

University of Memphis

University of Memphis Digital Commons

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

2019

**READING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY TEACHERS WHOSE STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY PASSED THE THIRD GRADE READING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**

Sebrina Shantell Perkins

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd>

---

**Recommended Citation**

Perkins, Sebrina Shantell, "READING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY TEACHERS WHOSE STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY PASSED THE THIRD GRADE READING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI" (2019). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2709.

<https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd/2709>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by University of Memphis Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of Memphis Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [khggerty@memphis.edu](mailto:khggerty@memphis.edu).

READING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY TEACHERS WHOSE STUDENTS  
SUCCESSFULLY PASSED THE THIRD GRADE READING SUMMATIVE  
ASSESSMENT IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

by

Sebrina Shantell Perkins

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Leadership and Policy Studies

The University of Memphis

May 2019

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who made the completion of this endeavor possible.

You have helped me to develop into the person I am today through your unending support and encouragement.

## Acknowledgements

*“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak”* (Isaiah 49:29). I give all the glory to God. He was there from the beginning to the end. Great is thy Faithfulness. It is a pleasure to thank those who made the completion of this endeavor possible. I continuously give thanks to my Heavenly Father who has continued to give me strength to persevere through this process. I would like to thank my family and friends for their love, support, and understanding on this journey. A special thanks to my mother, Annette Jackson and my father, Michael Jackson. Thanks for all your continuous support, inspiration, and love. You both have kept me focused on the end goal throughout this entire program, and it is because of you both that I was able to complete this dissertation.

To my friends and cohort members, Dr. Kendra Hightower and Dr. Ashlesha Lokhande, thank you all for your friendship and for making this endeavor possible. I would not be here today if it were not for you both. You women have helped me to develop into the person I am today through your unending support, and encouragement.

I would also like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Reginald L. Green, as well as my committee members, Dr. J. Helen Perkins, Dr. Derrick Robinson, and Dr. Donald Hopper, for leading and guiding me through this arduous process. Thank you for your thoughtful comments throughout the writing process, your support for my topic, and pushing me to think in new ways. Each of you, at different times and in many ways, were instrumental in seeing this dissertation through to its completion. Thank you for all of your support and assistance. Finally, I would like to thank all the educators and students who have had such a profound impact on me. You have helped to shape the practitioner that I am. Thus, I dedicate this study to all of the educators that embark on the best practices and have a will to do what is best for students. I am forever grateful

that we are able to learn and grow together to become teacher leaders and share our love of professional growth.

## **Abstract**

Perkins, Sebrina, Ed.D. The University of Memphis. May 2019. Reading Strategies Implemented by Teachers whose Students Successfully Passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment in the State of Mississippi

Major Professor: Reginald Leon Green, Ph.D.

The low income and poverty-stricken areas of Mississippi have historically suffered from low-test scores, low graduation rates, and a high concentration of special education students. Additionally, poor, Black Mississippians have performed lower, have lower graduation rates, and score lower in college readiness than do students in the rest of the nation. Similar, Mississippi continues to rank last or near the bottom on national measures of reading achievement. To reverse this trend, in 2013 the Mississippi State Legislature passed the Literacy- Based Promotion Act to improve the literacy skills of students beginning in kindergarten and extending through third grade. The law requires every school district in the state to provide a strong reading-intensive based curriculum, as well as interventions for students displaying a substantial deficiency in reading. The law also mandate that school districts deny promotion from third to fourth grade for any student whose deficiency in reading is not remediated before the end of third grade. While many students are successful and are promoted to fourth grade, a large percentage of third grade students are being retained as they may not pass the required summative assessment.

The researcher used a qualitative case study design to identify the strategies and practices implemented by third grade teachers whose students passed the summative reading assessment and were promoted to fourth grade. Fifteen third- grade reading teachers from multiple school districts in Mississippi participated in the study. From an analysis of the fifteen teacher's

interviews, five strategies emerged that were implemented by teachers whose students passed the assessment.

These strategies correlate with the National Reading Panel's five noted strategies and practices that lead to successful reading instruction.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, reading strategy usage, third grade reading, scaffolding, sociocultural theory, schema theory, prison-to-school-pipeline*

## Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction of Study	1
Background of Study	2
Statement of Problem	7
Purpose of Study	9
Research Question	10
Theoretical Framework	11
Definition of Terms	16
Limitation	19
Significant of the Study	19
Organization of the Study	19
2. Review of Literature	20
Other Effective Literacy Practices	30
Reading Comprehension Strategies	36
Literacy Components	44
Literacy and Illiteracy	45
School-to-Prison Pipeline	46
Teacher Quality	50
Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act	52
3. Methodology	57
Introduction	57
Review of Statement of the Problem	58
Research Design	59
Subject Selection and Description	60
Instrument	61
Data Collection	62
Data Analysis	63
4. Data Analysis	65
Introduction	65
Background	67
Data Collection	68
Data Analysis Procedures	69



Finding	71
5. Discussion of Finding and Conclusion	83
Introduction	83
Themes from the Study	85
Conclusion	92
Implication for Practice	93
Recommendation for Further Study	95
Reflection of the Researcher	95
References	97
Appendix A: Interview Protocol	129
Appendix B: Sample Principal Recruitment Email	130
Appendix C: Sample Teacher Recruitment Email	131
Appendix D: Consent to Participate in a Research Study	132
Appendix E: IRB Renewal Approval Email	135
Appendix F: IRB Modification Approval Email	136

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction to the Study**

Today, reading and literacy are critical skills; they are the foundational skills for learning other subjects. Literacy is defined by the International Literacy Association (2016), as “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context” (para. 1). Not only do they serve as an essential foundational skill to learning, but it is also highly correlated to academic success. Between third and fourth grade, a critical transition takes place. The premise is that in grades Pre-k through third grade students are learning to read, and in grades 4<sup>th</sup> and above, students read to learn (Goerge, Gwynne, Lesnick, & Smithgall, 2010; Green, 1995). Students who are not reading with comprehension by the time they exit third grade are likely to be challenged when attempting to successfully master other subjects (Goerge et al., 2010; Green, 1995). For poor and minority students of color, this phenomenon is compounded as students who exit third grade unable to read with comprehension are disproportionately poor students of color. There is a 29-point gap between students from higher-and lower-income families (Center for Public Education, 2015) and a 25-point gap between minorities and non-minorities (Fiester, 2013). Consequently, students entering fourth grade unable to read with comprehension has become a national concern.

Reading is fundamental to achievement, and it is associated with prominent educational policies (e.g., federal funding, teacher credentialing, No Child Left Behind [NCLB], standards, assessment, and accountability) (Young, Shepley, & Song, 2010). Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers all agree that third grade is a critical pivot point in which children go from

“learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Children who do not read proficiently at this point tend to fall behind and are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their reading-proficient peers (Helios Education Foundation, 2014). According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 35 percent of fourth graders across the country are proficient in reading. This is a crisis (Lu, 2013). As a result, both the federal and state governments are open to considering new policy concepts that may be implemented to improve students’ reading performance.

### **Background of Study**

The high-stakes assessments that control progression through elementary, middle, and high school and determine entrance to college are in large parts, a measure of reading comprehension skills. Consequently, more than 8 million U.S. students in grades 4-12 struggle to read, write and comprehend adequately (Guensburg, 2006). According to the 2004 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only three out of ten eighth graders read at or above grade level. The National Center for Education Statistics also reported that only three-fourths of high school students graduated in four years in 2003. Surprisingly in 2002, just over half of African American and Hispanic students graduated at all (Guensburg, 2006).

Falling behind in school has severe consequences for life outcomes. Adults with lower levels of literacy and education are more likely to be unemployed or to earn an income that falls below the poverty level (Kutner et al., 2007; Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Additionally, adults without a high school diploma or postsecondary education are more likely to be incarcerated than adults with higher levels of education (Harlow, 2003). In summary, literacy represents a key factor of academic, social, and economic success (Snow, Burns, & Griffin,

1998). Two of the reasons for the lack of literacy skills are students drop out and student retention.

The strongest school-related predictor of dropping out is poor academic performance. According to a special report, *Early Warning*, from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, ...the process of dropping out begins long before high school. It stems from a loss of interest in middle school, often triggered by retention in grade... and that, in a great many cases, is the result of not being able to read proficiently as early as fourth grade. (p. 5)

Students who drop out frequently identify reading comprehension as their primary reason for their inability to achieve academically (Creech, 2000). Students who read with comprehension by the time they exit third grade are four times more likely to graduate by the age of 19 than those who do not. Add poverty to the equation, and a student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time than his or her proficient peers (Sparks, 2011). Likewise, grade retention is a significant factor for students leaving school. Students who repeat a grade are twice as likely to drop out, and this likelihood increases to four times for students who repeat more than one grade (Woods, 1995).

Researchers are speaking to why students may not read. They revealed two reasons: some students have a disability that makes reading difficult, and other students come to school without the literacy experiences they need to become proficient readers. Thus, these students struggle because they have received poor or inadequate reading instruction (Francis, 1996; Shaywitz, Escobar, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Makuch, 1992). The Barksdale Institution (2015) acknowledges five components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Because of the impact that these components have on a student's ability to read

with comprehension, there have been numerous intervention programs for these five components of literacy implemented by schools and school districts to address the national reading problem. Some of these programs are: Read Well, Corrective Reading, Soar to Success, Reading Horizon, Early Reading Intervention, the Orton-Gillingham Souday System Program Reading Intervention, and iReady and Response to Intervention. Nevertheless, after decades of reading research and reading interventions, there is still a major reading crisis, especially for Black students, which warrants national attention (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). As it has been previously stated, poor reading skills are correlated to poverty during adulthood (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010), prison incarceration rates (Kunjufu, 2005), dropping out of school, and struggling academically in other subjects besides reading (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). Black youth are overrepresented in these groups and become trapped in the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Children's Defense Fund, 2007).

There is a strong connection between early low literacy rates, high school dropout rates, crime, and our country's exploding incarceration rate. Every year, thousands of young people experience a direct path from schools to juvenile detention centers and then ultimately to prison. Youth of color, Hispanics, Latinos, and African Americans in particular, are at the greatest risk of being pushed out of schools and into the streets, the juvenile justice system, and into adult prisons (Wald and Losen, 2003; NAACP, 2005; Advancement Project, 2005; Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Heitzeg, 2009). This injustice has become so alarming that scholars, children advocates, and community activists now refer to it as "the school-to-prison pipeline" (Wald and Losen, 2003; NAACP, 2005; Advancement Project, 2005; Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Heitzeg, 2009). The school- to- prison pipeline refers to the pattern of tracking students out of educational institutions, primarily through zero tolerance policies, and directly or indirectly into

the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems (Heitzeg, 2014). It disproportionately impacts poor students of color, especially African American, and students with disabilities who are suspended, retained, or expelled at the highest rates, despite comparable rates of infractions (Witt 2007; Heitzeg, 2009). Consequently, there has been a dramatic increase in the U.S. prison population over the last 40 years. The United States currently has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Over 2.4 million people are either in state or federal prisons and jails (PEW, 2008; Heitzeg, 2009). Despite no statistical differences in rates of offending, the poor, the under-educated, and people of color, particularly African Americans, are over-represented in statistics at every phase of the criminal justice system (Walker, Spohn & DeLone, 2012; PEW, 2008). According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy Prison Survey results, a large number of incarcerated adults fall into the lowest two levels of reading proficiency. This means they lack the reading skills needed to navigate many everyday tasks, or they are only able to hold down anything but lower paying jobs (Greenberg, Dunleavy, and Kutner, 2007). Data supports that those without sufficient income earned by working are the ones most prone to crime.

Researchers have found that 75 percent of students identified with reading problems in the third grade still struggle with reading in the ninth grade (Francis, 1996; Shaywitz, Escobar, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Makuch, 1992), and that students with poor word identification skills in the third grade were unlikely to significantly improve their reading skills by the end of eighth grade (Felton & Wood, 1992). Thus, meeting increased educational demands becomes more difficult for students who struggle to read.

Poverty continues to be a severe problem throughout the United States (Levin & Riffel, 2000). It impacts all races, and its impact of poverty on education and student achievement may be devastating (Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004). In 2005, Latino and Black

children had higher rates of poverty in terms of percentages while white children had the highest number, 11.1 million (NCCP, 2006). Often children from poverty attend the poorest schools, have little options for choice, and are taught by teachers who are not highly qualified by any definition (Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004). The U.S. Census Bureau (2005) reported that the total number of families living in poverty was 7.6 million. With such staggering numbers of children from poverty attending public schools, finding ways to organize the system for success has become a clear priority for educators and policymakers (Duncan et al., 1998). Many states are seeking practices educators may use to address this educational crisis and improve the reading comprehension level of students who are transitioning from third grade to fourth grade. One such state is Mississippi.

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2014) records, 44% of the states' 1,097 schools are located in rural areas, within one of the poorest regions in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2012; Mississippi Center for Public Policy, 2012). These school districts face challenges such as low reading and math scores, high concentrations of students living in poverty, and a critical shortage of teachers (Mississippi Center for Public Policy, 2012). According to the 2016 United States Census Bureau, Mississippi had a poverty level of 20.8%, based on a three-year average between 2004-2015, the highest in the nation. In 2017, the poverty level was 19.8 %, leading as the forty-ninth most impoverished state in the United States and fifth in the nation in K-12 Achievement (United States Census Bureau, 2017). As further evidence of poverty, 73.7% of all students are on free or reduced lunch in schools (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

The low income and poverty-stricken areas of Mississippi have historically suffered from low-test scores, low graduation rates, and a high concentration of special education students

(Kober & Usher, 2012). Additionally, poor, Black Mississippians have performed lower, have lower graduation rates, and score lower in college readiness than do students in the rest of the nation (Al-Fadhli & Singh, 2010; NAEP, 2013). Similar, Mississippi continues to rank last or near the bottom on national measures of reading achievement (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015; Smith & Narrett, 2013). As a result, the State Legislature has taken significant steps toward improving children's reading achievement (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

In 2013, the Mississippi State Legislature passed the Literacy-Based Promotion Act. The Literacy-Based Promotion Act focuses on improving literacy skills beginning in kindergarten and extending through third grade. The law requires every school district in the state to provide a strong reading-intensive based curriculum, as well as an intervention, for students displaying a substantial deficiency in reading. The law also mandates that school districts deny promotion from third grade to fourth grade for any student whose deficiency in reading is not remediated (Mississippi Center for Education Innovation, 2014).

Since 2014, Mississippi students in kindergarten through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade have shown annual improvement in reading skills. Mississippi is now 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for gains in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading on NAEP (from 2007-2017) (Mississippi Department of Education, 2018). As a result, many students are successful and are promoted to fourth grade. However, a large percentage of third-grade students in Mississippi are retained as they may not read with comprehension or pass the required summative assessment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Because reading is the gateway skill to further learning, children who may read proficiently seldom catch up academically and often fail to graduate on time from high school or



drop out altogether. In fact, a national study correlating dropout rates with reading ability, poverty, and race or ethnicity among third-graders found that striving readers accounted for about a third of the students studied but represented more than three-fifths of those who eventually dropped out or failed to graduate on time (Hernandez, 2011).

Many students are successful and are promoted to fourth grade. However, a large percentage of third-grade students in Mississippi are retained as they may not read with comprehension or pass the required summative assessment. During the 2015-2016 school year, 37,831 third grade students took the Third-Grade Reading Summative Assessment; however, 5,612 students failed (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). The Center for Public Education (2015) acknowledges that if children have not established basic reading skills by the end of third grade, it might seem logical to hold them back a year; consequently, that has been common practice, though controversial. Students who are held back a year face lower achievement and poorer social-emotional outcomes than students who are promoted. Also, they are more likely to drop out of school (as cited in the Center for Public Education, 2015). Consequently, there is a need to identify and implement practices and strategies that will assist students to read with comprehension by the time they exit third grade. Educators may equip readers with the tools they need to help them construct meaning and comprehend the texts they read. According to a guide from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), a part of the U.S. Department of Education, students beginning in kindergarten through third grade should learn how to use instructional strategies to improve reading comprehension (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgesen, 2010).

Instead of reconciling the differences between strategies and practices, researchers, educators, and publishers simply utilize them together to be comprehensive. For analysis and

discussion, the terms instructional strategies and instructional practices are implemented synonymously. For the purpose of this study, instructional strategies are defined as techniques teachers use to help students become independent, strategic learners (Alberta Learning, 2005). According to Alberta Learning (2005), these strategies become learning strategies when students independently select the appropriate ones and use them effectively to accomplish tasks or meet goals. Instructional strategies may: motivate students and help them focus attention, organize information for understanding and remembering, and monitor and assess learning.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine instructional strategies that effective teachers in Mississippi implemented to achieve success with students who are reading with comprehension and successfully passed the summative assessment. The researcher also sought to determine what specific practices and strategies were being implemented by effective teachers to get students reading on grade level and passing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment.

The importance of a good teacher may not be emphasized enough. Many state, federal, and district policies are designed to promote teacher quality. Research on utilizing students' achievement scores on standardized assessment confirmed that some teachers are more effective than others and being taught by an effective teacher has essential outcomes for student achievement (RAND Corporation, 2012).

Effective teachers are best identified by their performance, despite the common perception of effective teachers can be identified based on where they went to school, whether they are licensed, or how long they have taught (RAND Corporation, 2012). The RAND Corporation (2012) disclosed that the best way to measure teachers' effectiveness is to look at their on-the-

job performance, including what they do in the classroom and how much progress their students make on achievement tests.

In the state of Mississippi, legislators have passed a retention policy that requires all 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students to be reading on grade level before entering 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Data from the Mississippi Department of Education 2015- 2016 Student Assessment Data revealed that 87 percent of current third-grade students are reading on grade level, scoring at least 926 on the summative assessment, and 13 percent of students are not ready for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Thus, a number of students are retained as they may not read with comprehension or pass the required assessment. If some students are learning to read prior to exiting 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the question becomes what strategies effective teachers are implementing to teach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to read.

Research confirmed that teachers have extensive impacts on their students' academic and life-long success (e.g., Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). Mendro, Jordan, and Bembray (1998) found that students who received 3 consecutive years of high-quality instruction, or effective teaching, made 40% larger gains than students who received low-quality instruction for 3 consecutive years (as cited in Stronge, 2011). For the purpose of this study, students' test performance on the end-of-grade Reading Summative Assessment was used to define an effective teacher. An effective teacher is one who had 95% of their students to meet LBPA (Literacy-Based Promotion Act) passing score on the previous year exam.

### **Research Question**

The following research question was addressed in the study:

- *What specific instructional strategies do effective teachers in the state of Mississippi implement to teach reading to students who passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment?*

## **Theoretical Framework**

Two theories serve as the underlying framework of this study: sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934/1986; Wertsch 1991) and the schema theory (Barlett, 1932; Rumelhalt, 1980; Carrell, 1981). These theoretical frames are relevant to the study because learning is understood as social interaction involving learners and how teachers mediate learning. Both concepts are discussed in the subsequent sections.

## **Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural theory, based heavily on the work of Vygotsky (1934/1986), ascertains that learning and language development are rooted in experiences, dialogue, and social interactions with others and may not be separated from a social context. The sociocultural theory states that without social interaction with other more knowledgeable peers, cognitive development will not occur (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 199; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Vygotsky's (1934/1986) theory of language development emphasizes that the primary function of speech is social contact and that the social and cultural nature of development is dependent on a child's interaction with adults. Effective teacher seeks out the social and cultural knowledge and experiences that students already have and make connections to classroom instruction. The nature of social interactions allows children to observe and participate in the language and culture of those that are around them. Vygotsky (1934/1986) posited that communication is a precursor before a child may mentally organize thoughts and higher mental functions may not be developed without actually

engaging in speech. His conception of the “zone of proximal development” explains this idea. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a central concept in sociocultural theory that explains the important role of teachers as interceders and is at the heart of the concept of scaffolding (Clark & Graves, 2004; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

The "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) is defined as the gap between what may be done without assistance and what may be performed with little support from the teachers. The concept focuses on socio-cultural interaction and scaffolding. The ZPD was considered for this study because it relates to students at hand levels of understanding. This means that background knowledge, communication, and relationships are essential to learning. Learning is successful in situations where social interaction is encouraged between the teacher and students. Moreover, individual learning occurs in a rich social context and with the support of scaffolding (Clark & Graves, 2004; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Scaffolding is described as the process through which the teacher supports the learner. It helps students to extend their knowledge through practicing skills with support and help from the teacher. The main aim of reading is to comprehend what is being read (Goodman & Goodman, 2009, p.92). Scaffolding helps teachers activate learners’ prior knowledge which will help with their understanding of the text. In the classroom, scaffolding can include modeling a skill, providing hints or using cues, and adapting material or activities (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Other examples of scaffolding include the following: prompts, questions, hints, models, visual scaffolding including pointing, representational gestures, diagrams, and other methods of highlighting visual information (Alibali, 2006). Vygotsky (1978) also viewed interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. He suggested that teachers use cooperative learning exercises where less knowledgeable children learn with help from more

knowledgeable peers as an effective way of developing these skills and strategies (McLeod, 2012).

Sociocultural theorists view reading as a social skill which requires active participation and interaction of the learner (Lantolf, 2006; Remi & Lawrence, 2012). An understanding of the sociocultural construction of literacy is essential because people identify themselves and their language within their culture (Delpit, 2006). Although the common conception of literacy development is the acquisition of a series of discrete skills, a sociocultural view of literacy argues that literacy learning may not be abstracted from the cultural practices in which it is nested (Razfar and Gutierrez, 2003).

This concept of literacy is one that includes efforts to understand children's cultures, including what counts as knowledge in their homes and neighborhoods (New, 2003). It also values the literacy experiences and knowledge that students bring to school and validates students as successful literate participants in the classroom. In relation to this study, the goal is for teachers to negotiate and share meanings about texts and the classroom community with the students, based on the language abilities that children automatically bring into the learning environment. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to understand how language and sociocultural factors support cognitive styles and the development of students who are viewed through an autonomous lens as deficient based on their literacy skills (Street, 1985; New, 2003; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000).

