Contributions and Limitations of the Study

It is my hope that the contribution of this study is to provide a different lens by which to learn more about effective reading instruction at the secondary level. While there are many different kinds of secondary reading programs available, the perspectives of the teachers and students were somewhat straightforward, at least in this study. Adequate time, adequate teacher preparation, and appropriate delivery met the student and teacher needs and increased student engagement and motivation.

The following topics and questions arise as a result of the limitations of this study:

1. Reliance on Scholastic Reading Inventory and WKCE—Would an additional reading assessment provide a better overall picture?
2. Sample Size—Would a larger study produce similar findings?
3. Achievement Gaps--What is preventing similar growth for other students?
4. Sustainability--Will these students be prepared for high school courses?
5. Teacher Preparation/Secondary Staffing and Scheduling—Are school districts ready to reevaluate practices?

This study is very limited in its scope, and that is recognized. Certainly a larger sample size for both students and teachers, as well as a broader representation of other reading interventions, would provide a more in depth picture. The study does represent a dilemma that many administrators face, providing the most effective interventions for the most needy students. While further research is needed, this study provides important insights about some of the critical trade-offs and core components of alternative reading interventions for struggling secondary school readers.

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Appendices

A. Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Attributes of Two Alternative Reading Interventions that Contribute to Improved Reading Proficiency among Secondary English Language Learners and Students with Learning Disabilities.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Carolyn Kelley(phone: 608-263-5733) (email:kelley@education.wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Connie Negaard (phone: 715 345-5620)(email: cnegaard@wisp.k12.wi.us)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You and your child are invited to participate in a research study about effective reading programs for junior high school students.

Your child has been asked to participate because he/she is enrolled in one of two reading programs, READ 180 or a two hour language arts block. Further, your child has experienced success in one of these programs, and this study is an attempt to determine the attributes of the reading program that contributed to your child's improved reading skills.

This study will include seventh grade students in a special education language arts class and English Language Learners (students whose home language is not English).

Your child will participate in a thirty minute interview in a conference room at school. He/she has been selected based on reading achievement gains that he/she experienced this year. These gains are reflected in your child's Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE), the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) assessment results as well as his/her report card. These records are all in your child's cumulative folder at Ben Franklin Junior High School. These records will be reviewed and analyzed by a graduate research assistant from the University of Wisconsin--Stevens Point. Further, this graduate research assistant will interview your child. The questions will revolve around what your student believes contributed to his/her reading improvement. All

student responses will be coded by the interviewer, the graduate research assistant from UWSP. No student names will be used in the text of the research paper, and all data will be kept confidential.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you and your child decide to participate in this research, your child will be asked to answer questions about his/her reading program, his/her reading progress, his/her reading skills and behaviors, and his/her grades.

Your child will be asked to complete one interview conducted by a graduate research assistant from the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point.

Your child's participation will last approximately 30 minutes per session and will require 1 session which will require 30 minutes in total.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

We don't anticipate any risks to your child or to you from participation in this study. Because I am a principal in the district, the graduate student will review all data and conduct all interviews to eliminate any pressure or anxiety and to maintain complete confidentiality of student responses.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There are no direct benefits to participation in my study. Students participating in this study will be helping educators determine the most effective reading programs for secondary students.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your child's name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Carolyn Kelley, at 608 263-5733 or email kelley@education.wisc.edu. You may also call the researcher, Connie Negaard at 715 345-5620 or email cnegaard@wisp.k12.wi.us.

If you are not satisfied with the response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study, it will have no effect on any services or treatment you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and have voluntarily consented to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature Student Date

Name of Parent (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature Parent Date

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
KEV NTSHAWB FAWB THIAB KEV TSO CAI

Lub Npe Kev Kawm: Qhia txog kev kawm ntawv thiab nyeem ntawv kom tau zoo rau cov menyuam kawm lus askiv uas yog cov lus tib ob ntawm txhua haivneeg (Two Alternative Reading Interventions to improved Reading Proficiency among Secondary English Language Learner) thiab rau cov menyuam uas muaj kev kawm qeeb (Learning Disabilities).

Thawj tswj saib kev ntshawb fawb: Principal Investigator: Dr. Carolyn Kelley

Tus ntshawb cov menyuam kev kawm: Student Researcher: Connie Negaard

Kev qhia txog kev ntshawb cov kev kawm

Peb xav caw koj thiab koj tus menyuam nrog koom tes thiab ntshawb fawb kev pab los ntawm qhov kev nyeem ntawv no. Xav tshawb cov tsev kawm ntawv junior high school kom txawj qhia menyuam thiab txawj nyeem ntawv tau zoo.

Koj tus menyuam tau raug xaiv vim nws yog ib tus uaS tab tom kawm hoob nyeem ntawv Reading 180 no. Hoob no muaj kawm ob teev tuaj ib hnub txhua lub asthiv thiab koj tus menyuam kawm thiab txawj pab tau nws nyeem ntawv zoo.

Hoob no muaj cov menyuam tshwjxeeb uas nyob hoob xya thiab cov menyuam uas kawm lus askiv uas yog cov lus thib ob. Cov menyuam uas hais lub tom tsev tsis yog lus askiv.

Peb yuav muaj kev noog thiab teb los ntawm koj tus menyuam li 30 feeb hauv tsev kawm ntawv no. Peb yuav xaiv thiab noog tus menyuam kev kawm zoo li cas thiab txawj ntau npaum li cas lawm.
Cov tuaj ntshawb fawb no yog cov kawm tiav thiab tuaj tom University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Txhua tus menyuam uas peb xaiv thiab muaj npe yuav tsis pub sau thiab qhia rau daim ntawv ntshawb no. Peb yuav tsum zais lawv lub npe, tsis pub qhia rau lwm tus neeg paub.