### **The Schema Theory**

The Schema theory posits that reading comprehension is an interactive process between the text that is read and the reader's pre-existing knowledge (Wallace, 2003; Rumelhart, 1980).

Therefore, reading comprehension depends on how a reader interprets and makes meaning of words when reading the text (Grabe, 2004). Reading comprehension research over the years has been profoundly influenced by the schema theory. The schema theory explains how information we have stored in our minds help us gain new knowledge.

The term schema was first introduced by psychologist Barlett in 1932 as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences" (p. 201). It was later introduced in reading by Rumelhart (1980), Carrell (1981) and Hudson (1982) when discussing the importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension. Rumelhart (1980) defined schema as "a data structure for representing the genetic concepts stored in memory " (p. 34). Medin and Russ (1992) defined schema as "a general knowledge structure used for understanding" (p. 246). However, for this study, schemas, or schema as they are sometimes known, is defined as "cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in long-term memory" (Widdowson, 1983).

The schema theory assumes that written text does not carry meaning by itself. Instead, a text only provides directions for readers as to how they should construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge or background knowledge. The previously obtained knowledge structures are called schemata (Barlett, 1932; Adams and Collins, 1979; Rumelhart, 1980). The schema theory argues that comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Therefore, efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge (Huang, 2009).

Prior knowledge plays a vital role in readers' ability to comprehend text. A reader's prior knowledge may come from their experiences or from reading. When a reader activates his or her

prior knowledge, he or she is linking what they already know to what they are currently reading and learning (Alfaki & Siddiek, 2013). Cooper (2000) explains that the interaction between the reader and the text is the foundation of comprehension. A text does not carry meaning all by itself. The reader brings information, emotion, culture, and most importantly, knowledge to the printed word (Brown 2001). This knowledge includes an understanding of the world, an understanding of language structures, and knowledge of texts and forms they take in terms of genre and organization. In the process of comprehending, readers relate the new information presented by the author to old information stored in their minds (Cooper, 2000). When the student may connect what he or she is reading with something already known or understand, prior knowledge is being utilized to make sense of the new information (Cooper, 2000).

There are three different types of schemata that have been suggested: 1) formal schemata, 2) content schemata, and 3) cultural schemata. Formal schema refers to the background knowledge of the organizational structures in ways in which different genres are presented to a reader (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983). Content schema refers to the background knowledge of the content area of the text (Carreli and Eisterhold, 1983, p. 80). It contains conceptual knowledge about what usually happens within a particular topic and how these happenings relate to each other to form a coherent whole (Carreli and Eisterhold, 1983). Richard et al. (2000) defined culture schema as the beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and social habits of members of a particular society. Studies by Johnson (1981) and Carreli (1981) found that the implicit cultural knowledge presupposed by a text interacts with the reader's own cultural background knowledge of content to make texts whose content is based on one's culture easier to read and understand than syntactically and linguistically equivalent text based on a less familiar, more distant culture. In essence, different groups may interpret the same texts differently because of their cultural



experiences (Steffenson, et al., 1979). Therefore, it is important for a teacher to be sensitive to the cultural differences of students because, without such cultural awareness, there may be no adequate and total comprehension on the part of the students. Research on the theory of schema has had a significant impact on understanding reading (Barrlett, 1932; Adams and Collins, 1979; Rumelhart, 1980).

### **Definition of Terms**

Within the context of this study, the following definitions were applied:

1. ***Achievement gap***- The academic disparities that exist in reading and math scores between majority (white students) and minority students (students of color) as determined by standardized measures.
2. ***Comprehension***- The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 11).
3. ***Literacy Retention Policy***- Many states have adopted “mandatory retention” laws that require schools to hold back third graders who are not reading at a certain level of proficiency and who do not meet other criteria for exemptions.
4. ***Good Cause Exemptions***- A 3rd grade student who fails to meet the academic requirements for promotion to the 4th grade may be promoted for good cause:
  - Limited English Proficient students with less than two (2) years of instruction in English Language Learner program;
  - Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates that participation in the statewide accountability assessment program is not appropriate, as authorized under state law;

- Students with a disability who participate in the accountability assessment and who have an IEP or Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intense remediation in reading for two (2) years but still demonstrates a deficiency and was previously retained;
- Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of reading proficiency on an alternative assessment approved by the State Board of Education;
- Students who have received intensive intervention in reading for two (2) or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who previously were retained in Kindergarten or First, Second or Third Grade for a total of two (2) years and have not met exceptional education criteria.

5. ***Instructional Strategies***- A strategy is the intentional application of a cognitive routine by a reader before, during, or after reading a text. Comprehension strategies help readers enhance their understanding, overcome difficulties in comprehending text, and compensate for weak or imperfect knowledge related to the text (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgesen, 2010).

6. ***Mississippi Literacy-Based Promotion Act***- an act to improve the reading skills of kindergarten and first through third grade public school students so that every student completing 3rd grade reads at or above grade level. The intent is to increase the proficiency of all students in reading by the end of their 3rd grade year of school (Mississippi Department of Education, 2014).

7. ***Literacy***- Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context (International Literacy Association, 2016).

8. **Proficiency-** Mississippi Department of Education determines proficiency by calculating the percentage of students who performed at or above the “proficient” achievement category on assessments. In other words, this is the percentage of students whose assessment score placed them in the proficient or advanced achievement category.
9. **Reading Instruction-** Reading involves the explicit teaching of foundational skills (e.g., phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, concepts of print, word identification, fluency) in tandem with unconstrained skills (e.g., vocabulary and comprehension) (International Literacy Association, 2018).
10. **Reading Retention-** Retention requires both decoding and comprehending what is written. This task relies on high level cognitive skills, including memory and the ability to group and retrieve related ideas. As students progress through grade levels, they are expected to retain more and more of what they read. From third grade on, reading to learn is central to classroom work. By high school it is an essential task.
11. **Retention-** the practice of holding back a student and asking them to repeat the same grade. Common causes of retention include failing or not being academically ready for the next grade (Dell, 2014), or in the Third -Grade Retention Promotion Act’s case; not being on the correct reading level.
12. **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment-** The 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Summative Assessment is a multiple-choice test that is given in the Spring online or via a computer that covers the Mississippi College-and Career-Ready Standards of reading for foundational skills, information text, literature, and language. The Mississippi Literacy-Based Promotion Act requires students to take the MKAS2 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Summative Assessment to ensure

they are reading at grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

*13. Strategy-* Deliberate, goal-directed attempt to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text (Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris, 2017, p. 38).

*14. Summative Assessment-* Summative assessments are utilized to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period. Summative assessments commonly collect detailed information that educators may use to determine learning progress and achievement, evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs, measure progress toward improvement goals, or make course-placement decisions (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

### **Limitations**

Due to the scope of the study, the major limitation of the study was the study was limited to the state of Mississippi and teachers in the state of Mississippi.

### **Significant of the Study**

This study determined strategies implemented by effective teachers to assist students in passing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment. It will also help educators understand effective literacy instruction and how it benefits students.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One, the introduction to and overview of the study, includes background information, statement of problem, purpose of the study,

research questions, definition of terms, a theoretical framework, significance of the study, and limitations. Chapter Two is a concise review of the literature regarding the analysis of effective literacy instruction based on the previous studies conducted. Chapter Three describes the methodology including the design of the study, the selection of the population and participants, the research questions, and the data collection procedures. Chapter Four contains the findings. Chapter Five contains a discussion of the findings, their relationship to existing research, implications for practice, and identifiable topics for further research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

Many educators are concerned about the number of elementary students, especially those in grade 3, who struggle with reading. Such concerns are warranted. A decade of studies indicate that when students get off to a poor start in reading, they rarely catch up. Striving readers encounter negative consequences such as grade retention, assignment to special education classrooms, or participation in long-term remedial services. As these students progress through grade levels, the academic distance from those who read well grows more pronounced (Kelly and Campbell, 2008; Learning First Alliance, 1998; Rashotte, Toregesen & Wagner, 1997).

The terms “literacy” and “reading” have traditionally been used interchangeably by scholars in reference to the topic under study. The term “reading” refers to a complex cognitive process in which the reader attempts to construct meaning from text (Anderson et al., 1985; Cooper et al., 2012; Pressley, 1998). Reading is further defined as a process in which the reader interacts with the text using prior knowledge and experience to acquire a store of new information, comprehend arguments, and glean main ideas from sources (Carter, 1997). Reading

involves the explicit teaching of foundational skills (e.g., phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, concepts of print, word identification, fluency) in tandem with unconstrained skills (e.g., vocabulary and comprehension) (International Literacy Association, 2018). Literacy is defined by the International Literacy Association (2016) as “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context” (para. 1). Cooper et al. (2012) described literacy as encompassing reading, writing, listening, thinking, speaking and learning. Literacy instruction typically begins in the early grades, thus, placing the responsibility of ensuring that all children develop good reading skills upon the primary teachers (Mathes et al., 2010). From third grade onward, students received very little instruction in reading comprehension. Instead, teachers focus on comprehension testing. Once a reading is complete, students are often required to respond to questions based on what was read (Durkin, 1978–79; Trehearne, 2004). Thus, high-quality literacy instruction in the primary grades is the greatest defense for preventing future reading failure (Snow et al., 1998).

Although it is suggestive that no single instructional strategy or practice has proved successful with all children, several studies and meta-analyses have examined strategies and practices that lead to successful reading instruction. Five of the most noted ones surfaced in a report by Barksdale Reading Institute (2015) and in the National Reading Panel’s (2000) *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. In both reports, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension were identified as strategies and practices leading to students successfully learning to read with comprehension.

## **Phonemic awareness instruction**

Phonemic awareness instruction is beneficial to all beginning readers. Phonemic awareness has been defined as the ability to understand that words are made up of different sounds (Cooper et al., 2012; Morrow et al., 2011). Further, the term has been described as the conceptual framework on which reading is built, essential to the development of the alphabetic principle, word recognition and inventive spelling (Stahl, 1997). Students who lack phonemic awareness instruction are likely to face major obstacles in learning to read (Gillon, 2003).

In examining research about the levels of phonological awareness that lead to phonemic awareness and the instructional techniques that support early reading skills, Gillon (2003) found that there is a clear hierarchy of phonological awareness skills, which includes (from easiest to most difficult): syllables, onset-rhyme, and phonemic awareness. Lonigan, Burgess, Anthony, and Barker (1998) noted that a grasp of the easier levels of phonological skills appears at earlier ages than do the more difficult phonemic awareness skills. This means that students learning to read, or students struggling with reading, may benefit from some early attention to phonological skills not yet mastered prior to teaching phonemic awareness (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

In addition to being a key factor in beginning reading acquisition, phonological awareness (especially phonemic awareness) is a reliable predictor of reading success (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015). Labbo and Teale (1997) suggested that phonemic awareness may be developed and fostered by implementing a wide array of engaging activities that include, but are not limited to, riddles, rhymes, poetry, chants, alliteration, puns, tongue twisters, and clapping syllables.

## **Phonics**

The second practice leading to successful reading is phonics. Phonics is very important in reading instruction. Phonics has been defined as “the study of the relationships between the speech sounds (phonemes) and the letters (graphemes) that represents them” (Cooper et al., 2012, p. 487). Kelly and Campbell (2008) noted that students struggle with reading because they lack phonics. A strong body of research indicates that beginning readers benefit from explicit phonics instruction (Adams, 1990; Anderson et al., 1985; Chall, 1983; Cooper et al., 2012; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). The National Reading Panel (1999) acknowledged that if phonics instruction is systematically taught to students in grades Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup>, students benefit because they focus on phonemes, the smallest units in spoken syllables and words. Phonics instruction assists students in understanding that spoken words are composed of distinguishable sounds and that sounds are represented in print by symbols. Moreover, phonics instruction enables learners to receive instruction in blending sounds and word patterns (Kelly & Campbell, 2008).

The National Panel of Reading (2000) acknowledged that the ability to recognize sight words is another vital skill striving readers need that they are lacking. Many striving readers lack rapid word recognition, which limits their comprehension; therefore, it is important for teachers to teach common words through practices such as Dolch Sight words, matching games, and word searches (Kelly & Campbell). The Simple View Research (Hoover & Gough, 1990), the most influential research supporting the importance of decoding instruction, proposed that strong decoding and language comprehension skills are needed to be a skilled reader. The researchers defined decoding as the ability to read nonsense words out of context and language comprehension as the ability to understand text that is read aloud. Along with numerous other



studies (Catts, Adlof, & Weismer, 2006; Verhoeven & van Leeuwe, 2011; Chen & Vellutino, 1997), they have validated the basic premise that decoding is a necessary skill for reading comprehension and that linguistic strength may not make up for poor decoding skills. These studies also revealed that strong decoding is a prerequisite for reading comprehension. It established that early reading instruction must ensure that children learn to decode accurately (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

## **Fluency**

Fluency is also very important for reading comprehension. Word reading fluency was defined by Cooper et al. (2012) as the ability to read words of connected text smoothly and without significant word recognition problems. The National Reading Panel (2000) defined fluency as the ability to read a text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression. According to the Barksdale Reading Institute (2015), there is a strong correlation between oral reading fluency, measured as rate and accuracy, and reading comprehension. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) recommended that reading fluency and word recognition accuracy be regularly assessed in the classroom since the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on them. Pikulski and Chard (2005) noted that teachers who work with beginning readers should focus significant amounts of instructional time on basic word recognition and word analysis skills because accuracy is a fundamental component of fluency (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

Feedback is also valuable when students are learning to read. Immediate feedback on errors helps students develop the critical habit of reading accurately (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015). Pany and McCoy (1988) found that third-grade students with reading disabilities (those who read 10% to 15% of words incorrectly) significantly improved their word recognition and comprehension scores when given immediate feedback on every single error. Therefore, it is

recommended that teachers provide beginning readers and students struggling with accuracy daily and systematic opportunities to learn to read words accurately (Snow et al.,1998).

Additionally, the National Reading Panel (2000) found that the most effective ways to develop fluency are by repeated oral readings and guided oral repeated reading. By using repeated oral readings and guided oral reading practices, regardless of students' reading levels or ages (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

Rasinski (2012) recommended four strategies for increasing fluency skills: 1) teacher modeling reading a selected text with fluency and expression, 2) teacher providing support to students with support as they read the same text out loud, independently, chorally, paired with partner, or along with recording, 3) the teacher helping the students focus on reading with expression by bringing attention to meaningful phrases and words, and, 4) providing students with multiple opportunities to practice their reading. Similarly, Beers (2003) suggested the following strategies for improving fluency: repeated exposure to high-frequency words; modeling expression, phrasing, and pacing; explicit instruction of phrasing and intonation; prompting rather than correcting; and rereading texts.

## **Vocabulary**

Reading vocabulary is crucial to the comprehension processes of a skilled reader (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015). Readers depend mainly on their background knowledge (schemata) and the wide vocabulary strategies they have in order to understand the reading materials (French, Ellsworth, & Amoroso, 1995). Young readers usually find difficulty in comprehending a text if they do not know a lot of the words in the text (Harmer, 2005). Therefore, the vocabulary of readers is the key to learning to make the transition from oral to written forms. Researchers have identified four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading,

and writing (Armbruster et al., 2001). Children acquire vocabulary directly and indirectly when they hear and see words used in a variety of contexts ranging from conversations, reading, and explicit instruction.

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), as a learner read a text, the vocabulary words they encounter is mapped into the oral vocabulary the learner brings to the task. The reader learns to translate the (relatively) unfamiliar words in print into speech with the expectation that the speech forms will be easier to comprehend. Students benefits in understanding a text by applying letter-sound correspondences to printed material, but only if the target word is in the learner's oral vocabulary. When the word is not in the learner's oral vocabulary, it will not be understood when it occurs in print (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

According to Allington (2006), independent reading has been shown to be a critical factor in students acquiring new word meanings. Equally, research conducted by Pressley and Allington (2014) revealed that when children attempt to derive the meanings of unfamiliar words in context, they often misinterpret them due to either poor prior knowledge or weak contextual clues within the text. As a result, teaching common word parts including affixes, base words, and root words may accelerate vocabulary growth by helping children learn the meanings of multiple unknown words (Adams, 1990; Armbruster et al., 2001; Marzano, 2004). Adams (1990) recommended teaching word parts by common meaning to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills.

There are numerous strategies and resources for teaching vocabulary. Blachowicz and Fisher (2011) stressed the importance of engaging students in discussions, sharing, feedback, and scaffolding to increase word learning. In addition, Marzano (2004) outlined eight evidenced-based strategies for direct vocabulary instruction:

1. Provide students with descriptions of words using everyday language rather than definitions.
2. Present words using linguistic and nonlinguistic representations.
3. Gradually shape the meanings of words through repeated exposure.
4. Teach students roots, base words, and affixes.
5. Organize words into categories by semantic features (e.g., setting, typical uses, physical characteristics, etc.).
6. Allow students to interact with words through discussion.
7. Incorporate vocabulary games into instruction.
8. Focus on content specific terms (p. 90).

Marzano (2004) and Cooper and Kiger (2003) proposed that direct vocabulary instruction has an impressive track record of improving students' background knowledge and the comprehension of academic content. Marzano (2004) extended the research by suggesting that teaching content-specific vocabulary increases comprehension by 33%, compared to a 12% increase in comprehension when vocabulary instruction is limited to high-frequency word lists.

## **Comprehension**

The last strategy identified by the Barksdale Reading Institute is comprehension. Comprehension is very important in reading instruction. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) stated that comprehension is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 11). Smith and Robinson (1980) defined reading comprehension as the understanding, evaluating, and utilizing of information and ideas gained through an interaction between the reader and the author. A common definition for comprehension is a process in which readers construct meaning by

interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relation to the text (Pardo, 2004). Comprehension occurs in the transaction between the reader and the text (Kucer, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1978). The reader brings many things to the literacy event; however, meaning emerges only from the interaction of readers with a text at a particular moment in time.

Comprehension is the core of reading (Durkin, 1993), and reading depends on many levels of language skills. There are many avenues to improved reading comprehension, including the previously mentioned teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, and vocabulary. These forms of instruction influence how well students comprehend text (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

Allington (2001) acknowledged that most readers, including striving readers, benefit enormously when they may construct meaning that help make the comprehension processes visible. This may happen using several different strategies, but specifically through schema. Schema help students connect the reading with something they have already learned. Pardo (2004) noted that the more background knowledge, or schema, a reader has to connect with a text, the more likely the reader will be able to make sense of what is being read. Pardo (2004) further noted that when children have inadequate background knowledge, a teacher may use a variety of strategies to help build knowledge. Good readers use strategies to support their understanding of the text. Teachers help students become good readers by teaching them how to use the strategies (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Pardo, 2002). Strategies such as incorporating informational texts across content areas and genres, using graphic organizers, and teaching students to connect text to self, the world, and other texts. Researchers have found that

teaching multiple strategies simultaneously may be particularly powerful (Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pressley, 2000).

Although research has not identified a single set of evidence-based strategies that are most effective in increasing comprehension, it does support the idea that there is a wide array of strategies and practices for helping children construct meaning and build critical thinking skills (Cooper et al., 2012; National Reading Panel, 2000). Cooper et al. (2012) found visualizing, making connections, monitoring, inferencing, identifying important information, generating and answering questions, summarizing and synthesizing, and evaluating as key strategies that may enhance students' comprehension when they are taught explicitly. Explicit instruction involves a multistep, scaffolding process in which the teacher provides a great deal of student support in the early stages, followed by a gradual release of responsibility (McLaughlin, 2012). Clark and Graves (2005) reported that scaffolding is one of the most necessary techniques essential to enhancing comprehension. The precept behind scaffolding is that students are given the opportunity to learn complex tasks in manageable chunks.

There are two apparent groups of readers: successful readers and striving readers, and each group come to reading with a different experience that will produce different results. Successful readers read a variety of genres frequently, comprehend their reading, and may elicit information from a text. On the other hand, striving readers are reluctant to read, lack fluency, and have negative feelings attached to reading (Dell, 2014). Research conducted by Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) indicated that many students, especially those who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, become ineffective readers as they move from the early to the upper elementary grades (Trehearne, 2004). In other words, there is a slump in their reading beginning around the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and often increasing through high school.

To understand the causes of the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade slump, it is important to examine the factors that affect students' reading comprehension. Students' attitudes toward reading (motivation and interest), the time allotted for engaging the reader, comprehension strategy instruction and practice, vocabulary and word knowledge, and opportunities for rich text talk and written response are all key factors that influence reading comprehension (Trehearne, 2004). Similarly, it has also been noted that the prevalence of children with reading difficulties is often associated with the economic and social circumstances of the home. This finding is supported by studies conducted in the mid-1970s where variables, such as social class, family income, educational background of the parents, and the number of books in the home were consistently related to school reading achievement (Romeo, 2002).

Researchers have established that children's early attainment of decoding skill is a reliable predictor of later reading achievement (Juel, 1998; Pressley, 1998; Chapman and Tunmer, 2003). It has been established that skilled reading comprehension requires the reader to be capable to process the written symbols of text at an appropriate level. This is reinforced by the fact that poor decoders, both in and out of school, read substantially less than average readers (Beck and Juel, 1992). However, reading and the comprehension of text is a complex process, and there is more to reading and comprehension than just decoding or word calling (De Corte et al., 2001; McNaughton et al., 2004; Rivalland, 2000).

### **Other Effective Literacy Practices**

Given the numerous studies and scholarly articles published on the topic of literacy instruction over the past few decades, it may appear that no two educators agree on the most effective or ineffective methods of teaching children to read. In fact, scholarly findings on the subject of literacy has often been inconclusive or contradictory in terms of the superiority of a

particular method or approach (Bond & Dykstra, 1966/1997; Chall, 1983). Thus, other effective literacy practices effective in promoting the academic growth of students in primary grades include read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading, and shared writing.

**Read-aloud.** Read-aloud may be defined as an activity that "provides a context through which adults and children share a joint topic focus, which affords an opportunity for children to participate in increasingly sophisticated conversations that move beyond a perceptual focus to encompass conceptually oriented discussions" (Pentimonti & Justice 2010, p. 242). Strachan (2015) continued this definition by describing read-aloud more in-depth by stating, "During interactive read-aloud, teachers scaffold children's sense-making and support their learning of new concepts through direct instruction; asking questions before, during, and after reading" (p. 209). Essentially, an interactive read aloud is when a teacher actively engages students while reading a specific text aloud. The reading is not a simple reading of the words; it engages students in the experience, rather than postponing their involvement until after the reading (Delacruz, 2013).

There have been many noted benefits for reading aloud with younger elementary children. Fien, et al. (2011) acknowledged that read-aloud practices are a prevalent component of reading instruction in the early grades. Strachan (2015) added that verbal interaction and discussion between teachers and young learners helps promote social and reading skills. Additionally, Wiseman (2011) found that read-aloud are important learning opportunities for emergent readers because teachers may actively model and scaffold comprehension strategies, engage readers, and cultivate a community of learners. Thinking aloud is a common and effective form of modeling read-aloud that helps students focus on building meaning (Bauman,



Seifert-Kessel, & Jones, 1992) and understanding how successful readers construct meaning while reading.

Teachers may also use read-aloud to help scaffold a text that is too rigorous for students to read on their own independently. Strachan (2015) also stated the importance of reading aloud to primary students. She acknowledged that discussions about a text help clarify the information of the passage for younger students. Among many other benefits of read-aloud, Rog (2001) listed the following:

- Building Vocabulary,
- Understanding of content,
- Encourages understanding of a higher level,
- Motivating students to read.

Rasinski and Padak (2000) recommended that teachers incorporate read-aloud strategies daily, especially in classes which include students with reading difficulties, as such strategies allow learners to become more familiar with literacy (Wood & Salvetti, 2001).

**Shared reading.** Shared reading is a collaborative learning activity. Shared reading is an interactive experience that students join a part of it while reading a book or other texts guided and support by a teacher (Stahl, 2012). Developed by Don Holdaway in 1979, shared reading involves the teacher reading a text aloud. While the teacher reads, guidance and support are needed for the student. The children may contribute to reading along as well.

In shared reading, teachers use thinking aloud to show students thought process, and provide fluent models of oral reading as students follow along with copies of the text. Students then pose questions, discuss central themes with a partner, and construct written responses to the

text. Implemented initially as a read-aloud using a stretch text that may be too difficult, shared reading scaffolds instruction in a gradual release model that ultimately enables the learner to read the story with little teacher assistance (Stahl, 2012; Kurshumlia & Stavileci, 2015). Shared reading is an important activity that needs to be integrated into the classroom. It contributes to the child's reading development of phonemic awareness, phonics/letter identification, builds concepts of print, improves fluency, and aids comprehension (Bus, Van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Snow, Chandler, Lowry, Barnes & Goodman, 1991).

**Guided reading (small group instruction).** Research has revealed that beginning readers benefit most from being taught explicit skills during intensive small-group instruction. Differentiated small-group reading instruction enables teachers to focus on specific skills needed by varied groups of children (Tyner, 2003). Whole-group lessons may often be too challenging for students with the least literacy knowledge, and too easy for students with the most literacy knowledge (Williams, et al., 2009). Small group instruction, on the other hand, better enables teachers to meet the needs of each student. Small group instruction is noted as being more effective than whole-group instruction because teachers may (1) differentiate instruction to meet each student's needs, (2) better match instruction to each student's level, and (3) respond to children's reading more effectively (Amendum, et al., 2009).

Teachers differentiate small-group instruction by matching instruction to meet the needs of the learner (Kosanovich, Ladinsky, Nelson, & Torgesen, 2007). In order to accommodate these needs, teachers plan reading centers for small groups that offer plenty of practice opportunities for children. Through small-group literacy lessons, teachers explicitly teach students what they need to know about reading and keep them engaged and motivated through

hands-on word-work activities that promote inquiry and critical thinking (Williams, Phillips-Birdsong, Hufnagel, Hungler, & Lundstrom, 2009).

Additionally, small group instruction enables children to have access to high-quality interaction with their teacher (Wasik, 2008). Teachers are able to observe students as they are learning and modify instruction, clarify misconceptions, and discuss material to meet the specific learning needs of each child in a small group. Each group receives high-quality reading instruction and children may be engaged in meaningful tasks that are related to their specific instructional levels (Kiley, 2007). Tyner (2005) noted that one key point that makes guided reading successful is that students are regularly evaluated and shuffled and reshuffled in flexible groups to meet instructional needs best.

**Independent reading.** Voluminous reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency (Allington, 2014; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Reutzel and Juth (2014) found that time spent silently reading independently correlated strongly with reading achievement. Regular independent reading built into the school day aids the development of specific skills and habits that contribute to students' overall reading achievement and attitudes toward reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). Pilgreen (2000) describes the role that independent reading plays in supporting students' development of agency this way:

In order for children to be prepared to read for enjoyment and information, they must learn to be independent in making book selections and setting purposes for reading. We may help students begin to achieve this autonomy by surrendering some control to them. To do this we must provide them with opportunities to read under conditions in which they choose their reading selections, their purposes, and their own demands for learning. This is why they need carefully orchestrated periods of time to read in school. (p. 5)

Hundreds of correlational studies found that the best readers read the most and poor readers read the least; these studies suggest that the more children read, the better their fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). Certainly, it is during

successful, independent reading practice that students consolidate their reading skills and strategies and come to own them; reading proficiency lags without reading practice (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003). Examples of independent reading programs are DEAR (drop everything and read), AR (Accelerated Reader), and SSR (sustained silent reading). These programs are adopted to encourage children to read for pleasure without the teacher picking out books for them (Dell, 2014).

**Interactive Writing.** Interactive writing is intertwined as a cognitive and social process where the teacher and the students work collaboratively through meaningful interactions to transcribe a message (Askew & Frasier, 1999). Askew and Frasier (1999) noted that interactive writing is a process utilizing scaffolded learning and instruction. During interactive writing, the goal is for the students to contribute what they know while the teacher extends their understanding of how print works.

Interactive writing is supported by both social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the emergent literacy approach (Clay, 1975) that allows children and teachers to “share the pen” during writing lessons to create group texts. During interactive writing, the teacher offers varying levels of support and children are invited to take a more active role in the writing process. The teacher and students write the letters and words of the group text. The teacher makes decisions about the appropriate level of support students need based on each child's current level of knowledge with the text (Rubadue, 2002).

Moreover, teachers are able to individualize writing instruction based on each child's individual age, needs, and ability level. As children go through the steps of an interactive writing lesson, they are introduced to a variety of important emergent literacy skills within an authentic writing experience (Rubadue, 2002).

**Independent writing.** Independent writing is a time when students write by themselves. In independent writing situations teachers, construct conditions for children to write, explore and respond to texts independently (Harris et al., 2003, p. 62). However, texts that they write need to be familiar and clearly arise from what has been demonstrated in modeled writing and composed in guided writing. Irwin (2007) noted that writing is one of the most powerful tools for developing comprehension because it actively involves the reader in constructing a set of meanings that are useful to the individual reader.

Students engage in independent writing at all phases of the writing process. It is not just ‘free choice’ writing; rather, it is a way for students to demonstrate what they are able to do as a result of explicit instruction and scaffolds offered by the teacher. In this sense, it is the independent phase of the gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Duke, Pearson, Strachan & Billman, 2011). Through independent writing, the children use the knowledge and skills they have developed about text types and the writing process to write for different purposes and audiences. They practice their writing skills and apply what they have learned to new contexts. The teacher provides support through regular discussions or conferences with individuals and needs-based teaching as required (Wing Jan, 2001, p. 26).

### **Reading Comprehension Strategies**

The National Research Council (NRC), a group of experts convened to examine reading research and address the serious national problem of reading failure, concluded in their report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) that most reading problems may be prevented by providing effective instruction and intervention in the primary grades (Denton, 2008). Further, the NRC noted that, in order for students to read well, they must understand how sounds are represented by print and apply this understanding to read

and spell words, become fluent readers, learn new vocabulary words, learn to self-monitor when reading, and correct their own errors (Denton, 2008).

Understanding a text is a complex task. A multitude of research has shown over the last 75 years (e.g., Davis, 1944; NRP, 2000; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Stouffer, 2016; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), several elements of text instruction are important for fostering reading comprehension. Pressley (2000) noted that word-level skills and background knowledge are important components of teaching reading comprehension. Others acknowledged teaching text/story structure (Duke et al., 2011; NRP, 2000), building vocabulary and language knowledge (Duke et al., 2011; Kamil et al., 2008), and increasing student motivation and engagement around reading (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004) as important components of teaching reading comprehension. The main focus herein is teaching reading comprehension strategies, that is, explicitly modeling, explaining, and scaffolding how one reads in different situations, which have been proven to significantly improve reading ability (e.g., Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, & Kurita, 1989; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994).

Reading comprehension strategies are processes for enhancing comprehension and overcoming comprehension failures (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). These strategies have been defined as part of the procedural knowledge (knowledge about how to comprehend text) that readers use as tools for long-lasting comprehension and learning (McNamara, 2011). Strategies are distinguished from other reading processes because they demand the readers' attention in constructing the meaning of a text (Afflerbach & Cho, 2009). Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2017) defined strategies as "deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text" (p. 38). In order to effectively use strategies, readers must consciously apply certain cognitive techniques before,

during, and/or after reading (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991) while keeping the intended purpose of the reading clearly in mind.

Comprehension strategies are flexible by nature and widely applicable (Grossman, 2015) and transferable to other reading situations. Kamil et al. (2008) pointed to certain strategies as particularly powerful in improving students' comprehension. These strategies include summarizing main ideas, asking questions about texts, paraphrasing, drawing inferences based on information about the text and prior knowledge, using graphic organizers to visualize elements of the text, and thinking about the types of questions to be answered. Other strategies have also been deemed useful to students are story mapping (Idol, 1987; Reutzel, 1985), creating mental imagery (Pressley, 1976), activating prior knowledge (Duke et al., 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2015), predicting (Block & Duffy, 2008), setting purposes for reading, scanning and skimming (Duke et al., 2011). The strategies are deemed most effective across the literature.

Alder (2001) found that there are seven research-based evident strategies for improving text comprehension: monitoring comprehension, metacognition, graphics and semantic organization, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing text structures, and summarizing. Research over the past 20 years has shown that children with reading difficulties benefit from explicit instruction in decoding skills and strategies, fluency vocabulary word meanings and word-learning strategies, and comprehension strategies. Explicit instruction is considered a powerful delivery system for teaching comprehension strategies (Kamil et al., 2008) because it is a clear and direct approach (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Such instruction conveys new information to students in a supportive climate, with explicit explanations, modeling, and guided practice (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009).

**Monitoring Comprehension.** Comprehension monitoring instruction teaches students to be aware of what they understand, identify what they do not understand, and use appropriate strategies to resolve problems in comprehension. Students who are good at monitoring their comprehension know when they understand what they read and when they do not (Alder, 2001). Weak comprehenders often do not realize where or when they do not understand. Instead, they just keep reading. Students need to know that their reading must always make sense (Trehearne, 2004). Good readers use metacognitive strategies to think about and have control over their reading. Before reading, they might clarify their purpose for reading and preview the text. During reading, they might monitor their understanding, adjusting their reading speed to fit the difficulty of the text and fixing any comprehension problems they have. After reading, they might check their understanding of what they read (Alder, 2001).

**Metacognition.** Metacognition is defined as thinking about one's own thinking (Trehearne, 2004). Metacognition is an active thinking process that may be described as "knowing how to know" (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Metacognition refers to two important concepts related to reading comprehension: (1) a reader's awareness of how well he or she is understanding the reading, and (2) a reader's ability to control his or her own thinking. This includes the use of comprehension strategies to improve or repair failing comprehension while reading (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Metacognitive skills include self-monitoring strategies in comprehension, active participation, and self-reflection to regulate one's learning (Chan & Cole, 1986). Students using metacognitive reading strategies evaluate the reading task demands in light of their skills for reading, including their ability to select, employ, and monitor strategy usage (Deshler, Ellis, & Lenz, 1996).



**Graphic and Semantic Organizers.** Daniel Willingham (2008) classified learners into three different types: those who learn by looking (visual learners), those who learn by listening (auditory learners), and those who learn by manipulating things (kinesthetic learners) (cited in Sam & Rajan, 2013). By understanding what sort of learner a child is, a teacher may improve his or her learning by presenting the appropriate material to that child based on their learning style. The use of graphic organizers as a tool for visual learners may make comprehending a text easier and more engaging for students (Praveen & Rajan, 2013). Learning through visual representations help students organize information in a text more effectively. They are also able to identify information in the text such as the main idea, supporting details, facts, opinions, text structures, and comparisons more easily (Praveen & Rajan, 2013, p. 156). Graphic organizers are known by different names such as maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames, or clusters (Alder, 2001). However, regardless of the name, there are three main ways teachers may use graphic organizers in their teaching and a number of ways that students may use them to enhance their learning process. Graphic organizers may be exerted before, during, and after instruction. Before instruction, graphic organizers are utilized to evaluate students' understanding of the content. During instruction, graphic organizers may assist in students' thinking and check ongoing comprehension. After instruction, graphic organizers help students summarize the content (Praveen & Rajan, 2013).

Students with learning disabilities and English as a Second Language (ESL) students, or other English Language Learners (ELL) particularly benefit from the use of graphic organizers because graphic organizers are an effective, nonverbal way of interpreting what they have read from both narrative and informational texts and to concretely manage, retain, and recall abstract information (Trehearne, 2004).

**Answering and Generating Questions.** Asking good questions is essential to learning. Asking questions may be more important than getting the answers, particularly when the questions encourage students to think critically. Thus, the art of questioning lies at the basis of all good teaching (Betts, 1910). When teachers ask higher-order thinking questions and give students opportunities to develop deep explanations, learning is enhanced, and students develop important critical thinking skills. Higher-order thinking questions often start with question stems such as *Why, What caused, How did it occur, How does it compare, or What is the evidence* (Betts, 1910). A meta-analysis of studies of instructional practices (Redfield & Rousseau, 1981) found a positive relationship between the use of higher-level questions during instruction and student gains on tests of both factual recall and application of thinking skills.

An example of teacher questioning that supports thinking and discussion is the K-W-L strategy, which helps students learn from an expository text (Ogle, 1986). Using this strategy, the teacher models for students how to create a three-column chart, labeling the first column K, the middle column W, and the third column L. The teacher then introduces the topic of the expository text that students are to read and asks students to brainstorm words, terms, or phrases from their background knowledge about the topic of the text. The teacher records students' information in the K column of the chart. Next, the teacher asks students what they want to learn about the topic or what they think they will learn about the topic. The teacher records the predictions in the W column of the chart. This helps in setting students' purpose for reading. Afterward, the teacher or students read the text. After the reading is complete, students record in the L column the new knowledge they learned from reading the text. The teacher then leads a discussion of the information that is recorded in the L column. The K-W-L strategy supports

student learning before, during, and after reading. As students use this procedure over time, they become more actively involved in their reading of an expository text (Ogle, 1986).

To become critical thinkers and good independent learners, students also need to ask themselves questions as they read. Self-questioning was identified as the most effective strategy in improving comprehension when the National Reading Panel (2000) examined 203 studies on reading comprehension. Effective self-questioning may improve students' awareness and control of their thinking, which in terms may improve their learning. It may improve long-term retention of knowledge and skills, as well as the ability of students to apply and transfer the knowledge and skills they learn (Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996)

**Text Structures.** Reading researchers have argued that knowledge of text organization or structure is an important factor for text comprehension (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Fletcher, 2006; Grabe, 1991, 2004, 2008; Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005; Horiba, 2000; Kendeou & van den Broek, 2007; Meyer, 2003; Meyer & Poon, 2001; Snyder, 2010). Text structure is defined as “how the ideas in a text are interrelated to convey a message to a reader” (Meyer and Rice, 1984, p. 319). It involves the reader looking mentally for the text structure of a text by looking at keywords, subheadings, and other text features that may reveal the structure the writer is using. The recognition and use of text organization are essential processes underlying comprehension and retention (Meyer, 1985). Meyer (1985) classified these text structures as follows:

- **Description:** The author describes the topic.
- **Sequence:** The author uses numerical or chronological order to list items or events.
- **Compare/contrast:** The author compares and contrasts two or more similar events, topics, or objects.
- **Cause/effect:** The author delineates one or more causes and then describes the ensuing effects.
- **Problem/solution:** The author poses a problem or question and then gives the answer.

Students in grade 3 are expected to recognize text structure. The ability to identify and analyze these text structures in expository texts helps readers to comprehend the text more easily and retain it longer. Signal or cue words employed by nonfiction writers send a signal to the reader as to the text structure the writer has followed (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). Readers who are unaware of the text structures are at a disadvantage because they do not approach reading with any type of reading plan (Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980). However, readers who are familiar with text structures expect the information to unfold in certain ways (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

**Summarizing.** Summarizing is an important strategy for developing student comprehension and oral language proficiency. Retelling is an opportunity for students to select what was important to them from the text, make personal connections, and share that information either orally or in writing (Trehearne, 2004). On the other hand, summarizing is a step beyond retelling. It often involves breaking important parts of a text into manageable chunks. A summary provides the gist or essence of what has been read or heard and may consist of only a sentence or two. Summarizing helps students to improve their grasp of the main idea, an important skill in comprehension. Both retelling and summarizing incorporate students' ability to infer, to provide a more insightful, synthesized summary (Trehearne, 2004; Adler, 2001). When students infer, they go beyond the literal meaning to what is implied. They use their own experiences and background knowledge to help them make sense of and gain deeper insights into, the text (Trehearne, 2004). In summary, instruction in summarizing helps students identify or generate main ideas, connect the main or central ideas, and eliminate unnecessary information (Alder, 2001).

## Literacy Components

In the National Reading Panel's (2000) *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, the panel found the integration of technology in the classroom to be essential in the development of students' literacy skills. Song and Keller (2001) acknowledged that technology is a way to supplement teacher effectiveness and instruction to ensure individual student's needs are being met. Adaptive technology diagnosis a student's areas of weaknesses in reading and assigns specific learning experiences aimed at improving students' reading comprehension during the reading instructional block.

Technology provides an unlimited number of opportunities for practice while making learning fun and engaging (Song & Keller, 2001). Balajthy, et al. (2001) found in a clinical study on reading improvement through computer instruction that students demonstrated a significant improvement in reading fluency by using meaning-oriented reading and writing activities, reading and writing skills, word identification, synthetic phonics, word families, and structural analysis. Smolin and Lawless (2003) also concluded that technology provides instructional practices that traditional instruction does not when they conducted a study that examined the role that technology plays in the classroom and with students. They found that technology enables information to be presented in multiple ways. For example, teachers may use presentation software to introduce new content and concepts to students. Likewise, teachers may use technology to reconfigure information that is tailored to each student's individual needs.

In summary, the extent to which new technologies effectively support reading instruction and learning in the classroom is unknown. Teachers may draw on technology to engage students in challenging authentic learning (Cioro, 2003; Watts-Taffe, Gwinn, Johnson, Horn, 2003). The

extent to which new technologies effectively support reading instruction and learning in the classroom is unknown.

### **Literacy & Illiteracy**

A considerable amount of research acknowledges that students who have literacy problems early in their academic career fall behind and never catch up (Ferguson & Lynskey, 1997; Juel, 1988; Sadler & Sugai, 2009). Hall (2006) contend that reading difficulties at an early age that is not corrected, tend to worsen well into adolescent years and beyond. Likewise, he argued that students who suffer from literacy problems start to lose motivation in school when they start to feel like they may not be successful in school academically. These students become disinterested in school, become a behavior problem and eventually drops out (Lane, Wehby, Menzies, Gregg, Doukas, & Munton, 2002; Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997). In other words, early deficiency in literacy development may well affect students into adulthood (Velluntino & Smaylon, 2002).

Dorn (1993) found that illiteracy is one of the most prominent indicators of students who drop out of high school. He contended that dropping out of high school is just the beginning of the problem for illiterate teenagers. He also maintained that obtaining a job without a high school diploma is extremely difficult; however, it is even more difficult for someone who may not read. Similarly, following their longitudinal, multilevel analysis, Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) found illiteracy to be a major determining factor in teenagers dropping out of school. One survey revealed that 90% of 17-year-old African American male dropouts were below the expected reading level and, of this group, 78% dropped out in the ninth grade. In addition, in all ethnic and socioeconomic categories, students who were held back in school at least once were 45% more likely to drop out, and students who were held back two grades were 90% more

likely to drop out.

Research conducted by Perry et al. (2003) on middle school dropouts showed that grade retention and illiteracy were the two most powerful predictors of dropouts. The Education Commission of the States (2012) acknowledged that grade retention disproportionately affects disadvantaged students of lower socioeconomic status. Decades of research cite that African American, Latino, and Native American students are more likely to be held back a grade because of poor academic performance (Neill, et al., 2009). In a 2002 meta-analysis of 17 studies examining factors associated with dropout, Jimerson et al. found in all 17 studies that grade retention was associated with subsequent school withdrawal which is a controlling factor historically associated with dropout (as cited in Hanover Research, 2013). Similar, Lynch (2013) noted that students who are retained become unmotivated and disengaged in school. These students often feel stigmatized by retention, and the possibility of these students dropping out increases.

### **School-to-Prison Pipeline**

Children who are not reading on grade-level by the time they exit third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). Those who leave high school without a diploma are 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers who do (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Often, delinquent teenagers who drop out of high school do not have the skills or the motivation to enter the job market (Perry et al., 2003), and since they already have a tendency toward misbehavior, many dropouts get in trouble with the law and are incarcerated (Weishew & Peng, 1993).

In the past decade, there has been a growing linkage between schools and legal systems. The school to prison pipeline refers to this growing pattern of tracking students out of

educational institutions, primarily through zero tolerance policies, and directly or indirectly into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems (Heitzeg, 2014). It disproportionately impacts poor students of color, especially African American, and students with disabilities who are suspended, retained, or expelled at the highest rates, despite comparable rates of infractions (Witt 2007; Heitzeg, 2009). In particular, youth of color are at a greater risk of being pushed out of schools and into the streets, the juvenile justice system, and into adult prisons and jails. This injustice has become so alarming that scholars, children advocates, and community activists now refer to it as "the school-to-prison pipeline" (Wald & Losen, 2003; NAACP, 2005; Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Heitzeg, 2009).