Kuv koom muaj dabtsi?

Yog koj thiab koj tus menyuam txiav txim siab koom qhov kev ntshawb no, peb yuav noog thiab kom tus menyuam teb saib qhov kev kawm nyeem ntawv (program) no pab thiab txhawb nws npaum li cas.
Cov yuav tuaj ntshawb fawb no yog tuaj tom University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point thiab yuav siv sijhawm li 30 feeb rau ib qhov kev noog.

Puas muaj teeb meem rau kuv?

Peb tsis pub muaj teebmeem rau koj thiab koj tus menyuam vim nov yog ib qhov kev txaus siab ntawm koj thiab peb. Peb tsis yuam cai.

Pab tau kuv li ca?

Pab tsis tau rau kuv tus uas tuaj ntshawb fawb, tabsis pab tau cov uas yuav kawm thiab txawj ua kom zoo lawm yav tom ntej.

Yauv tiv thaiv kuv li cas?

Yuav qhia rau lwm tus txawj kawm zoo. Peb yuav tiv thaiv thiab tsis pub cov menyuam npe sau rau daim ntshawb fawb no. Peb yuav zais lawv lub npe, tsis pub qhia rau lwm tus neeg paub.

Leej twg thiaj teb tau?

Yog koj muaj lus noog thiab tsis tau taub yam twg. Lossis koj xav paub txog cov kev ntshawb fawb no, koj muaj cai hu tuaj noog thiab nrog cov thawj nram no tham:
Principal Investigator, Dr. Carolyn Kelley
Xob tooj: 608 263-7533 Email:Kelley@eduacation.wisc.edu.
Student Researcher: Connie Negaard
Xov tooj: 715 345-5620 Email: cnegaard @wisp.k12.wi.us
Yog koj tsis txaus siab rau qhov kev ntshawb fawb no thiab xav paub ntxiv, thov hu rau Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office: 608 263-2320.
Koj muaj txoj cai xaiv thiab koom tes yog tsis muaj teeb meem rau koj thiab koj tus menyuam.
Yog koj txaus siab rau peb txoj kev ntshawb fawb no, thov koj suam npe rau hauv qab no thiab tso cai rau peb. Peb mam li xa ib daim (copy) rau koj thaum koj suam daim kev tso cai no tuaj.

Tus menyuam Koom tes lub npe:_____
Menyuam suam npe:_____Hnub tim_____
Niamtxiv npe:_____
Niamtxiv suam npe:_____Hnub tim_____

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Student Researcher: Connie Negaard (phone: 715 345-5620) (email: cnegaard@wisp.k12.wi.us)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about effective reading programs for junior high school students.

You have been asked to participate because one or more students enrolled in your seventh grade reading intervention program have demonstrated significant gains in reading proficiency while enrolled in your reading program. This study is an attempt to determine the attributes of the reading program that contributed to your students' improved reading skills.

This study will include seventh grade students enrolled in the special education language arts/reading class and the English Language Learners (students whose home language is not English) enrolled in the READ 180 reading intervention program.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

Your participation in this study will involve a thirty minute interview in a conference room at school. Questions will resolve around your perceptions of the attributes of the reading programs that you believe contributed to your student's improved reading proficiency. You will be interviewed by a graduate research assistant from the University of Wisconsin--Stevens Point. This third party individual will coordinate the time and date of the interview and will keep all information confidential. Your responses will be coded by the interviewer. No names will be used in the text of the research paper, and all data will be kept confidential. The researcher will only receive typewritten responses submitted by the graduate assistant after all interviews have taken place.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

We don't anticipate any risks to you from participation in this study because a third party will be conducting the interviews and transcribing and coding all responses to maintain confidentiality.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There are no direct benefits to participation in my study. Students and teachers participating in this study will be helping to determine the most effective reading programs for secondary students.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published. All responses to the interview questions will be transcribed and coded. Confidentiality of all individuals will be maintained by a third party.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Carolyn Kelley, at 608 263-5733 or email kelley@education.wisc.edu. You may also call the researcher, Connie Negaard at 715 345-5620 or email cnegaard@wisp.k12.wi.us.

If you are not satisfied with the response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study, it will have no effect on any of your current responsibilities.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and have voluntarily consented to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

B. Surveys

Student Interview Questions

Student Identification Number for Study_____

1. What about (specific reading intervention) do you believe has helped improve your reading?

2. Do you think your improved reading skills have helped you in your other classes? If so, how?

3. Do you read outside of school?

4. What do you choose to read?

5. Who do you talk to about what you have read?

6. How do you choose something to read?

7. What do you think about your reading skill?

8. How has your feeling about reading changed since enrollment in (specific reading intervention)?

9. Has reading become easier for you? How so?

10. What is the best part of your reading class?

Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Identification Number for Study_____

1. You have several students who made significant reading gains during their enrollment in your reading class. In your opinion, what are the main factors that contributed to this success?

2. Do you think your students who have experienced these gains have their performance in other content area classes? If so, how?

3. What challenges did you face in the implementation of your reading program?

4. Describe the level of student engagement you experience in your reading class.

5. What affective changes, if any, have you seen among the students who have made significant gains in their reading proficiency.

6. What changes, if any, would you make in your reading program?

7. How do you manage your instructional time in your reading program?

8. Describe your assessment system/procedures in your reading program.

9. Describe the strengths/weakness of your reading program.

10. Describe student motivation in your reading program.

11. What have you learned about adolescent literacy as a result of your involvement in your reading program?