Currently, the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Over 2.4 million people in the United State are either in state or federal prisons or jails (Pew, 2008; Heitzeg, 2009). Despite no statistical differences in rates of offending, the poor, the under-educated, and people of color, particularly African Americans, are over-represented in statistics at every phase of the criminal justice system (Walker, Spohn & DeLone, 2012). A similarly oppressive trend has emerged in the juvenile justice system. Black youths are 2 times more likely to be arrested, to be referred to juvenile court, to be formally processed and labeled as delinquent or referred to the adult criminal justice system than white youths. In addition, they are 3 times more likely than white youth to be sentenced to out-of-home residential placement (Walker, Spohn & Delone, 2012; Heitzeg, 2009).

While Advanced Placement and vocational tracks prepare students for their respective positions in the workforce, it is the "schoolhouse to jailhouse track" that prepares students for their futures as an inmate in the political economy of the prison industrial complex (Heitzeg, 2009). The school to prison pipeline is correlated with several trends in education that negatively



impact students of color. These trends include: the growing poverty rates, declining in school funding, re-segregation of schools by race and class, under-representation of students of color in advanced placement courses and over-presentation of students in special education tracks, high stakes testing, and the rising drop-out/push-rates (NAACP, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Heitzeg, 2009). In summary, rather than creating an atmosphere of learning, engagement and opportunity, current educational practices have increasingly blurred the distinction between school and jail (Heitzeg, 2009).

Schools have been known to formally and informally track students into various areas of the curriculum; however, tracking students out of schools and into jails is a new phenomenon (Heitzeg, 2009). Most schools have adopted zero-tolerance policies to deal with behavioral issues such as fighting on school premises, being in contact with alcohol and drugs, and carrying a concealed weapon on the school premise (Heitzeg, 2009). Zero tolerance policies have generally involved harsh disciplinary consequences such as long-term and/or permanent suspension or expulsion for violations, which often led to arrest and referral to juvenile or adult courts.

On the surface, zero tolerance policies are facially neutral and are applied equally to all class and gender. However, a growing body of research suggests that these policies are anything but (ABA, 2001; NAACP, 2005; Skiba, 2001). Criminalized education policies like zero-tolerance policies disproportionately impact the poor, students with disabilities, LGBT students, and youth of color, especially African Americans, who are suspended, expelled and arrested at the highest rates, despite comparable rates of infraction (Witt, 2007; Advancement Project, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Division documents revealed that nationally, black students are three and a half times more likely to be suspended or

expelled than their white peers. One in five black boys and more than one in 10 black girls received an out-of-school suspension (Lewin, 2012). In fact, black students made up only 18 percent of students, but they accounted for 35 percent of those suspended once, 46 percent of those suspended more than once and 39 percent of those expelled (Lewin, 2012; Advancement Project, 2012). This racial over-representation manifests itself in higher drop-out rates for students of color and students from historically disadvantaged minority groups who have a little over a fifty percent chance of graduating high school (Losen & Gillepsie, 2012; Schott Foundation, 2012).

These racial disparities may be explained by differential enforcement of zero tolerance policies. Research has found no evidence that African American youths violate rules at higher rates than other groups (Skiba, 2001); however, the persistence of stereotypes of young African American males and cultural miscommunication between students and teachers is often cited as one key factor. White women make up 83 percent of the nation's teaching ranks, and stereotypes may determine the decision to suspend or expel. Consequently, this racial disproportionality between teachers and students is noted as one of the key factors in the school to prison pipeline (Heitzeg, 2009).

It no surprise that zero-tolerance policies have contributed to the already high drop-out rate for students of color. By comparison, graduation rates for Whites and Asians are 75 and 77 percent nationally compared to Hispanics and African Americans 55 percent. Increased drop-out rates by minority students are directly related to the repeated use of suspension and expulsion (NASP, 2006). The Advancement Project (2011) noted that students who have been suspended or expelled are more likely to experience poor academic performance and eventually drop-out. Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) documented that 31 percent of

high school sophomores that left school had been suspended three or more times, a rate much higher than for those who had not been suspended at all.

In conclusion, the school to prison pipeline has already claimed tens of thousands of young lives. Fueled by poverty and segregation, an under-funded education system pressured by high-stakes testing and zero tolerance policies, and an increasingly oppressive justice system, the link between education and incarceration continues to threaten the future many youths (NAACP, 2005). Failure to address these contributing factors is costly, certainly in terms of the funds distracted from education towards incarceration, but also in lost potential and lost lives. Many young people who are affected by zero tolerance policies never reenter the educational system, and the loss to society is huge (NAACP, 2005).

### **Teacher Quality**

Relevant research has confirmed that teacher quality is the most significant factor in raising student achievement (Allington, 2012; Anderson et al., 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Marzano et al., 2001; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Stronge, 2011; Taylor et al., 2002). The importance of a good teacher may not be emphasized enough. Many state, federal, and district policies are designed to promote teacher quality. Research on utilizing students' achievement scores on standardized assessment confirmed that some teachers are more effective than others and being taught by an effective teacher has essential outcomes for student achievement (RAND Corporation, 2012). Effective teachers are best identified by their performance, despite the common perception of effective teachers can be identified based on where they went to school, whether they are licensed, or how long they have taught (RAND Corporation, 2012). The RAND Corporation (2012) disclosed that the best way to measure teachers' effectiveness is to look at

their on-the-job performance, including what they do in the classroom and how much progress their students make on achievement tests.

Although studies disclosed that there is no single program, strategy, or practice has been shown to be superior in increasing student proficiency rates, Barber and Mourshed (2007) found that students under the guidance of teachers with high student achievement outcomes, no matter their initial proficiency levels, progressed at three times the rate of students placed with teachers with low student achievement outcomes. Mendro, Jordan, and Bembray (1998) found that students who received 3 consecutive years of high-quality instruction, or effective teaching, made 40% larger gains than students who received low-quality instruction for 3 consecutive years (as cited in Stronge, 2011).

Research confirmed that teachers have extensive impacts on their students' academic and life-long success (e.g., Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). Overall, qualities of effective teachers roughly fall into three categories: personality qualities (including attitude), knowledge of content and pedagogy, and skills (including classroom management and lesson differentiation). Stronge (2002) argued effective teachers recognize complexity, communicate clearly, and serve conscientiously. Moreover, Stronge claimed the "ultimate proof" of teacher quality is students' results (i.e., grades, test scores, graduations, acceptance to universities, student evaluations) (p. 65).

Cullingford (1995) analyzed teacher quality and found that good teachers are teachers who establish a positive shared working atmosphere, are aware of students' needs, and have a well-organized, purposeful classroom. Additionally, he revealed that characteristics of effective teachers who create this positive learning atmosphere impose qualities such as integrity, learning,

organization, communication, and humor. Several studies found similar characteristics were perceived to be important to students about teacher effectiveness. Students perceive that knowledge of the content, ability to explain content clear, and enthusiasm were among the most important qualities of effective teachers (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1997). Anderson (1994) emphasized that student achievement depends heavily on the teacher's instructional planning, practices selected by teachers, and the learning activities teachers choose to employ in their classroom.

For the purpose of this study, students' test performances on the end-of-grade Reading Summative Assessment was used to define an effective teacher. An effective teacher is one who had 95% of their students to meet LBPA (Literacy-Based Promotion Act) passing score on the previous year exam.

### **Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act**

Mississippi is cited as having among the worst literacy rates in the country (Abrokwa, Presson, Simon, Ullman, 2010). In the past, Mississippi has had many students moved through the school system without developing functional literacy in the early grades. This has contributed to high drop-out rates and low achievement scores in later grades (Empower Mississippi, 2016). Obtaining sufficiently high levels of literacy is a national concern. In a 2007 national study of the reading skills of American fourth graders, sixty-five percent of the students performed at or above basic levels of literacy with only thirty-one percent achieving proficient or above levels (Abrokwa, Presson, Simon, Ullman, 2010). In Mississippi, fifty-one percent of fourth graders performed at or above the basic level, with only nineteen percent reaching proficient or above (The Nation's Report, 2007). Research revealed that many of Mississippi early grade teachers do

not hold a vast amount of knowledge about teaching children how to read. A study conducted by the Barksdale Reading Institute (2015) revealed that Mississippi's teacher preparation programs were failing to adequately prepare teachers in reading instruction. The group reviewed 15 traditional teacher preparation programs at 23 different sites in Mississippi and found that the content taught in classes and the hours spent on instruction vary greatly among programs. Additionally, they found that new teachers were being taught strategies to teach literacy that were not research-based. The inconsistency in literacy instruction for Mississippi's teachers means educators in Mississippi varied greatly in their ability to effectively teach reading instruction (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2016).

Nationally, almost two-third of 4<sup>th</sup> graders (64%) scored below proficient in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In Mississippi, 74% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored below proficient (NAEP, 2015). In an attempt to reverse this trend, Governor Phil Bryant signed Senate Bill 2341, Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act in 2013. The Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act is lawmakers attempt at raising the state's reading scores which have been some of the lowest scores in the nation (MDE, 2018). Mississippi's Third Grade Literacy Promotion Act, also known as Third Grade Gate, requires all students in grade 3 to be at or above 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade reading levels at the end of the year as determined by the MKAS2 3rd Grade Reading Summative Assessment.

The goal of the act is to ensure that every student may "read to learn" by grade 3 (MDE, 2014). The act also ends social promotions of third-grade students who are not reading at or above grade level and provide a way for them to receive targeted intervention early. The act helps identify students with reading deficiencies as early as kindergarten, and assistance them in learning to read with comprehension before third grade which will in terms decrease students' chances of dropping

out and receiving public assistance in the future (Mississippi Center for Education Innovation, 2014). In order for a third-grade student to be promoted to grade 4, he or she must score at least 926 on a scale of 600 to 1200 on the assessment. There are two retest opportunities for students who fail the first assessment. However, students who fail the test after three attempts are retained in grade 3 and provided with intensive reading intervention and support (MDE, 2013).

The Mississippi Literacy-Based Promotion Act was modeled after a legislation in Florida that has been very successful. Just Read, Florida! is one of the nation's noted highest-profile retention program (Sparks, 2015). The Florida program was promoted by former Governor Jeb Bush as part of his A+ Plan for education reform. It is also part of an extensive accountability system that included school report cards, performance-based funding, and several options for school choice. Florida's policy has garnered attention for positive effects. Researchers found that one-year third-grade students in Florida who were retained, they score slightly higher than their promoted peers on the state's assessment (Nagoaka & Roderick, 2004; Hanover Research, 2013). Today, even though Bush is not governor of Florida, he continues to encourage other states to adopt some or all of Florida's policies (Education Innovation Institute, 2011). Currently, 16 of the 50 states, which include states such as Ohio, Florida, New York, Mississippi, and Tennessee require schools to retain 3rd grader students based on their reading performance (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012).

As it has previously been stated, the Act's primary aim is to help students most in the need to learn how to read. Mississippi policy focuses solely on reading, and it seeks to improve students' ability in school through instructional interventions (Stamm, 2014). Consequently, by grade 3, a student struggling to read has been struggling to read for almost 3 years before he or she is retained. Hence, the gap between the time when children start to learn to read in

kindergarten and when children are tested for comprehension in third grade is huge (Stamm, 2014). Torgesen (2007) identified eight key aspects to developing and maintaining an effective intervention system for K-3 students. These aspects are:

- Strong motivation on the part of teachers and school leaders to be relentless in their efforts to leave no child behind.
- A reliable system for identifying students who need intensive interventions in order to make progress in learning to read.
- A reliable system for monitoring the effectiveness of interventions.
- Regular team meetings and leadership to enforce and enable the use of data to adjust interventions as needed.
- Regular adjustments to interventions based on student progress. The most frequent adjustments should involve group size and time (intensity).
- Enough personnel to provide the interventions with sufficient intensity (small group size and daily, uninterrupted intervention sessions).
- Programs and materials to guide the interventions that are consistent with scientifically based research in reading.
- Training, support, and monitoring to ensure that intervention programs are implemented with high fidelity and quality. (p. 2)

Torgesen (2007) also noted that small-group instruction, working with students outside of the regular reading block, and intensive interventions are practices that may be used to provide intensive interventions to striving readers. However, it is important to note that these are not the only ways that schools may provide effective interventions.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Literacy Promotion Act also prohibits the promotion of public-school students based solely on a student's age or other social promotion factors (MDE, 2014). Exemptions to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Literacy Promotion Act include: limited English-proficient students with less than 2 years of instruction in an English Language Learner program; students with disabilities whose individualized education program (IEP) indicates that participation in the statewide accountability assessment program is not appropriate, as authorized under state law; students with a disability and who participate in the accountability assessment and who have an IEP or Section 504 disability plan that reflects that the student has received intense remediation in reading for 2 years but still demonstrates a deficiency and was previously retained; students who demonstrate an acceptable level of reading proficiency on an alternative assessment approved by the State Board of Education; and students who have received intensive intervention in reading for 2 or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who previously were retained in kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for a total of 2 years and have not met exceptional education criteria (MDE, 2015).

What makes the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade so significant to the journey of literacy? According to research, between third and fourth grade, a critical transition takes place. As it was mentioned previously, in grades Pk-3 students are learning to read, in grades 4 and above, students read to learn (Dell, 2014; Goerge, Gwynne, Lesnick, & Smithgall, 2010; Green, 1995; Helio Education Foundation, 2014). In other research, Irwin et al., (2012) found that children who fall behind in reading at age seven continued to lag behind at age twelve and beyond. Age seven is a significant turning point for children because if they have not gotten the proper background and foundation in reading, then for the rest of their educational careers they will always be falling behind and not learning effectively from the materials they read (Irwin et al., 2012).

Numerous research studies have been completed about the efficacy of literacy instruction (National Reading Association, 2000; Durkin, 1993; Allington, 2001; Cooper, et al., 2012). Several theories suggested the best ways of teaching literacy instruction is explicitly, while others argued the best way to teach literacy is implicitly; however, literacy instruction research is a never-ending process. Research change all of the time regarding the new and best practices in teaching in general, specifically in literacy instruction. It is always important to use the most current techniques in the classroom to which this study hopes to add more suggestions. This research will contribute to the existing literature because teachers in lower elementary education need to be informed of, and introduced to, the most effective comprehension practices and use them in their classrooms to provide the best education for their students. There is still more to learn about literacy instruction and comprehension strategies. The present study will validate the research on effective strategies implemented to teach reading as many of these strategies are implemented by teachers whose students are successfully passing the mandated Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment in the state of Mississippi.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

In grade three, a number of students in Mississippi continue to score below the established standards in Reading. Therefore, they exit 3<sup>rd</sup> grade unable to read with comprehension. During the 2015-2016 school year, 37,831 third grade students took the Third-Grade Reading Summative Assessment; however, 5,612 students failed (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). If some students are learning to read prior to exiting 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the

question becomes what strategies teachers are using to teach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to read with comprehension. The purpose of this case study was to investigate strategies effective reading teachers in Mississippi are implementing to prepare their students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Summative Assessment. This information was collected using an interview protocol with fifteen elementary reading teachers. This chapter includes information about the description of the subjects involved in the study. It also includes information about the instruments put forth to collect the data. There is a discussion of the procedure put forth to collect the data and data analysis procedure given.

### **Review of Statement of the Problem**

The low income and poverty-stricken areas of Mississippi have historically suffered from low-test scores, low graduation rates, and a high concentration of special education students (Kober & Usher, 2012). Mississippi continues to rank last or near the bottom on national measures of reading achievement (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015; Smith & Narrett, 2013). For years, Mississippi's students have lagged behind their peers on national reading exams. On the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 21 percent of Mississippi's fourth-graders scored at or above proficient, compared to 34 percent nationwide. On the state's 2014 year-end reading exam, only about half of the state's third-graders scored proficient or advanced. Reading is fundamental to achievement, and it is associated with prominent educational policies (e.g., federal funding, teacher credentialing, No Child Left Behind [NCLB], standards, assessment, and accountability) (Young, Shepley, & Song, 2010).

Governor Phil Bryant and other state leaders implemented the Literacy-Based Promotion Act or "third-grade reading gate" in 2013. The act required that third grade students learn to read

on grade level in order to be promoted to the fourth grade. The third grade “reading gate” legislation also ensure that elementary school students achieve functional literacy before being promoted to the fourth grade (Empower Mississippi, 2016). The 3rd Grade Summative Assessment is a multiple-choice test that will be given online via a computer or tablet in your child’s school. All 3rd grade public school students in Mississippi are required to take the assessment. The assessment covers the Mississippi College- and Career-Ready Standards of reading for foundational skills, informational text, literature, and language. The assessment has 50 multiple choice questions (Empower Mississippi, 2016).

The program was first implemented in the 2014-2015 school year and the first round of testing for the Third-Grade Reading Summative Assessment was conducted in April of 2015. Students were graded in four categories for reading on the annual accountability assessment: Minimal, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced (Empower Mississippi, 2016). Data from the Mississippi Department of Education 2015- 2016 Student Assessment Data revealed that 87 percent of current third-grade students are reading on grade level, scoring at least 926 on the summative assessment, and 13 percent of students are not ready for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Thus, many students are successful and are promoted to fourth grade. However, a large percentage of third grade students in Mississippi are retained as they may not read with comprehension or pass the required summative assessment.

### **Research Design**

This research study was a qualitative case study that utilized an interview protocol to determine the instructional reading strategies implemented by effective reading teachers to get students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Reading Assessment. According to Rubin and Rubin

(1995), qualitative studies seek to “share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds” (p. 51). Denzin and Lincoln (2004) defines qualitative research as the study of things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research also acknowledges difference in the situations of interviews and is designed to gain understanding of a situation through description a difference drawn from the human experience (Maxwell, 2012). Glesne (2006) contends that during qualitative interviewing, descriptions are sought that explain motives, intentions, and circumstances (p. 27). A qualitative case study is the most suitable method for gathering useful information about individual teachers’ perspectives. A qualitative case study also allows for “a deep understanding and a rich account of complex processes” such as reading, which other research designs do not illustrate (Ruiz-Funes, 1999, p. 47). Likewise, a qualitative case study allows participants to discuss their experiences in depth and provide a more intimate description of the reading strategies they use in their classroom, which differs from the numerous quantitative studies conducted on reading and learning strategies. Finally, considering the research question set forth in the study, a qualitative case study was the most appropriate approach.

The following research question guided the study:

*What specific instructional strategies do effective teachers in the state of Mississippi implement to teach reading to students who passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment?*

### **Subject Selection and Description**

The population of the study consisted of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers from multiple school districts Mississippi. All other teachers were excluded because of their lack of familiarity with the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Fifteen (15) reading teachers were selected to participate in the

study. The schools served a range of students from similar socioeconomic statuses and economic groups. The participants were selected based on two criteria. First, participants must be employed as a third-grade reading teacher in the state of Mississippi. Second, they must have taught students that has taken the Third Grade Summative Assessment, and 95 % of the students met LBPA (Literacy Based Promotion Act) passing score the previous year. Each of the fifteen (15) participants were selected using the Mississippi Department of Education website. The researcher utilized the state's website to identify schools where at least 95 % of students met LBPA (Literacy Based Promotion Act) passing score and elected teachers from those schools to participate in the study. Building- level administrators were contacted through email prior to involving the teacher to gain approval of the study. The researcher asked administrators to identify the most effective 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading teacher in the school to contact to be involved in the study. Once approval from the principal was attained, the teachers were contacted by email. The email stated what the teachers were going to be involved in, the risk, and the benefits of the study. The email also stated that the results will be completely confidential, and the researcher will give the teachers a *pseudonyms* name. If the teachers agreed to participate in the study, the researcher scheduled a time to interview the participant face-to-face or through telephone.

### **Instrument**

The instrument that was utilized in this study was interviews. These interviews were face-to-face. During the interviews the researcher asked the teachers ten questions about the practices and strategies they implement to teach reading and prepare students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment. The interview questions were developed from the literacy instructional practices appearing in the literature that is associated with teaching reading instruction and improving

students' comprehension. These ten questions also emerged from major research studies and writing. The ten questions were:

1. What specific instructional strategy do you use to prepare students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
2. What specific strategies do you perceive to be most effective in getting students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
3. What specific strategies do you perceive to be most important in getting students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
4. To what extent do you differentiate your instructional strategies to teach students on grade level?
5. What is your perception regarding the teaching of reading strategies?
6. What strategies do you use most often to prepare students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment? Why do you use these strategies?
7. What are some notable strategies that lead to successful reading instruction?
8. What are some literacy problems that affect your students?
9. What are some of the struggles that your students experience?
10. What tends to work best in moving students from grade three to fourth grade?

### **Data Collection**

Patton (1990) recommends researchers to conduct interviews in order to learn the things they may not directly observe. The purpose of qualitative interviewing is not to get answers to questions, but to understand the experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 1998). Usually, qualitative studies use unstructured, open-ended interviews because they allow for the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both the participants and interviewer (Schwandt, 2001). Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of unstructured, open-ended interviews with directionality and an agenda to produce focused, qualitative, textual data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). This study collected

data using semi-structured interviews in order to obtain information regarding the strategies effective teachers in Mississippi implemented to get students to read on grade level and pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment.

Interviews were conducted in one setting with each participant due to the interviewees being in several different cities in Mississippi. Prior to interviewing each teacher, the researcher and the participants discussed the informed consent document. After reviewing the consent, the researcher gave the participant the consent document as a handout. The interview protocol was strategically modified to gain quality data in one interview. Each interview lasted approximately an hour to one hour and thirty minutes. Interviews were also conducted and recorded in a quiet, neutral location where the participants felt safe from intimidation or coercion.

### **Data Analysis**

For the purposes of explaining the methodology of this dissertation, data analysis is under a separate heading, but with this qualitative research, data collection and data analysis were conducted concurrently. Merriam (1998) emphasized that the process of data analysis is making sense out of the collected data. Dyson and Genishi (2005) suggested that data analysis is the process by which field notes, interviews, and artifacts are transformed into assertions about a studied phenomenon that answer posed questions. Schwandt (1997) defined data analysis as “working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 157). In order to successfully answer the research questions in this case study, data was gathered through teacher interviews. The data collection was aligned with the questions and the data analysis guideline.



The fifteen (15) teachers' interviews were audio recorded with verbal permission and then transcribed upon completion of the interviews to maintain accuracy of the information. Recording the participants' interviews allowed the researcher to refer back to the recordings and check for accuracy of the transcription and interpretation if necessary. The data generated may be enormous as the participants share details, situations, and emotions when retelling their experiences during the in-depth interviews (Glesne, 2006; Sideman, 2012). According to Yin (2014), data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, testing, or recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings. The researcher followed each of these steps. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and electronic folders were established to create organization for the data collected from each individual participant. Information provided by each participant separate and in sequence with the order of the interviews.

The process of organizing the data allowed it to remain manageable, easily accessible, and readily available. The researcher read the transcriptions several times for accuracy before beginning the process of coding to gain an understanding of the content. This involved reading through the interviews at least three times. After the initial readings, Hatch (2002) recommends researchers read data through completely with one typology in mind. Patton (1990) defines typologies as classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspect of the world into parts. According to Hatch (2002), typologies are generated from the theory, common sense, or research objectives. For this study, the researcher used the typologies or themes from the literature review as the constructs through which to view the data.

After reading through the data with each construct or typology in mind, the researcher coded the data into five categories from the literature by taking excerpts of text from the data and identifying it within a particular category. Coding is a process of qualitative data analysis that

starts with a multitude of concrete quotes, words, images, symbols, and moments grouped into categories and finally merged into general themes (Creswell, 2007). In general, coding schemata often involves three steps in the overall process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 1998). During the open coding step, the researcher developed the initial categories of information about how each of the fifteen teachers taught reading and the strategies and practices they implemented, if any, to prepare students for the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment. In the axial coding step (sometimes called mapping), the researcher assembled the data and categories into coding paradigms (also known as logical diagrams or maps), addressing dimensions such as central phenomenon, strategies, and context. In other words, axial coding maps the relationship between qualitative data and categories. Finally, in selective coding, the researcher identified the storyline or pattern that links the findings together, hopefully leading to a hypothesis that may be presented for future research.

After everything was coded, the researcher read through the data again while writing analytic notes on her thoughts and began the process of offering interpretations. During this stage the researcher began to interpret the data to find significance and meaning in the teachers' instructional experiences through pulling themes, reoccurring ideas, and patterns of belief that resonated collectively throughout the interviews.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

Reading is fundamental to achievement, and it is associated with prominent educational policies (e.g., federal funding, teacher credentialing, No Child Left Behind [NCLB], standards,

assessment, and accountability) (Young, Shepley, & Song, 2010). Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers all agree that third grade is a critical pivot point in which children go from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Children who do not read proficiently at this point tend to fall behind and are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their reading-proficient peers (Helios Education Foundation, 2014).

More than 8 million U.S. students in grades 4-12 struggle to read, write, and comprehend adequately (Guensburg, 2006). Consequently, researchers have found that 75 percent of students identified with reading problems in the third grade still struggle with reading in the ninth grade (Francis, 1996; Shaywitz, Escobar, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Makuch, 1992). Thus, meeting increased educational demands becomes more difficult for students who struggle to read.

To address this critical factor, many states are seeking practices educators may use to address the reading comprehension level of students who are transitioning from third grade to fourth grade. One such state is Mississippi. In 2013, the Mississippi State Legislature passed the Literacy-Based Promotion Act which focuses on improving literacy skills beginning in kindergarten and extending through third grade. This research study investigated the instructional strategies that effective teachers in Mississippi implemented to achieve success with students who are reading with comprehension and successfully passed the summative assessment. Through this examination, the researcher sought to determine what specific practices and strategies are being implemented by these effective teachers to get students reading on grade level and passing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment.

## **Background**

Reading is a dominate skill, and comprehension is the true meaning of reading, because, without it, a reader is simply decoding words. Many educators are concern about the number of elementary students, especially those in grade 3, who struggle with reading. Such concerns are warranted. Not only is reading the major foundational skill to learning, it is also highly correlated to academic success.

Between third and fourth grade, a critical transition takes place. The premise is that in grades Pk-3 students are learning to read, and in grades 4 and above, students read to learn (Goerge, Gwynne, Lesnick, & Smithgall, 2010; Green, 1995). Basically, from third grade onward, students receive very little instruction in reading comprehension. Instead, teachers focus on comprehension testing. Students who are not reading with comprehension by the time they exit third grade are likely to be challenged to successfully master other subjects (Goerge et al., 2010; Green, 1995). Consequently, there is a need to identify and implement practices and strategies that will assist students to read with comprehension by the time they exit third grade. Educators may equip readers with the tools need to help them construct meaning and comprehend the texts they read. Although it is suggestive that no single instructional strategy or practices has proved successful with all children, several studies and meta-analyses have examined strategies and practices that lead to successful reading instruction.

Since 2014, Mississippi students in kindergarten through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade have shown annual improvement in reading skills. Mississippi is now 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for gains in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading on NAEP (from 2007-2017) (Mississippi Department of Education, 2018). As a result, many students are successful and are promoted to fourth grade. However, a large percentage of third

grade students in Mississippi are retained as they may not read with comprehension or pass the required summative assessment. If some students are learning to read prior to exiting 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the question becomes what strategies teachers are using to teach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to read.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this qualitative study was collected through semi-structured interviews with fifteen reading teachers who had at least 95 % or higher percentage of students to meet LBPA (Literacy-Based Promotion Act) passing score. For the purpose of this study participants were given *pseudonyms* names are Shia, Bianca, Shayla, Rachel, Kimberly, Toya, Kevin, Amie, Ari, Olivia, Teresa, Emani, Chanel, Wanda, and Eva; their names have been changed to protect their identity. Initial communication was made through email.

Personal contact was made with the fifteen teachers agreeing to participate in the study. All participants read over and understood the consent form. They were also given a copy of the consent form to keep for their records. Each interview was conducted in a secure area in order to avoid disruptions and distractions. Each interview was audiotaped, and the researcher took notes during the interviews. Interviews ranged from 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The recorded data was transcribed, analyzed, and coded. Qualitative data software was not used.

Consisted with the purpose of this study which was to determine what specific practices and strategies are being implemented by third grade effective teachers to get students reading on grade level and passing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment one essential question was to be answered. The essential question was:

- *What specific instructional strategies do effective teachers in the state of Mississippi use to teach reading to students who passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment?*

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data from interview transcripts were analyzed to determine what specific strategies are reading teachers in the state of Mississippi implementing to prepare their students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. According to Yin (2014), data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings. With each transcript, the researcher analyzed the data through open coding—that is, collecting indicators such as words, phrases, or statements from the data. Open coding, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008) entails close examination of the data, breaking it down into parts, making comparisons, and questioning.

The researcher organized the data by teacher interviews. The coded interview responses were kept in a Microsoft Word document. The researcher made a copy of the coded data and then cut out teachers' responses to each question. The researcher sorted and grouped teachers' responses together. The researcher then read the teachers' responses again. After reading through each interview, the researcher transcribed it and then reread the transcription of each interview several times. While reading each transcript, the researcher listed ideas, and looked for certain vocabulary that each individual participant used.

After reading through the data with each construct or typology in mind, the researcher coded the data into five predetermined categories from the literature by taking excerpts of text from the data and identifying it within a particular category. Essentially, the researcher identified

patterns from what the interviewees said, and the data was placed into categories aligned with the National Reading Panel’s five noted strategies and practices that lead to successful reading instruction. The researcher looked for information that answered the research questions. The researcher compared the responses describing common experiences, then combined the responses in order to discern patterns in the information. Because the researcher was looking for patterns, only data from 50% of the sample (8 teachers and above) was used (Refer to Table 1 below).

*Table 1: Strategies Implemented by Teachers Aligned with the National Reading Panel’s Components of Literacy*

Phonics	Phonemic Awareness	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decoding</li> <li>Students blend syllables or words together to create one word</li> <li>Prefixes and Suffixes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blending and word pattern strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided Reading</li> <li>Think Aloud</li> <li>Read aloud to children to provide a model of fluent reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Figure out unknown words as they read</li> <li>Using context clues to define difficult vocabulary</li> <li>Word Wall</li> <li>Vocabulary Cards</li> <li>Roots and Affixes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activating prior knowledge</li> <li>Generating questions while reading</li> <li>Inferring</li> <li>Predicting</li> <li>Summarizing</li> <li>Graphic and semantic organizers</li> <li>Comprehension monitoring</li> <li>Cooperative learning</li> <li>Multiple strategy teaching in which multiple procedures are used</li> <li>Citing Evidence from text</li> <li>Text Structure</li> <li>Test-Taking Strategies</li> <li>Small, flexible guided reading groups</li> </ul>

Five categories and five (5) themes emerged through the analyzed data from fifteen interviews with regards to the Research Question. The researcher reexamined each theme to ensure that the theme related to a category. Changes were made as needed, which included combining or deleting themes.

The identified themes led to an answer to the research question which asked: *What specific instructional strategies do effective teachers in the state of Mississippi use to teach reading to students who passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment?* The themes identified were:

- **Theme 1:** Small Group Instruction
- **Theme 2:** Building Students' Vocabulary
- **Theme 3:** Modeling through read-aloud
- **Theme 4:** Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies
- **Theme 5:** Teaching Test-Taking Strategies

These five themes emerged because of the frequency in which they appeared during data analysis. The information informing the themes were used to answer the research question.

## **Findings**

The next section includes the discussion, beginning with the research question, then each theme is described. This is repeated until all themes are listed and explained. In the following section, supporting evidence for each theme that emerged is also found to support its relevance in the study.

### **Theme 1: Small Group Instruction**

The analysis of the data led to the emergence of one theme relevant to the specific strategies reading teachers are implementing to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment: small group instruction. Through examining the descriptions of the participants'



teaching practices and experiences, it was evident thirteen of the participating teachers used small, flexible grouping to prepare their students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Small group instruction has proven to have a positive impact on third grade students' reading comprehension. Small group instruction is a strategy employed by many of the participants to differentiate instruction and to promote maximum learning. During small flexible grouping students are typically grouped and regrouped according to specific goals, activities, and individual needs.

### **A Summary Description of Participant Responses**

Shai acknowledged that she uses small group to differentiate her reading instruction. During small group, she conducts mini-lessons and word activities on students' individual levels. Eva said she use small flexible group to differentiate her instructional strategies. She reported that she uses small group instruction to meet the needs of the learners. During small group instruction, students are mixed according to their abilities. While students are in small group working, she basically focuses on teaching the students in group with her decoding and comprehension strategies.

Similar, Wanda and Emani stated that they use guided reading groups regularly. Both teachers meet with three groups of five students daily, and while meeting with these groups, other students are working in small group settings. In these groups, students are engaged in differentiated literacy work on their instructional levels.

Another teacher, Olivia, said believes what works for one student does not work for all student. She quoted, "There is no one size fits all in the reading classroom. At least not in mines." Therefore, she differentiates her classroom instructional practices during small group

and whole group instruction. She uses small group instruction to reteach skills and concepts based on students' needs. She also let students practice work in centers through assignments that are differentiated based on students' ability.

Amie stated she uses small group to make sure she reaches all of her students on their instructional level. According to Amie, small group enables her to differentiate her instructional strategies. While students are working in groups, she works with a group of 5 to 6 students (typically students with the same literacy problems) at the teacher table where she either reteach skills and concepts or provide additional small, differentiated practice in using a strategy.

Similar, Ari uses small group to differentiate her instructional strategies. While students are working in groups or pairs, she makes her way around to each group to work with students one-on-one or in pairs. She believes different students need different strategies; some of my students need support using decoding words, while others need help monitoring their comprehension. Guided reading groups is another form of scaffolding she uses to help her students improve their reading fluency and comprehension.

Bianca reported she use small, flexible grouping to reach all her students, and to accommodate each individual student's learning style, readiness, and interest. She uses small, flexible grouping to reteach students who do not understand a concept or skill and reteach the concept or skill in a different way in small group, providing additional practice time. Group size are adjusted to accommodate and reflect student progress. Likewise, instructional objectives, centers and independent activities are aligned with instructional goals and objectives focused on achieving grade-level standards.

Kevin acknowledged that he uses small group to provide students with opportunities to learn content, become independent learners, and develop skills from face-to-face interactions. He adds that during small group instruction students are exposed to an array of strategies that may help them in the reading process and hopefully help them grow to be proficient readers. These strategies include think/pair/share, using graphic organizers, performing read-aloud, modeling and scaffolding instruction, teaching students how to find the main idea and summarize a text, providing vocabulary instruction (context clues), and teaching students test taking strategies. Furthermore, he explained: “I believe strategies should be introduced in sequential order, starting with creating mental images, and moving (in the following order) to using background knowledge, asking questions, making inferences, determining importance, synthesizing information, and finally fix-up strategies.”

## **Theme 2: Building Students’ Vocabulary**

The analysis of the data led to the emergence of another theme relevant to the specific strategies reading teachers are implementing to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment: building student’s vocabulary. Through examining the descriptions of the participants’ teaching practices and experiences, it was evident all of the participating teachers implement vocabulary strategies to prepare their students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Vocabulary strategies were proven successful for preparing students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. There are endless ways to teach and practice vocabulary and they each discussed how they teach vocabulary in their classrooms.

## **A Summary Description of Participant Responses**

Teresa disclosed that she teaches her students blending and word pattern strategies to help with their phonics. Furthermore, she teaches her students vocabulary strategies such as using context clues to identify unknown words and common word parts including affixes, base words, and root words, which accelerate vocabulary growth by helping children learn the meanings of multiple unknown words.

Rachel revealed that she teaches her students vocabulary strategies such as teaching student show to use context clues to define difficult words. Rachel also said she uses semantic maps and concept cubes to teach vocabulary and word parts. Both of these organizers increase students' grasp of vocabulary words in her opinion.

Kevin thinks building student's vocabulary is important when trying to help student comprehend and understand a text. He stated, "The more students read, the more they encounter unfamiliar terms. Therefore, I teach my students context clues strategies to help them with new vocabulary. Teaching students to use context clues help them use clues around the words to guess the meaning of the words."

Olivia said she teaches her students how to break down individual words and puzzle out their meanings by looking for the parts of the word they know. In contrast, Wanda, Kevin, Emani, Bianca, and Shai use Frayer words to help students build their vocabulary. According to Wanda and Kevin, the model prompts students to think about and describe the meaning of unfamiliar words or concepts. With the use of the model, the target word is defined, characteristics are identified along with examples and non-examples. This provides students with an opportunity to explain and elaborate their understanding of a target word from a text we are

reading. In addition, Shai also revealed that she teaches her students word parts to help build their vocabulary.

Kimberly said she uses think-aloud often to teach her students vocabulary. She believes thinking aloud help students build stronger reading foundation. She also uses the Frayer Model to teach vocabulary. She said she find the four-square Frayer model useful in provoking students' thought about new concept during thinking aloud and to describe the meaning of a word.

### **Theme 3: Modeling through read-aloud**

The analysis of the data led to the third emergence theme relevant to the specific strategies reading teachers are implementing to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment: modeling through read-aloud. Through examining the descriptions of the participants' teaching practices and experiences, it was evident several of the participating teachers implement read-aloud to prepare their students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Read-aloud strategies were proven successful for preparing students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Reading aloud is a powerful way to engage students in the literacy process. Reading aloud also has demonstrated a significant impact on students' reading development. Below is discussed how teachers implement read-aloud to prepare their students for the Third-Grade Summative Assessment.

#### **A Summary Description of Participant Responses**

Ari said she performs read-aloud audibly, where she focuses on punctuation and explain unfamiliar words using context clues strategies. She also asks students question from the read-aloud to help with their understanding of a text. Emani uses read aloud opportunities to explicitly

model reading and teach student pre-reading behaviors (e.g., making predictions, looking at the picture, etc.), during reading behaviors, such as think aloud, and after reading behaviors (e.g., responding to what was read, sharing, etc.).

Kimberly reported that she performs a lot of read-aloud in her classroom. She stated that read-aloud strategies are researched based and she believes they makes content learning easy and helps students with comprehension. During read aloud, she performs think-aloud for her students to modeled for them how they should be thinking when they are trying to comprehend a text. She also pulls out vocabulary words she thinks students will struggle with to help students with comprehension. As a result, Kimberly says her students acquire and retain content knowledge and content specific abilities through read-aloud.

Finally, Toya and Rachel also said that they believed read aloud is effective in promoting reading comprehension and getting students to read on grade level. Toya said she read aloud to students and teach them test-taking strategies through reading instruction. She uses read aloud activities as a regular part of the instructional day to model fluent reading for students. She disclosed that she completes at least one read aloud activity for students.

#### **Theme 4: Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies**

The analysis of the data led to the emergence of a fourth theme relevant to the specific strategies reading teachers are implementing to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment: teaching reading comprehension strategies. Through another examination of the descriptions of the participants' teaching practices and experiences, it was evident all of the participating teachers use reading comprehension strategies to prepare their students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Reading comprehension strategies has proven to have a positive impact on third grade students' reading comprehension and reading retention. It is a

strategy employed by all of the teachers. Teaching reading comprehension strategies indisputably benefits student comprehension because they help with the retention of students' reading comprehension. Students who possess reading strategy knowledge and have training in comprehension strategies are better able to comprehend text. There is an array of reading strategies that may be taught to students to them with comprehension, and below is a summary of how participants utilize reading comprehension strategies in their classrooms.

### **A Summary Description of Participant Responses**

All fifteen (15) of the teachers agree that teaching reading strategies are important. Ari said she believes exposing students to reading strategies is most beneficial in getting students to pass the summative assessment. She uses pair reading, group reading and whole class reading in her instruction. Reading comprehension is the main focus. She uses these strategies so that the fast readers and/or advanced readers improve the reading pace of the slow readers. In this way, the slow readers become relaxed and gain confidence. Additionally, Ari said asking students to use strategies such as making connections when reading or self-verbalizing when solving problems is very important. She believes these strategies and other strategies are beneficial in getting students to pass the summative assessment and produce successful readers. Finally, she disclosed that she focuses a lot on developing spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. Her goal in her classroom and through her instruction is to develop lifelong readers and learners who may read for pleasure.

Kevin said he believe teaching students reading comprehension strategies is the best ways to help students connect to a text deeply and engage in higher-level thinking. He believes strategies should be introduced in a sequential order, starting with creating mental images, and moving to using background knowledge, asking questions, making inferences, determining

importance, synthesizing information, and finally introducing using fix-up strategies. Kevin said that he believes teaching his students to identify gist, main ideas and specific details, and even making inferences about what they are reading during reading instruction are important strategies.

Amie revealed that she believes teaching students reading comprehension strategies is very important. She believes reading comprehension strategies help students better understand what they are reading. She explained,

“Reading comprehension strategies should be taught explicitly. When teachers explicitly teach comprehension strategies, students are more likely to apply the strategies while reading independently. Simply providing opportunities or requiring students to read will not teach students the comprehension strategies they need to be proficient readers. They need to be taught directly as students learn to read.”

Kimberly said she believes providing quality instruction is crucial in helping children become successful readers. Quality instruction includes teaching students reading comprehension strategies they may use when they encounter difficult texts. She also believes in order to teach the reading components (e.g. phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension), students have to be taught effective reading strategies in order to benefit from such instruction. She noted that research has shown that teaching strategies is one of the most effective means of helping students to overcome their reading problems. She believes her classroom practices yield positive results as far as reading instruction is concerned, and this is indicated by her students’ performance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade summative assessment. She explained, “Not only do I pay attention to students reading fluency, I also monitor students’ reading



comprehension. As a result, so far I have never had a student to fail the assessment or be promoted to grade 4 without being on grade level.”

Bianca also said she believed that teaching students reading comprehension strategies is important. She acknowledged that as students progress through grades, the texts they read become more complex, and in order to understand these complex texts, students need to have a repertoire of strategies to draw upon, and know how to use them in different contexts, especially struggling students. She explained, “Struggling students need explicit teaching of reading strategies to become better readers. It is also important for students to practice using these strategies during reading instruction. Practicing using reading strategies help develop students into active, purposeful, thinking readers.”

Shai also said she believes teaching students reading comprehension strategies is important because she believes effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during, and after reading. Before reading, they use their prior knowledge to think about the topic and make predictions about the likely meaning of the text. During reading, they monitor their understanding by questioning, thinking about, and reflecting on the information in the text. After reading, they also reflect upon the ideas and information in the text and relate what they have read to their own experiences and knowledge. Additionally, she said she believes struggling readers benefit the most from a variety of instructional strategies.

During Eva interview, she said she believes learning to read with a cognitive reading strategy is very beneficial. She believes there are three types of reading strategies which are useful when learning to read: first, reading for gist or skimming; second, reading for specific information; and third, looking for inferences, reading comprehension, and/or reading for

detailed comprehension. She teaches these strategies explicitly to students, Additionally, she believes early identification of struggling readers, differentiating instruction in the classroom, and using individual student data to guide reading instruction are other effective strategies that may be used to providing quality instruction to students.

Similar, Rachel said she believe effective teaching demands teaching strategies that accommodate the diverse abilities and backgrounds of her students. She said that teaching reading comprehension strategies is important because strategies help train the brain to think strategically and actively integrate thinking to comprehend. Moreover, effectively teaching comprehension reading strategies help keep students more engaged with the text and has positive effects on students' reading comprehension. She believes students should read with understanding, and they should obtain information about the story or text they are reading, not just to read for the sake of punctuation and pronunciation. Thus, Rachel reported that she teaches her students comprehension strategies such as: students monitoring their reading, generating questions about the text, and identifying text structure/organization.

### **Theme 5: Teaching Test-Taking Strategies**

The analysis of the data led to the emergence of the final theme relevant to the specific strategies reading teachers are implementing to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment: teaching test-taking strategies. Through examining the descriptions of the participants' teaching practices and experiences, it was evident majority of the fifteen participating teachers teach their students test-taking strategies to prepare them for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Test-taking strategies has proven to have a positive impact on third grade students' testing scores. Test-taking strategies also ensure that students have good test

taking skills and earn more success. A description of how teachers implement test-taking strategies to prepare students for the summative assessment is discussed below.

### **A Summary Description of Participant Responses**

Toya said she integrates a series of test-taking lessons into the reading block to expose students to genre used in standardized testing and to prepare them for the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment. During these lessons, students learn, and practice strategies related to locating and highlighting relevant information within text, eliminating inappropriate answer choices, and selecting correct answers.

Emani teaches students test-taking strategies, such as eliminating incorrect answer choices, highlighting key words, and going back in the text to underline evidence to support their answers. Chanel said she teaches students test-taking strategies, such as eliminating incorrect answer choices and going back in the text to underline evidence to support their answers. Wanda said she teaches students a lot of test prep strategies, underlining key words, eliminating incorrect answer choices, going back in the text to find evidence and support, and rereading the text.

Eva believed teaching students test-taking strategies tends to work best in moving students from grade three to fourth grade since my students have to pass the summative assessment to be promoted. She disclosed that she teaches students test taking strategies in small and whole group exercises. Test-taking strategies included familiarizing students with different question formats. Additionally, Eva said she review and practice multiple choice (selected-response) strategies with student before an assessment. She's noticed that on multiple-choice tests, the vocabulary and layout of the answers confuse her students. Therefore, exposing students to multiple testing formats is important.

Finally, Amie perceive teaching students test-taking strategies is important in getting students to pass the summative assessment. Eva said,

“I teach students to use A.C.E for open ended questions (Answer the question. Cite an example. Extend your thinking); teach vocabulary strategies and important ELA (compare, contrast, summarize, describe, explain, infer, author purpose, theme and main idea) and high-stakes test terms (analyze, persuade, infer, explain, describe, and conclusion).”

Five themes emerged from the data analysis. Each of the themes confirms the specific strategies successful third grade reading teachers are using to prepare their students to pass the Third Grade Summative Assessment.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion of Finding and Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the findings of the study, draws conclusions and offers recommendations for future research. The study focused on the strategies implemented by teachers in the state of Mississippi whose students passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment.

Reading is a basic skill that is critical for everyday life. As stated in earlier chapters, this dissertation aimed to investigate and determine what specific strategies are being implemented by effective teachers in Mississippi to get students reading on grade level and to pass the Third Grade Summative Assessment. After conducting interviews with fifteen participants, five themes

emerged that answered the research question. These themes appeared consistently during data analysis. The themes were:

- Theme 1: Small Group Instruction
- Theme 2: Building Student's Vocabulary
- Theme 3: Modeling through read-aloud
- Theme 4: Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies
- Theme 5: Teaching Test-Taking Strategies

Interviews were conducted with teachers whose students successfully passed the Third Grade Summative Assessment. The responses to a protocol containing ten questions enabled the researchers to answer the following research question.

*What specific instructional strategies do effective teachers in the state of Mississippi implement to teach reading to students who passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment?*

There is a common belief among educators that strategy usage has a positive impact on students when they are trained to apply the strategies effectively. Janzen (1996) noted that strategy instruction is useful in the reading context because students develop knowledge about the reading process. An analysis of the data revealed that participants in this study disclosed that instruction in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension are important when teaching students in the primary grades (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015; National Reading Panel, 2000). The National Reading Panel (2000) identified five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. All fifteen participants reported that they used some form of the five components to teach reading to their students: 1) *Small group instruction*; 2) *Building Students'*

*Vocabulary; 3) Modeling through read-aloud; 4) Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies; and 5) Teaching Test-taking strategies.*

## **Themes from the Study**

**Theme 1: Small Group Instruction.** Small group instruction was a prominent feature in these findings. Differentiated small-group reading instruction enables teachers to focus on specific skills needed by varied groups of children (Tyner, 2003). It also allows teachers to match instruction to meet the needs of learners (Kosanovich, Ladinsky, Nelson, & Torgesen, 2007). Small group reading instruction is in alignment with the views of Vygotsky, who believed that learning is naturally social and that children make sense of various school activities through observation, participation, and social interaction (Williams, et al., 2009). The underlying principle of the sociocultural theory is that a novice (students) may learn from an expert (teacher) through scaffolding. The interaction between peers is significant when it comes to learning. Wilson, et al. (2012) acknowledged that effective teachers provide opportunities for children to participate in literacy activities, model learned behaviors, and offer instructional support. Teachers also observe students as they are learning and modify instruction, clarify misconceptions, and discuss material to meet the specific learning needs of each child in a small group. Each group receives high-quality reading instruction and children are engaged in meaningful tasks that are related to their specific instructional levels (Kiley, 2007). Through these social interactions and small-group learning activities, children are able to integrate and control specific knowledge and skills gradually, as they participate in meaningful, hands-on practice of those skills (Wilson, et al., 2012).

Teachers who participated in the study implemented small group instruction to differentiate instruction and to promote maximum learning. Shai acknowledged that she implements small groups to differentiate her reading instruction. During small group, she conducts mini-lessons and word activities on students' individual levels. Similar, Eva said she uses small group instruction to meet the needs of the learners. During small group instruction, students are mixed according to their abilities. Wanda and Emani stated that they implement guided reading groups regularly. Both teachers meet with three groups of five students daily, and while they are meeting with these groups, other students are working in small group settings completing individualized reading tasks. Bianca also reported she utilize small, flexible grouping to reach all of her students and to accommodate each student's learning style, readiness, and interest. She uses small, flexible grouping to reteach students who do not understand a concept or skill. She re-teaches the concept or skill differently in small group and provides students with additional practice time. Group size is adjusted to accommodate and reflect student progress. According to Tyner (2005), one key point that makes guided reading successful is that students are regularly evaluated and shuffled and reshuffled in flexible groups to meet instructional needs best.

**Theme 2: Building Students' Vocabulary.** A child's vocabulary is enriched with words that it has learned through social interactions. Indeed, children learn some words incidentally in context; however, they accumulate a multitude of words through interactions in their immediate world (Gunderson, D'Silva, & Chen, 2011). As noted by the Barksdale Reading Institute (2015), reading vocabulary is critical to the comprehension processes of a skilled reader. Young readers usually find difficulty in comprehending a text if they do not know a lot of the words in the text

(Harmer, 2005). Thus, the vocabulary of readers is the key to learning to make the transition from oral to written forms (Armbruster et al., 2001).

Vocabulary was found to be essential in preparing students for the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment. After transcribing and analyzing the data, it was evident that all of the participating teachers teach their students vocabulary strategies to prepare them for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. There are unending ways to teach and practice vocabulary. Teresa disclosed that she teaches her students blending and word pattern strategies to help with their phonics. Furthermore, she teaches her students vocabulary strategies such as using context clues to identify unknown words and common word parts including affixes, base words, and root words, which accelerate vocabulary growth by helping children learn the meanings of various unknown words. Rachel and Kevin revealed that they teach their students context clues strategies to help them define difficult words they encounter in texts.

Pressley and Allington (2014) revealed that most students often misinterpret the meaning of unfamiliar words in context due to either poor prior knowledge or weak contextual clues within the text. As a result, teaching common word parts including affixes, base words, and root words may accelerate vocabulary growth by helping students learn the meanings of various unknown words (Adams, 1990; Armbruster et al., 2001; Cunningham, 2009; Marzano, 2004). Adams (1990) also recommended teaching word parts by common meaning to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills (p.151). Olivia disclosed that she teaches her students how to break down individual words and puzzle out their meanings by looking for the parts of the word they know. In contrast, Wanda, Kevin, Emani, Bianca, Kimberly, and Shai Frayer used swords to help students build their vocabulary.



**Theme 3: Modeling through read-aloud.** Fien, et al. (2011) acknowledged that "read aloud approaches are a prevalent component of reading instruction in the early grades" (p. 308). Read-aloud is powerful and serves many instructional purposes. They motivate and encourage students, build background knowledge and assist students in making connections, develop comprehension, and serve as a model of what fluent reading sounds like (Wadsworth, 2008). Read-aloud strategies were proven to be successful in preparing students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment.

According to several of the participating teachers, reading aloud is a powerful way to engage students in the literacy process. Reading aloud also has demonstrated a significant impact on students' reading development. Ari disclosed that she performs read-aloud audibly in her class daily, where she focuses on punctuation and explain unfamiliar words to students using context clues strategies. Emani disclosed that she utilizes read- aloud opportunities to explicitly model reading and teach student pre-reading behaviors (e.g., making predictions, looking at the picture, etc.), during reading behaviors, such as think aloud, and after reading behaviors (e.g., responding to what was read, sharing, etc.). Similar, Toya and Rachel noted that they believed read-aloud is effective in promoting reading comprehension and getting students to read on grade level. They also acknowledged that they use the strategy daily. This is supported by research. Razinski and Padak (2000) recommended that teachers incorporate read-aloud strategies daily, especially in classes which include students with reading difficulties, as such strategies allow learners to become more familiar with literacy (Wood & Salvetti, 2001).

Thinking aloud is a common and effective form of modeling that helps students focus on building meaning (Bauman, Seifert-Kessel, & Jones, 1992) and understanding how successful readers construct meaning while reading. Kimberly said during read-aloud, she performs think-

aloud for her students to model for them how they should be thinking when they are trying to comprehend a text. She also pulls out vocabulary words she believes students will struggle with to help students with comprehension. As a result, Kimberly says her students acquire and retain content knowledge and content specific abilities through read-aloud.

**Theme: Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies.** Good readers are strategic learners who think about what they read, develop specific reading strategies and skills, and learn to apply these strategies and skills as a way to get meaning from a variety of texts (Roit, 2017). Comprehension is the essence of reading (Durkin, 1993), and reading depends on many levels of language skills. According to Allington (2001), most readers benefit immensely when they may construct meaning that helps make the comprehension processes visible. Comprehension strategies are conscious or intentional plans that students use to achieve a goal (Roit, 2005) and are used deliberately to make sense of a text (Afflerbach et al. 2008). There are many avenues to improve reading comprehension, including the previously mentioned teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, and vocabulary (Barksdale Reading Institute, 2015).

It was evident that all of the participating teachers implemented reading comprehension strategies to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Reading comprehension strategies has proven to have a positive impact on third-grade students' comprehension. Reading is a highly strategic process during which readers are constantly constructing meaning using a variety of strategies, such as activating background knowledge, monitoring and clarifying, making predictions, drawing inferences, asking questions and summarizing (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Kimberly disclosed that she believes it is important to teach students reading comprehension strategies they may utilize when they encounter difficult texts. She also believes in order to teach the reading components (e.g. phonemic awareness,

phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension), students have to be taught effective reading strategies in order to benefit from such instruction. Bianca revealed that she teaches students reading comprehension strategies because as students progress through grades, the texts they read become more complex, and to understand these complex texts, students need to have a repertoire of strategies to draw upon, and know how to utilize them in different contexts, especially struggling students. Cooper et al. (2012) found visualizing, making connections, monitoring, inferencing, identifying important information, generating and answering questions, summarizing and synthesizing, and evaluating as key strategies that may enhance students' comprehension when they are taught explicitly.

During Eva's interview, she said she believe learning to read with a cognitive reading strategy is very beneficial. She thinks there are three types of reading strategies which are useful when learning to read: first, reading for gist or skimming; second, reading for specific information; and third, looking for inferences, reading comprehension, and/or reading for detailed comprehension. Kevin said that he believes teaching his students to identify gist, main ideas, and specific details, and even making inferences about what they are reading during reading instruction are essential strategies.

Kevin also said he believes teaching students reading comprehension strategies is the best ways to help students connect to a text profoundly and engage in higher-level thinking. He introduces strategies in sequential order, starting with creating mental images, and moving to use background knowledge, asking questions, making inferences, determining importance, synthesizing information, and finally introducing using fix-up strategies. Pressley (2000) notes that it is beneficial to begin instruction by teaching individual comprehension strategies. He emphasizes that it takes time for students to develop strategic knowledge and proficiency. When

students are taught comprehension strategies systematically throughout the grades, they gradually become more adept, flexible and independent in their usage of strategies.

Finally, Amie revealed that she believes teaching reading comprehension strategies should be taught explicitly. When teachers explicitly teach comprehension strategies, students are more likely to apply the strategies while reading independently. This is supported by research. Explicit instruction is considered a powerful delivery system for teaching comprehension strategies (Kamil et al., 2008), as it is a clear and direct approach (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Such instruction conveys new information to students in a supportive climate, within which explicit explanations, modeling, or demonstrating and guided practice are essential (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009). Duffy (2002) noted that students, even high achieving students, benefit from explicit instruction and modeling of how to use strategies. The instructional goal is for students to understand, internalize and use strategies independently. They need to learn what strategies are, why they are essential, and how, when and where to apply them (Roit, 2017).

**Theme 5: Teaching Test-Taking Strategies.** Though it was not specifically discussed in the literature, after thoroughly examining the transcribed data from the teachers' interviews, it became evident that teaching students test-taking strategies is a practice used by teachers to prepare students for the Third Grade Summative Assessment. Teaching students test-taking strategies have proven to have a positive impact on third-grade students' testing scores.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) found that learning test-taking strategies improve the validity of a test by making scores reflect more accurately what students know. A test-wise student will answer a question incorrectly only if he or she does not know the content, not

because the test format is confusing or intimidating. Toya acknowledged that she integrates a series of test-taking lessons into the reading block; students learn, and practice strategies related to locating and highlighting relevant information within the text, eliminating inappropriate answer choices, and selecting correct answers. Similar, Wanda and Emani disclosed that they teach their students test-taking strategies, such as eliminating incorrect answer choices, highlighting key words, rereading the text, and going back in the text to underline evidence to support their answers. Furthermore, Eva disclosed that she teaches students test-taking strategies in small and whole group exercises. Test-taking strategies included familiarizing students with different question formats. Finally, Amie teach students to use A.C.E for open-ended questions (Answer the question. Cite an example. Extend your thinking); teach vocabulary strategies and important ELA (compare, contrast, summarize, describe, explain, infer, author purpose, theme, and the main idea) and high-stakes test terms (analyze, persuade, infer, explain, describe, and conclusion). Research conducted by Berliner (1986) revealed that low-income students and those not proficient in English gain more from test preparation than their more academically proficient peers. This includes students characterized as "special" or "remedial" or culturally diverse (Berliner, 1986; Dreisbach & Keogh, 1982; Kalechstein, Kaleschstein & Doctor, 1981; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1987).

## **Conclusion**

There are a number of research-based principles of best practices in reading which have been proven to be useful to all learners (Morrow et al., 2003). All teachers participating in the study expressed that reading comprehension is essential. The importance of understanding the nature of good instruction in the primary grades may not be overstated. More than a decade of research has established a strong correlation between those who learn to read early and later

academic success. When teaching students who struggle with reading comprehension, it is imperative that educators figure out which reading strategies work best for their students. Not all strategies will work the same for every student, so a teacher needs to determine the specific strategies to fit the needs of each student without overwhelming their students by introducing too many strategies at once.

The data from this study indicated that five strategies and practices are effective in teaching reading and preparing students for the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment. These strategies are: *Small Group Instruction, Building Students' Vocabulary, Modeling through read-aloud, Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies, and Teaching Test-taking strategies.* Overall, the findings of this study highlight that the five strategies above are implemented by teachers who are effective in teaching their students to read in the state of Mississippi. Teaching students specific reading strategies and when to utilize them helps students become successful readers. It is also important to note that none of the participants in the study depended on one particular strategy to prepare students for success.

Results of this study suggest that if an assessment is put in place at the end of third grade, teachers may find strategies that may be implemented to assist students in passing that assessment. When this occurs, students may move into grade four ready to learn, rather than struggling for the remainder of their schooling. Giving students a robust early start on literacy provides a significant saving to federal, state, and local governments.

### **Implication for Practice**

There were several implications from the study. First, finding from this study may be shared with institutions of higher learning to stress the importance of teaching reading. Student

teachers in preparation programs and educators in graduate programs should be aware of explicit and implicit reading strategy instruction. They should know what reading strategies are, why strategic reading is important, and which reading strategies are most effective for learners, especially struggling/striving readers. Moreover, student teachers in preparation programs and educators in graduate programs, furthering their education, should be knowledgeable about research and theory regarding how individuals learn to read, how to provide appropriate literacy instruction based on assessed needs and how to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

New third-grade “reading gates” have put great pressure on teachers, as well as school administrators, superintendents, and school board members to seek innovative ways to increase student achievement and to ensure that effective teachers are in all classrooms, so emphasis is on developing and improving teacher quality is essential. Critical to developing students’ reading abilities by the third grade is the instruction they receive in the classroom. Thus, superintendents, stakeholders, administrators, and elementary school principals must have full knowledge and understanding of best practices and strategies in reading instruction and finding to this study assist in their understanding. Professional development is an essential component in improving the instructional practices of reading teachers. Professional learning supports both individual and systemic development and growth (Bean & Ippolito, 2016; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Matsumura, Bickel, Zook-Howell, Correnti, & Walsh, 2016; Walpole & McKenna, 2013). To improve students’ learning, an effective school or district provides learning opportunities that build teachers’ capacity to enable them to assume ownership and responsibility for improving the culture of the school and the instruction/curriculum provided for students (Bean & Ippolito, 2016; Guskey, 2000; Risko & Vogt, 2016; Vogt & Shearer, 2016). Components of professional

development should include pedagogy, current reading theory, current reading research and research-based general reading strategies.

Finally, principals of schools may also utilize the results of this study to hold professional developments sessions for reading teachers. The results of the study may also be utilized by teachers who are interested in improving their instructional capacity in the area of reading. Sharing the findings with teachers and teacher educators to emphasize the importance of the appropriate use of reading strategies and practices that promote maximum learning is another implication for practice.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine what specific practices and strategies are being implemented by effective teachers in Mississippi to get students reading on grade level and to pass the 3rd Grade Summative Assessment. Further studies in connection with specific evidence-based literacy practices would add to the body of research. Researchers could expand the study including more teachers from various school districts in Mississippi. Furthermore, researchers could conduct a survey to determine the extent in which teachers in other states use these strategies. Finally, researchers could conduct a focus group using reading teachers from the state of Mississippi to refine the use of reading strategies and gain a deeper understanding of how the strategies work.

### **Reflections of the Researcher**

As a classroom teacher of seven years, I have my own perceptions of instructional strategies and practices within the reading and language arts classroom. I believe that in most schools, teachers are not active participants in curricular and instructional decision-making



process. Most of the students I have encountered struggled with reading and comprehension. I care about students and teachers, and I want teachers to have opportunities to share their perceptions as teacher practitioners. I want effective teachers who are successful at teaching students to read on grade level and pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment to share their instructional practices and strategies with others. I believe the most important thing a school can do for a student's education is to ensure he or she has a good teacher. Thus, schools need to find ways in which they can provide teachers with the necessary tools to help them effectively assist students to be proficient readers.

This study has highlighted for me how important it is for teachers and students to receive research-based teaching pedagogy that will enhance the reading proficiency level of students in grades kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and prepare them for success very early in their academic careers. I was surprised by the array of practices and strategies implemented by the teachers, and equally surprised that not all practices and strategies were considered as having equal value. In the past, I have taught my students an array of practices and strategies targeted at improving their reading and comprehension. I am thrilled about the practices and strategies the effective teachers shared with me, and I am eager to employ these practices and strategies and recommend them to others teacher practitioners.

## References

- Alibali, M (2006). Does visual scaffolding facilitate students' mathematics learning? Evidence from early algebra. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=54>
- Abrokwa, A., Presson, E., Simon, E., Ullman, S. (2010). Mississippi Kids Count-Literacy. Harvard Law School. Retrieved from <https://kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Literacy1.pdf>.
- Adams, M. J., & Collins, A. M. (1979). A schema-theoretic view of reading in Fredolle, RO (ed.) Discourse Processing Multidisciplinary Perspectives. *Norwood, NJ Ablex.*
- Adams, M. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Adler, C.R. (Ed). 2001. Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pp. 49-54. National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2017, from [http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading\\_first1text.html](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1text.html).
- Advancement Project (2005). *Education on Lockdown: The School to Jailhouse Track*, Washington, D.C.
- Advancement Project, Education Law Center—PA, FairTest, The Forum for Education and Democracy, Juvenile Law Center, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (2011). Federal policy, ESEA reauthorization, and the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Advancement Project. (2012, December 12). *Testimony of Judith A. Browne Dianis Co-Director, Advancement Project Hearing on Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, Senate Committee on the Judiciary*. Washington, DC.

- Aebersold, J.A., & Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Afflerbach, P., & Cho, B. Y. (2009). Identifying and describing constructively responsive comprehension strategies in new and traditional forms of reading. In S. Israel & G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 69–90). New York, NY: Routledge
- Afflerbach, P, Pearson, P.D. & Paris, S.G. (2008). Clarifying differences between reading skills and reading strategies. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(5), 364-373.
- Alberta Learning (2005). Instructional Strategies. Knowledge and Employability Studio Instructional Strategies Teacher Workstation. Retrieved from [www.LearnAlberta.ca](http://www.LearnAlberta.ca) (Accessed October 10, 2018.)
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Horsey, C. S. (1997). From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. *Sociology of education*, 87-107.
- Al-Fadhli, H., & Singh, M. (2010). Unequal moving to being equal: Impact of No Child Left Behind in the Mississippi Delta. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 79(1), 18-32
- Alfaki, I.M. & Siddiek, A.G. (2013). The role of background knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension. *World Journal of English Language*, 3(4), 42-66.  
doi:10.5430/wjel.v3n4p42
- Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J.P. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the Zone of Proximal Development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 471-83. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-781.1994.tb02064.x>
- Allington, R. L. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research based programs*. New York, NY: Longman.

- Allington, R. (2006). *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Allington, R. L. and McGill-Franzen, A. (2003). The impact of summer setback on the reading achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(1), 68-75.
- Allington, R. L. (2012). *What really matters for struggling readers: designing research-based programs* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Allington, R. L. (2014). How reading volume affects both reading fluency and reading achievement. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 7(1), 13-26.
- Amendum, S.J., Li, Y., & Creamer, K.H. (2009). Reading lesson instruction characteristics. *Reading Psychology*, 30(1), 119-143.
- American Bar Association. (2001). Zero Tolerance Policy. Washington, D.C.
- Anderson, W. R. (1994). *Bloom's Taxonomy: A Forty-Year Retrospective, Ninety-third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Chicago, IL: Longman.
- Anderson, R., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Education.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010). Early warning! Why reading by the end of third grade matters. Retrieved from [http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf)
- Archer, A.L., & Hughes, C.A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., Osborn, J., & Adler, C. R. (2001). *Put reading first: The research*

- building blocks for teaching children to read (Kindergarten through grade 3)*. National Institute for Literacy, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Darby, PA: Diane.
- Askew, B.J. & Frasier, D. (1999). Early writing: an exploration of literacy opportunities. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 4, 14-66. Retrieved from [http://www.earlyliteracyinfo.org/sections/adv\\_search](http://www.earlyliteracyinfo.org/sections/adv_search)
- Balajthy, E., Reuber, K., & Robinson, C. (2001). Teachers' use of technology in a reading clinic. *Electronic Literacy in School and Home: A Look into the Future.*, 5(3).
- Barber, M., & Mourshed M. (2007). How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top. London: McKinsey & Company. Retrieved December 12, 2018, from [http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Worlds\\_School\\_Systems\\_Final.pdf](http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf)
- Barksdale Reading Institute. (March 2015). 2014-15 Study of Mississippi teacher preparation for early literacy instruction. Oxford, MS: Barksdale Reading Institute and The Institutions of Higher Learning. Retrieved from [www.msreads.org](http://www.msreads.org)
- Barksdale Reading Institute (2016). *2014-15 Study of Mississippi Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Statewide Report*. Retrieved from [www.msreads.org](http://www.msreads.org)
- Barlett, F.C. (1932). *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. London: New Psychological Linguistics. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Education Publication.
- Barton, D., Hamilton, M., & Ivanic, R. (2000). *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context*. New York: Routledge
- Baumann, J. F., Seifert-Kessell, N., & Jones, L. A. (1992). Effect of think-aloud instruction on elementary students' comprehension monitoring abilities. *Journal of Reading Behavior*,

24(2), 143-172.

- Bean, R.M., & Ippolito, J. (2016). *Cultivating coaching mindsets: An action guide for literacy leaders*. West Palm Beach, FL: Learning Sciences International.
- Beck, I. L., & Juel, C. (1992). The role of decoding in learning to read. In S. J. Samuels & A. E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 101-144). Newark: International Reading Association.
- Beers, G. K. (2003). *When kids may't read, what teachers may do: A guide for teachers, 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Betts, G. H. (1910). *The recitation*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Blachowicz, C. L. Z., & Fisher, P. J. (2011). *Teaching vocabulary in all classrooms* (4 th ed.). (pp. 40-196). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon
- Block, C.C., & Duffy, G.G. (2008). Research on teaching comprehension: Where we've been and where we're going. In C.C. Block, S.R. Parris, & L.M. Morrow (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (2nd ed., pp. 19–37). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Bond, G. L., & Dykstra, R. (1997). The cooperative research program in first-grade reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32(4), 348.
- Bus, A.G., Van Ijzendoorn, M.H., & Pellegrini, A.D. (1995). Joint book reading makes for success in learning to read: A meta-analysis on intergenerational transmission of literacy. *Review of Educational Research*, 65, 1-21.
- Carrell, P. L., & Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. *TESOL quarterly*, 17(4), 553-573.
- Carrell, P. L. (1981, March). Culture-specific schemata in L2 comprehension. In *Selected papers*

*from the ninth Illinois TESOL/BE annual convention, First Midwest TESOL Conference*  
(pp. 123-132).

Carroll, T. G., Fulton, K., Abercrombie, K., & Yoon, I. (2004). *Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education. A two-tiered system*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Carter, C. J. (1997). Why reciprocal teaching? *Educational Leadership*, 54(6), 64-68. Retrieved November 17, 2018, from:

<https://login.ezproxy.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/224854630?accountid=10771>

Catts, H., Adlof, S., & Weismer, S. (2006). Language deficits in poor comprehenders: A case for the simple view of reading. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 49(2), 278–293.

Center for Public Education. (2015). *Learning to read, reading to learn why third-grade is a pivotal year for mastering literacy*. Alexandria, VA: The Center.

Chall, J. S. (1983). *Learning to read: The great debate*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Chall, J. S., Jacobs, V. A., & Baldwin, L. E. (1990). *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind*. Cambridge, MA, US: Harvard University Press.

Chan, L. K. S., & Cole, P. G. (1986). The effects of comprehension monitoring training on the reading competence of learning disabled and regular class students. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7, 33- 40.

Chapman, J. W., & Tunmer, W. (2003). Reading difficulties, reading-related self-perceptions, and strategies for overcoming negative self-beliefs. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 19, 5-24.

- Chen, R., & Vellutino, F. (1997). Prediction of reading ability: A cross-validation study of the simple view of reading. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 29(1), 1–24.
- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., & Rockoff, J. E. (2014). Measuring the impacts of teachers II: Teacher value-added and student outcomes in adulthood. *American Economic Review*, 104(9), 2633-79.
- Children’s Defense Fund. 2007. America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline. Washington DC: CDF
- Clark, K. F., & Graves, M. F. (2004). Scaffolding students’ comprehension of text. *International Reading Association*, 570-580.
- Clay, M. M. (1975). What did I write? Beginning writing behavior. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Coiro, J. (2003). Exploring literacy on the internet. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(5), 458-464.
- Cooper, J.D., Kiger, N.D., Robinson, M.D., & Slansky, J.A. (2012). *Literacy: Helping children construct meaning* (8th ed). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creech, J. D. (2000). Reducing Dropout Rates. Educational Benchmark 2000 Series.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cullingford, C. (1995). The effective teacher. New York: Cassell.
- Cunningham, A., & Stanovich, K. (1998). What reading does for the mind. *American*



- Educator*, 22 (1/2), 8–15.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007, May 21). Evaluating No Child Left Behind. *The Nation*.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1996). What matters most: A competent teacher for every child. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(3), 193-200. Retrieved December 12, 2018, from <https://login.ezproxy.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/218472535?accountid=10771>
- Davis, F.B. (1944). Fundamental factors of comprehension in reading. *Psychometrika*, 9(3), 185–197. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02288722>
- De Corte, E., Verschaffel, L., & van der Ven, A. (2001). Improving text comprehension strategies in upper primary school children: A design experiment. *British Journal of Educational Research*, 71, 531-559.
- Delacruz, S. (2013). Using interactive read-aloud to increase K-2 student’s reading comprehension. *Journal of Reading Education*, 38(3), 21-27.
- Dell, J. L. (2014). “Literacy instruction in early childhood education: Ohio’s third grade reading guarantee.” Honors Theses. Paper 13. Retrieved from [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp\\_theses/13](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses/13)
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom* (updated ed.). New York: The New Press. (Original work published 1995)
- Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. (2004). *The discipline and practice of qualitative research*. Retrieved from <http://web.media.mit.edu>:
- Deshler, D. D., Ellis, E. S., & Lenz, B. K. (1996). *Teaching adolescents with learning disabilities: Strategies and methods*. Denver, CO: Love Publishing Co.
- Dreisbach, M. & Keogh, B.K. (1982). “Testwiseness as a Factor in Readiness Test Performance

- of Young Mexican-American Children.” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74, 224–229.
- Dorn, S. (1993). Origins of the “Dropout Problem.” *History of Education Quarterly*, 33(3), 353-373.
- Duke, N.K., Pearson, P.D., Strachan, S.L. & Billman, A.K. (2011). Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension. In S.J. Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.). *What research has to say about reading instruction*. (4th ed.). (pp. 51-93). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Duke, N.K & Bennett-Armistead, V.S. (2003). *Reading and writing informational text in the primary grades: Research based practices*. New York: Scholastic.
- Dunmay, G. J., Brooks-Gunn, J., Yeung, W. J., & Smith, J. R. (1998). How much does childhood poverty affect the life chances of children? *American Sociological Review*, 63, 406-423.
- Durkin, D. (1978-1979). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 14(4), 481-533.
- Durkin, D. (1993). *Teaching them to read*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Dyson, A. H., & Genishi, C. (2005). *On the case: Approaches to language and literacy research*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Education Commission of the States (2012). *Third Grade Reading Policies: Identification, Intervention, Retention*. Retrieved September 2017 from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/01/54/10154.pdf>
- Education Innovation Institute (2011). *Student Retention vs. Social Promotion: A False Dichotomy*. University of Northern Colorado Policy Brief.

- Empowers Mississippi (2016). Mississippi's Third Grade Reading Gate is a Success. Retrieved from <http://empowerms.org/mississippi-third-grade-reading-gate-is-a-success/>
- Felton, R. H., & Wood, F. B. (1992). A reading level match study of nonword reading skills in poor readers with varying IQ. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 25*(5), 318-326.
- Fergusson, D. M., & Lynskey, M. T. (1997). Early reading difficulties and later conduct problems. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 38*(8), 899-907.
- Fien, H., Santoro, L., Baker, S. K., Park, Y., Chard, D. J., Williams, S., & Haria, P. (2011). Enhancing teacher read aloud with small-group vocabulary instruction for students with low vocabulary in first-grade classrooms. *School Psychology Review, 40*(2), 307–318.
- Feister, L. (2013). Early warning confirmed: A research update on third-grade reading. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2015). Best practices for comprehension instruction in the secondary classroom. In S.R. Parris & K. Headley (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (3rd ed., pp. 253–265). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Fletcher, J.M. (2006). Measuring reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 10*(3), 323–330. doi:10.1207/s1532799xssr1003\_7
- Francis, D. J., Shaywitz, S. E., Stuebing, K. K., Shaywitz, B. A., & Fletcher, J. M. (1996). Developmental lag versus deficit models of reading disability: A longitudinal, individual growth curves analysis. *Journal of Educational psychology, 88*(1), 3-17.
- French, J. N., Ellsworth, N. J., & Amoruso, M. Z. (1995). *Reading and learning Disabilities*. New York: Garland publishing Inc.
- Gillon, G. (2003). *Phonological awareness: From research to practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Goerge, R. M., Gwynne, J., Lesnick, J., & Smithgall, C. (2010). *Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment?* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Goldschmidt, P., & Wang, J. (1999). When may schools affect dropout Behavior? A longitudinal multilevel Analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 715-738.
- Grabe, W. (1991). Current developments in second language reading research. *TESOL quarterly*, 25(3), 375-406.
- Grabe, W. (2004). 3. Research on teaching reading. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 24, 44-69.
- Grabe, W. (2008). Using graphic organizers to help develop reading and writing skills. In *TESOL conference, Toronto, Ontario, Mayada*.
- Green, R. L. (1995). The third-grade 'guarantee.' *The American School Board Journal*, 182(9), 30-31.
- Greenberg, E., Dunleavy, E., & Kutner, M. (2007). *Literacy Behind Bars: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy Prison Survey (NCES 2007-473)*, Washington, DC. *National Center for Education Statistics*. Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/help/orderinfo.asp>.
- Grossman, P. (2015). *Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations (PLATO 5.0)*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University. Retrieved from <http://platorubric.stanford.edu/index.html>
- Guensburg, C. (2006). *Why Johnny (still) can't read: Schools meet the challenge of producing teen readers*.

- Gunderson, L., D'Silva, R., & Chen, L. (2011). Second Language Reading Disability: International Themes. In A. McGill-Franzen & R. L. Allington (Eds.) *Handbook of reading disability Research*. New York & London: Routledge
- Guskey, T.R. (2000). Evaluating professional development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A., & Perencevich, K.C. (Eds.) (2004). Motivating reading comprehension: Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Janzen, J. (1996). Teaching strategic reading. *TESOL Journal*, 6(1), 6-9.
- Jimerson, S. R., & Renshaw, T. L. (2012). Retention and social promotion. *Principal Leadership*, 13(1), 12-16.
- Juel, C. (1998). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of 54 children from first through fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80, 417-447.
- Hall, L. (2006). Anything but lazy: New understandings about struggling readers, teaching, and text. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(4), 424-426.
- Hall, K. M., Sabey, B. L., & McClellan, M. (2005). Expository text comprehension: Helping primary-grade teachers use expository texts to full advantage. *Reading psychology*, 26(3), 211-234.
- Harmer, J. (2005). The practice of English language teaching (p. 203). Cambridge, MA: Longman.
- Harlow, C. W. (2003). Education and Correctional Populations. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report.
- Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2000). Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding. Markham: Pembroke.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). Doing qualitative research in education settings. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Heckman, J.J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator, Spring*, 31-35, 47.
- Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). Education or Incarceration: Zero Tolerance Policies and the School to Prison Pipeline. In *Forum on public policy online* (Vol. 2009, No. 2). Oxford Round Table. 406 West Florida Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801.
- Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). Race, class and legal risk in the United States: Youth of color and colluding systems of social control. *Forum on Public Policy*. Winter.
- Heitzeg, N. A. (2014). CHAPTER ONE: Criminalizing Education: Zero Tolerance Policies, Police in the Hallways, and the School to Prison Pipeline. *Counterpoints*, 453, 11-36.
- Helios Education Foundation (2014). Lessons from Florida's Third Grade Reading Retention Policy and Implications for Arizona. Retrieved from [http://www.helios.org/Media/Default/Documents/Education%20Briefs/Lessons\\_From\\_Floridas\\_Third\\_Grade\\_Reading\\_Retention\\_Policy\\_and\\_Implications\\_for\\_Arizona.pdf](http://www.helios.org/Media/Default/Documents/Education%20Briefs/Lessons_From_Floridas_Third_Grade_Reading_Retention_Policy_and_Implications_for_Arizona.pdf).
- Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. *Annie E. Casey Foundation*.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2008). The place of dialogue in children construction of meaning. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.) *Theoretical models and processes of reading*. (pp.133-145). Newark, DE: International Reading Association
- Holdaway, D. (1979). *The foundations of literacy*. Sydney, Australia: Ashton Scholastic.
- Horiba, Y. (2000). Reader control in reading: Effects of language competence, text type, and task. *Discourse processes*, 29(3), 223-267.
- Hoover, W., & Gough, P. (1990). The simple view of reading. *Reading and Writing*, 2(2), 127–160. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1007/BF00401799>

- Huang, Q. (2009). Background knowledge and reading teaching. *Asian Social Science*, 5(5), 138-142.
- Hudson, T. (1982). The Effects of Induced Schemata on the ‘Short Circuit’ in L2 Reading: Non-decoding Factors in L2 Reading Performance. *Language Learning*, 32(1), pp. 1-31.
- Idol, L. (1987). Group story mapping: A comprehension strategy for both skilled and unskilled readers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 20(4), 196–205.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002221948702000401>
- International Literacy Association. (2016). Why literacy? Retrieved from  
<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/about-us/why-literacy>
- International Literacy Association. (2018). *Standards for the preparation of literacy professionals 2017*. Newark, DE: Author.
- Irwin, J. (2007). *Teaching reading comprehension processes* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.
- Irwin, J. R., Moore, D. L., Tornatore, L. A., & Fowler, A. E. (2012). Expanding on early literacy. *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, 10(2), p. 20-28.
- Jule, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of fifty-four children first through fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(4), 437-447.
- Kalechstein, P., Kalechstein, M. & Doctor, R. (1981). “The Effects of Instruction on Test-Taking Skills in Second Grade Black Children.” *Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance*, 13, 198–202.
- Kamil, M.L., Borman, G.D., Dole, J., Kral, C.C., Salinger, T., & Torgesen, J. (2008). Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: A practice guide

- (NCEE 20084027). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Keene, E.O., & Zimmermann, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kelly, C., & Campbell, L. (2008). "Helping struggling readers." New Horizons. Retrieved from <http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/literacy/articles/helping-struggling-readers/>
- Kendeou, P., & van den Broek, P. (2007). The effects of prior knowledge and text structure on comprehension processes during reading of scientific texts. *Memory & Cognition*, 35(7), 1567–1577.
- Kiley, T.J. (2007). Research in reading. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 35(2), 72-75.
- Kober, N., & Usher, A. (2012). A public education primer: basic (and sometimes surprising). Facts about the US educational system. *Center on Education Policy*, 3(1), 9-11.
- Kosanovich, M., Ladinsky, K., Nelson, L., & Torgesen, J. (2007). *Differentiated reading instruction: Small group alternative lesson structures for students*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Center for Reading Research.
- Kucer, S.B. (2001). *Dimensions of literacy: A conceptual base of teaching reading and writing in school settings*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kurshumlia, R. and Stavileci, A. (2015). The Impact of Reading Aloud and Shared Reading in Developing Listening Comprehension for Second Grade Student. *Journal of Modern Education Review*, 5(5), pp. 503–509. Doi: 10.15341/jmer(2155-7993)/05.05.2015/008
- Kutner, M., Greenberg, E., Jin, Y., Boyle, B., Hsu, Y. C., & Dunleavy, E. (2007). Literacy in Everyday Life: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy. NCES



2007-490. *National Center for Education Statistics.*

- Labbo, L.D., & Teale, W. H. (1997). Emergent literacy as a model of reading instruction. In S.A. Stahl & D.A. Hayes(eds.), *Instructional models in reading* (pp. 249-281). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Sociocultural theory and L2: State of the art. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28, 67-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0272263106060037>
- Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (2008). Introduction to sociocultural theory and the teaching of second language. In P. J. Lantolf & M. E. Poehner (eds.), *Sociocultural theory and the teaching of second language* (pp. 1-30). London: Equinox.
- Lantolf, J.P., & Thorne, S.L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., Menzies, H. M., Gregg, R. M., Doukas, G. L., & Munton, S. M. (2002). Early literacy instruction for first-grade students at risk for antisocial behavior. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 25, 42-105.
- Lenz, B., Alley, G. R., & Schumaker, J. B. (1987). Activating the inactive learner: Advance organizers in the secondary content classroom. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 10, 53-67. doi:10.2307/1510755
- Lesnick, J., Goerge, R., Smithgall, C., & Gwynne, J. (2010). Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment. *Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago*, 1, 12.
- Levin, B., & Riffel, J. A. (2000). Current and potential school system responses to poverty. *Canadian Public Policy*, 26(2), 183-196.
- Lewin, T. (2012). Black students face more discipline, data suggests. *The New York Times*.

- Lonigan, C., Burgess, S., Anthony, J., & Barker, T. (1998). Development of phonological sensitivity in 2- to 5-year-old children. *Journal of Education Psychology, 90*(2), 294-311.
- Losen, D. J. & Gillispie, J. (2012). *Opportunities Suspended: The Disparate Impact of Disciplinary Exclusion from School*. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at The Civil Rights Project.
- Lu, A. (2013). States Insist on Third Grade Reading Proficiency. The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved July 4, 2017 from <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2013/11/15/states-insist-on-third-grade-reading-proficiency>
- Lynch, M. (2013). Alternatives to social promotion and retention. *Interchange, 44*(3-4), 291-309. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10780-014-9213-7>
- Mangin, M.M., & Dunsmore, K. (2015). How the framing of instructional coaching as a lever for systemic or individual reform influences the enactment of coaching. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 51*(2), 179– 213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X14522814>
- Marzano, R.J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., & Pollock, J.E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Mathes, P. G., Denton, C. A., Fletcher, J. M., Anthony, J. L., Francis, D. J., & Schatschneider, C. (2005). The effects of theoretically different instruction and student characteristics on the skills of struggling readers. *Reading Research Quarterly, 40*(2), 148-163,165-182.
- Matsumura, L.C., Bickel, D.D., Zook-Howell, D., Correnti, R., & Walsh, M. (2016). Cloud

- coaching: Web-based learning holds promise, especially for districts with limited resources. *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(4), 30– 39.
- Maxwell, J. A (2012). *A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- McLeod, S. A. (2012). Zone of proximal development. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Zone-of-Proximal-Development.html>
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, J.B.F. (2003). Text coherence and readability. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 23(3), 204–224.
- Meyer, J.B.F., & Poon, L.W. (2001). Effects of structure strategy training and signaling on recall of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(1), 141–159.
- Meyer, J.B.F., Brandt, D.M., & Bluth, G.J. (1980). Use of top-level structure in text: Key for reading comprehension of ninth-grade students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16(1), 72–103.
- Meyer, J. B.F., & Rice, G.E. (1984). The structure of text. In P.D. Pearson, R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp. 319–351). New York: Longman.
- Meyer, J.B.F. (1985). Prose analysis: Purposes, procedures, and problems. In B.K. Britten & J.B. Black (Eds.), *Understanding expository text: A theoretical and practical handbook for analyzing explanatory text* (pp. 11-64). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- McLaughlin, M. (2012). Reading comprehension: What every teacher needs to know. *Reading Teacher*, 65(7), 432-440. doi:10.1002/TRTR.01064
- McNamara, D. S. (2011). Measuring deep, reflective comprehension and learning strategies:

- Challenges and success. *Metacognition and Learning*, 6(2), 195–203.
- McNaughton, S., Lai, M., MacDonald, S., & Farry, S. (2004). Designing more effective teaching of comprehension in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms in New Zealand. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 27, 184-197.
- Miller, D. (2002). *Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in the primary grades*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Mississippi Center for Education Innovation. (2014). *Mississippi's third grade gate: Providing students with the keys to unlock the gate*. Retrieved from <http://www.mscei.com/blog/mississippi-third-grade-gate-providing-students-with-the-keys-to-unlock-the-gate>
- Mississippi Center for Public Policy. (2012). MCPP reports. Retrieved from [http://www.msppolicy.org/mcpp\\_reports/mcpp\\_reports\\_view.php?entryID=338](http://www.msppolicy.org/mcpp_reports/mcpp_reports_view.php?entryID=338)
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2014). Educational-accountability. Retrieved from <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/educational-accountability>
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2016). 2015-2016 MKAS2 3rd Grade Reading Summative Assessment Results. Retrieved from [https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/OCGR/lbpa-next-steps\\_0.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/OCGR/lbpa-next-steps_0.pdf).
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2018). Mississippi Literacy-Based Promotion Act Information for Educators. Retrieved from <https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OAE/OEER/Literacy/LitCommToolkit/Mississippi%20Literacy-Based%20Promotion%20Act%20Information%20for%20Educators.docx>.
- Morrow, L.M., & Gambrell, L.B. (2011). *Best practices in literacy instruction*. New York, NY:

Guilford Press.

NAACP (2005). *Interrupting the School to Prison Pipe-line*. Washington D.C.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2013). *Nation's report card*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2004). *2004 Long Trend Assessment Results in Reading*. Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ltr>.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. (1997). Students say: What makes a good teacher? *Schools in the Middle*, 6(5), 15-17.

National Association of School Psychologists (2006). *Zero Tolerance and Alternative Strategies: A Fact Sheet for Educators and Policymakers*. Bethesda, MD: NASP

National Center for Children in Poverty. (2006). *Basic facts about low income children: Birth to age 18*. New York: Columbia University Press.

National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *The Condition of Education*. Washington D.C.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00- 4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Reading Panel. (1999). *The report of the national reading panel-teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Reading Panel (US), National Institute of Child Health, & Human Development (US). (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific*

- research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Bethesda, MD: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.
- New, R. S. (2003) Early literacy and developmentally appropriate practice: Rethinking the paradigm. In N. Hall, J. Larson, J. Marsh (Eds.) *Handbook of early childhood literacy development*. (pp. 346-262). London, England: Sage.
- Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L. V. (2004). How large are teacher effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 237-257.
- Ogle, D. M. (1986). KWL: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. *The reading teacher*, 39(6), 564-570.
- Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction*, 1, 117–17.
- Pany, D., & McCoy, K. (1988). Effects of corrective feedback on word accuracy and reading comprehension of readers with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 21(9), 546– 550.
- Pardo, L. S. (2004). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(3), 272-280. doi: 10.1598/RT.58.3.5
- Pardo, L.S. (2002). Book Club for the twenty-first century. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 30(4), 14–23.
- Pardo, L. S. (2004). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(3), 272–280. doi:10.1598/RT.58.3.5
- Paris, S. G., Wasik, B. A., & Turner, J. C. (1991). The development of strategic readers. In R. Barr, P. D. Pearson, M. Kamil & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research, Volume II*, pp. 609–640. New York: Longman.

- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pearson, P. D., & Gallagher, M. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8, 317-344.
- Pentimonti, J. M., & Justice, L. M. (2010). Teachers' use of scaffolding strategies during read aloud in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37(4), 241–248.
- Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. G. (2003). *Young, gifted, and Black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students*. Beacon Press.
- Pew Center on the States. (2008). One in 100: Behind bars in America 2008. *Pew Charitable Trusts*.
- Pikulski, J. J., & Chard, D. J. (2005, March). Fluency: Bridge between decoding and reading comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(6), 510-519.
- Pilgreen, J. L. (2000). *The SSR Handbook: How to Organize and Manage a Sustained Silent Reading Program*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Parveen, S. D., & Rajan, P. (2013). Using graphic organizers to improve reading comprehension skills for the middle school ESL students. *English Language Teaching*, 6(2).
- Pressley, G.M. (1976). Mental imagery helps eight- year- olds remember what they read. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 68(3), 355– 359. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.68.3.355>
- Pressley, M., Johnson, C., Symons, S., McGoldrick, J., & Kurita, J. (1989). Strategies that improve children's memory and comprehension of text. *The Elementary School Journal*, 90(1), 3–32. <https://doi.org/10.1086/461599>
- Pressley, M. (1998). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching*. New York, NY: Guilford.

- Pressley, M. (2000). What should comprehension instruction be the instruction of? In M.L. Kamil, P.B. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 545–563). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pressley, M., & Allington, R. (2014). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Purcell-Gates, V., Duke, N., & Stouffer, J. (2016). Teaching literacy: Reading. In D.H. Gitomer & C. Bell (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (5th ed.), pp. 1217–1267). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- RAND Corporation (2012). *Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement*. Santa Monica, CA: Office of Education Research and Improvement. Retrieved from [https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate\\_pubs/CP693z1-2012-09.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP693z1-2012-09.html)
- RAND Reading Study Group (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward a research and development program in reading comprehension*. Pittsburgh, PA: Rand Education. Santa Monica, CA: Office of Education Research and Improvement.
- Rashotte C. A., Torgesen, J. K. & Wagner, R. K. (1997, September). *Difference in the growth of word reading accuracy and fluency after intensive instruction with older children*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Association for Dyslexia-Florida Branch, Miami.
- Rasinski, T. (2012). *Why reading fluency should be hot*. *Reading Teacher*, 65(8), 516-522. doi: 10.1002/TRTR.01077
- Rasinski, T., & Padak, N. (2000). *Effective reading strategies: Teaching children who find reading difficult* (2nd ed.). Ohio: Merrill-Prentice Hall.
- Razfar, A. & Gutiérrez, K. (2003) *Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Literacy: the*



- sociocultural influence, in N. Hall, J. Larson & J. Marsh (Eds) *Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Redfield, D. L., & Rousseau, E. W. (1981). A meta-analysis of experimental research on teacher questioning behavior. *Review of educational research*, 51(2), 237-245.
- Remi, A. V. C., & Lawrence, W. (2012). Promoting sociolinguistic competence in the classroom zone of proximal development. *Language Teaching Research*, 16(1), 39-60.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1362168811423340>
- Reutzel, D.R. (1985). Story maps improve comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 38(4), 400–404.
- Reutzel, D. R. & Juth, S. (2014). Supporting the development of silent reading fluency: an evidence-based framework for the intermediate grades (3-6). *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 7(1) 27-46.
- Risko, V.J., & Vogt, M. (2016). Professional learning in action: An inquiry approach for teachers of literacy. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Rivalland, J. (2000). Definitions and identification: Who are the children with learning difficulties? *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, 5, 12-16
- Rog L. J. (2001). *Early Literacy Instruction in Kindergarten*, Newark DE: International Reading Association.
- Roit, M.L. (2005) Essential comprehension strategies for English learners. T.A. Young and N.L. Hadaway (Eds.) *Building Literacy: Supporting English Learners in All Classrooms*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Roit, M. L. (2017). Effective teaching strategies for improving reading comprehension in k-3 students. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/ecommerce-prod.mheducation.com/unitas/school/explore/sites/oct/research->

white-paper-comprehension.pdf.

- Romeo, L. (2002). At-risk students: Learning to break through comprehension barriers. In C. Collins Block, L. B. Gambrell, & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Improving comprehension instruction* (pp. 385-389). San Francisco, Jossey-Bass
- Rosenblatt, L.R. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rosenshine, B., Meister, C., & Chapman, S. (1996). Teaching students to generate questions: A review of the intervention studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(2), 181– 221.
- Rosenshine, B., & Meister, C. (1994). Reciprocal teaching: A review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(4), 479-530. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1170585>
- Rubadue, M. (2002). Sharing the pen. *Teaching PreK-8*, 32, 58-60.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Ruiz-Funes, M. (1999). The process of reading-to-write used by a skilled Spanish-as-a-foreign-language student: A case study. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32(1), 45–58.  
[doi:10.1111/j.1944-9720.1999.tb02375.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1999.tb02375.x)
- Rumelhart, D.E. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In Spiro, RJ, BC Bruce & WE Brewer. *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum. 33-58.
- Rupley, W., Blair, T., & Nichols, W. (2009). Effective reading instruction for struggling readers: The role of direct/explicit teaching. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 25(2/3), 125–138.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560802683523>
- Sadler, C., & Sugai, G. (2009). Effective behavior and instructional support: A district model for

- early identification and prevention of reading and behavior problems. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11(1), 35-46.
- Sam, P. & Rajan, P. (2013). Using Graphic Organizers to Improve Reading Comprehension Skills for the Middle School ESL Students. *Mayadian Center of Science and Education CCSE*. 6(2), pp. 155-170.
- Sanders, W.L., & Rivers, J.C. (1996). Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement (Research Progress Report). Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.
- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., and LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *Essential Ethnographic Methods*. In J.J. Schensul and M.D. LeCompte, Eds. *The Ethnographer's Toolkit*. Baltimore, MD: Altamira Press of Rowan and Littlefield.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Scruggs, Thomas E. & Mastropieri, Margo A. (1987). *Effective Instruction for Special Education*. Austin, TX: ProEd
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York: Teachers College.
- Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Schatschneider, C., & Torgesen, J. (2010). Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade: IES Practice Guide. NCEE 2010-4038. *What Works Clearinghouse*.

- Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Schatschneider, C., & Torgesen, J. (2010). *Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: A practice guide* (NCEE 2010-4038). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from [whatworks.ed.gov/publications/practiceguides](http://whatworks.ed.gov/publications/practiceguides)
- Shaywitz, S. E., Escobar, M. D., Shaywitz, B. A., Fletcher, J. M., & Makuch, R. (1992). Distribution and temporal stability of dyslexia in an epidemiological sample of 414 children followed longitudinally. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 326, 145-150.
- Skiba, R. (2001). *Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Education Policy Center, Indiana University
- Smith, S. E., & Narrett, C. M. (2013). *Parental education level predicts differences between high and low performing states. NERA Conference Proceedings 2013. Paper 9*. Retrieved from [http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/nera\\_2013/9](http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/nera_2013/9)
- Smith, N., & Robinson, H. (1980). *Reading instruction for today's children* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: International
- Smolin, L. L., & Lawless, K. A. (2003). Becoming literate in the technological age: New responsibilities and tools for teachers. *Reading Teacher*, 56, 570-578. *Reading Teacher*, 56, 570-578.
- Snow, C. E., Barnes, W.S., Chandler, J., Goodman, I.F., & Hemphill, L. (1991). *Unfulfilled expectations: Home and school influences on literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

- Snyder, L. (2010). Reading expository material: Are we asking the right questions? *Topics in Language Disorders, 30*(1), 39–47.
- Song, S. H., & Keller, J. M. (2001). Effectiveness of motivationally adaptive computer-assisted instruction on the dynamic aspects of motivation. *Educational technology research and development, 49*(2), 5-22.
- Sparks, S. D. (2011). Study: Third grade reading predicts later high school graduation. *Education Week*.
- Stahl, K. (2012). Complex text or frustration-level text: Using shared reading to bridge the difference. *The Reading Teacher, 66*(1), 47-51.
- Stahl, S., & Hayes, D.A. (1997). *Instructional models in reading*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Stamm, C. F. (2014). A Better Solution than Mississippi's Third Grade Retention Policy to Address Students Struggling to Read: The First Grade Swinging Door. *Miss. LJ, 83*, 917.
- Strachan, S. L. (2015). Kindergarten students' social studies and content literacy learning from interactive read-aloud. *Journal of Social Studies Research, 39*(4), 207–223.
- Street, B. (1985). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Stronge, J. (2002). *Qualities of effective teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Stronge, J. (2011). *Effective teachers = student achievement: What the research says*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education
- Sugai, G., & Sadler, C. (2009). Effective behavior and instructional support: A district model for early identification and prevention of reading and behavior problems. *Journal of Positive*

- Behavior Interventions, 11, 35-70.
- Taylor, B.M., Pressley, M., & Pearson, D.P. (2002). Research-supported characteristics of teachers and schools that promote reading achievement. Retrieved December 16, 2018, from: [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf\\_readingachievement.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_readingachievement.pdf)
- The Glossary of Education Reform (2013). Summative Assessment. Retrieved from <http://www.edglossary.org>
- The Nation's Report Card, Reading: Mississippi Grade 4 (2007), Retrieved from [http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading-\\_2007/](http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading-_2007/)
- The Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2012). The urgency of now: 50 state report on black males and education. Cambridge, Mass.
- Trabasso, T., & Bouchard, E. (2002). Teaching readers how to comprehend text strategically. In C.C. Block & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (pp. 176–200). New York: Guilford
- Trehearne, M. P. (2004). *Comprehensive literacy resource: Grades 1-2* (pp. 96-186). Vernon Hills, IL: ETA hand2mind
- Tyner, B. (2003). *Small-group reading instruction: A differentiated reading model for beginning and struggling readers*. Newark, DE: The International Reading Association
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2005). *2004 American community survey*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Education (1994). Mini-digest of Education Statistics. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- United States Census Bureau. (2012). State and county quick facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>
- United States Census Bureau. (2016). State and county quick facts. Retrieved from

- <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>
- United States Census Bureau. (2017). State and county quick facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>
- Vellutino, F. R., & Smaylon, D. M. (2002). Research for the future: The interactive strategies approach to reading intervention. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 27*, 573-635.
- Verhoeven, L., & van Leeuwe, J. (2011). The simple view of second language reading throughout the primary grades. *Reading and Writing, 25*(8), 1805–1818.
- Vogt, M., & Shearer, B.A. (2016). Reading specialists and literacy coaches in the real world (3rd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1934/1986). Thought and language (A. Kozulin, Trans., Ed.). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wadsworth, R. M. (2008). Using Read Aloud in Today's Classrooms. *Leadership Compass, 5*(3).
- Wald, J., & Losen, D. (2003). *Defining and Re-Directing a School- to- Prison Pipeline*. Cambridge MA: Harvard Civil Rights Project.
- Walker, S., Spohn, C., & DeLone, M. (2012). *The color of justice: Race, ethnicity, and crime in America*. Cengage Learning.
- Wallace, C. 2003. *Critical reading in language education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walpole, S., & McKenna, M.C. (2013). The literacy coach's handbook: A guide to research-based practice (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Wasik, B. (2008). When fewer is more: Small groups in early childhood classrooms. *Early Childhood Educational Journal, 35*(1), 515-521.

- Watts-Taffe, S., Gwinn, C.B., Johnson, J.R., Horn, M.L. (2003). Preparing preservice teachers to integrate technology with the elementary literacy program. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(2), 130-138.
- Weishew, N., & Peng, S. (1993). Variables predicting students' problem behaviors. *Journal of Educational Research*, 87, 5-16.
- Wertsch, J. V. 1991. *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Williams, C., Phillips-Birdsong, C., Hufnagel, K., Hungler, D., & Lundstrom, R.P. (2009). Word study instruction in the K–2 classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(7), 570-578.
- Wilson, T., Nabors, D., Berg, H., Simpson, C., & Timme, K. (2012). Small-Group Reading Instruction: Lessons From the Field. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 40(3), pp. 30-40.
- Wing Jan, L. (2001). *Write ways: Modelling writing forms*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wiseman, A. (2011). Interactive read aloud: teachers and students constructing knowledge and literacy together. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(6), 431–438.
- Witt, H. (2007). School discipline tougher on African Americans. *Chicago Tribune*, 25.
- Wood, M., Salvetti, E, P. (2001). Project Story Boost: Read-aloud for students at risk. *The Reading Teacher*, 55(1), 76-83.
- Woods, E. G. (1995). Reducing the dropout rate. School Improvement Research Series (SIRS) Close-Up# 17. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved July 14, 2017.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Young, T. V., Shepley, T. V., & Song, M. (2010). Understanding agenda setting in state educational policy: An application of Kingdon's multiple streams model to the formation of state reading policy. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 18, 15. Retrieved July 10, 2017 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/771>

## **Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

1. What specific instructional strategy do you use to prepare students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
2. What specific strategies do you perceive to be most effective in getting students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
3. What specific strategies do you perceive to be most important in getting students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
4. To what extent do you differentiate your instructional strategies to teach students on grade level?
5. What is your perception regarding the teaching of reading strategies?
6. What strategies do you use most often to prepare students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment? Why do you use these strategies?
7. What are some notable strategies that lead to successful reading instruction?
8. What are some literacy problems that affect your students?
9. What are some of the struggles that your students experience?
10. What tends to work best in moving students from grade three to fourth grade?

## **Appendix B: SAMPLE PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your school. I am currently enrolled in the Doctorate of Leadership and Policy Studies program at the University of Memphis, and I am in the process of writing my Dissertation. The study is entitled Reading Strategies Implemented by Teachers Whose Students Successfully Passed the Third Grade Reading Summative Assessment in the State of Mississippi.

I hope that you will allow me to recruit a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher from your school to anonymously participate in an interview. In the interview, I will ask the teacher 10 questions about the strategies he or she implement to prepare his/her students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment. The interested teacher, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed and keep at the beginning of the interview.

The interview should take no longer than 45 minutes to 1 hour. The results will be pooled for the Dissertation and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call later this week. I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may also contact me at by email: [ssprkins@memphis.edu](mailto:ssprkins@memphis.edu) or by phone (662) 336-5185.

Thank you.

Sebrina S. Perkins, Doctoral Student, University of Memphis

## **Appendix C: SAMPLE TEACHER RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

Greetings.

My name is Sebrina Perkins and I am a research student at the University of Memphis. I am conducting a research study about reading strategies teachers are implementing to prepare students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment. I have obtained the principal's support to collect data for my research. I am emailing you to ask if you would like to participate.

As a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Reading teacher you are in an ideal position to give me valuable first-hand information from your perspective. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. The interview will last about 45 minutes to 1 hour and it is very informal. Each interview will be assigned a number coded to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. If you prefer not to be involved in this study, that is not a problem at all. If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [ssprkins@memphis.edu](mailto:ssprkins@memphis.edu).

Thank you for your time.

Sebrina S. Perkins

## **Appendix D: Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

### **READING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY TEACHERS WHOSE STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY PASSED THE THIRD GRADE READING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**

#### **Who Is Doing This Study?**

The person in charge of this study is Sebrina Perkins (*Lead Investigator, LI*), a doctoral student at the University of Memphis in the Department of Leadership. I am currently conducting a study on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment. I am being guided in the research by Dr. Reginald Leon Green (Advisor).

#### **Why Are You Being Invited?**

You are invited to take part in this research study about effective reading strategies teachers are implementing to prepare students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment. The researcher is inviting teachers over the age of 18 who are currently teaching reading at schools where at least 95 % of students met LBPA (Literacy Based Promotion Act) passing score. You are being recruited because your principal has given his/ her approval to assist in recruiting potential participants. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of 15 people to do so. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

#### **What Is The Purpose Of This Study?**

The purpose of this study is to examine instructional strategies that teachers in high performing schools are using to prepare students to read on grade level, and thus pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment.

#### **What Will You Be Asked To Do?**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview where 10 questions will be asked. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. You have the option of allowing your interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of your responses. You should also be aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the dissertation and/or publications phase, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

Below are some sample questions from the interview protocol:

1. What specific instructional strategy do you use to prepare students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
2. What specific strategies do you perceive to be most effective in getting students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
3. What specific strategies do you perceive to be most important in getting students to pass the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment?
4. To what extent do you differentiate your instructional strategies to teach students on grade level?
5. What is your perception regarding the teaching of reading strategies?
6. What strategies do you use most often to prepare students for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Summative Assessment? Why do you use these strategies?
7. What are some notable strategies that lead to successful reading instruction?
8. What are some literacy problems that affect your students?
9. What are some of the struggles that your students experience?
10. What tends to work best in moving students from grade three to fourth grade?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is completely voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. No one associated with this study will treat you differently if you decide not to participate. Additionally, this study is completely anonymous, no one will know if you did nor did not participate. If you decide to join the study now, you may still change your mind later. You may stop participating at any time.

### **What Are the Potential Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study?**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than what you would experience in everyday life. The benefits of the study include voicing your thoughts and concerns regarding the instructional reading strategies you implement to teach your students.

### **What Will It Cost You To Participate?**

This study is completely voluntary; there will be no reimbursement or payment for your time.

### **Who Will See The Information That You Give?**

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your name will not appear on any documents. Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information I have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

### **What Happens to my Privacy if I am Interviewed?**

If you agree to participate, the researcher will ensure that your identity is fully protected. Your name will not appear on any documents. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. Each interview will be assigned a number code to ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. Data will be kept secure by password protection and data encryption. Each interview will be assigned a number code to ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. This flash drive will be stored in a secure location that is protected by a lock and key. After the study is completed and the required retention period is over, data will be destroyed for reasons of confidentiality. Non-electronic data will be destroyed using a cross-cut shredder, and electronic data will be securely erased using DBAN, a popular and free disk wiping utility available for Windows PCs ensure the data may not be recovered.

### **What If You Have Questions, Suggestions, Concerns, or Complaints?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact the investigator, Sebrina Perkins, at 662-336-5185 or via [ssprkins@memphis.edu](mailto:ssprkins@memphis.edu). You may also contact the Research Participant Advisor, Dr. Reginald Leon Green, at my university. He may be reached at 901-678-3445, or via email [rlgreen1@memphis.edu](mailto:rlgreen1@memphis.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705. I will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

## Appendix E: IRB Renewal Approval Email



Institutional Review Board  
Division of Research and Innovation  
Office of Research Compliance  
University of Memphis  
315 Admin Bldg  
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

PI: Sabrina Perkins  
Co-Investigator:  
Advisor and/or Co-PI: Reginald Green  
Department: Leadership, Users loaded with unmatched Organization affiliation.  
Study Title: A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE USE OF SPECIFIC READING STRATEGIES ON THE 3RD GRADE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT SCORES OF STUDENTS IN A SOUTHEASTERN STATE  
IRB ID: PRO-FY2018-2  
Submission Type: Renewal  
Level of Review: Exempt

Decision: Exempt  
Expiration Date: --

Research Notes:  
Findings: This protocol was originally approved on July 31, 2017, and met the requirements for exempt classification. Exempt approval is considered to have no expiration date and no further review is necessary unless the protocol needs modification.

Thank you,  
James P. Whelan, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chair  
The University of Memphis.

*Note: Review outcomes will be communicated to the email address on file. This email should be considered an official communication from the UM IRB.*



## Appendix F: IRB Modification Approval Email



Institutional Review Board  
Division of Research and Innovation  
Office of Research Compliance  
University of Memphis  
315 Admin Bldg  
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

January 2, 2019

PI Name: Sabrina Perkins  
Co-Investigators:  
Advisor and/or Co-PI: Reginald Green  
Submission Type: Modification  
Title: A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE USE OF SPECIFIC READING STRATEGIES ON THE  
3RD GRADE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT SCORES OF STUDENTS IN A SOUTHEASTERN STATE  
IRB ID : #PRO-FY2018-2  
Level of Review: Exempt

Approval: December 23, 2018  
Expiration: --\*

The modification is approved.

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. This IRB approval for modification has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human subjects consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.
2. When the project is finished or terminated, a completion form must be submitted.
3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval.

*\*Modifications do not extend the expiration of the original approval*

Thank you,  
James P. Whelan, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chair  
The University of Memphis.