Ten Elementary School Teachers’ Voices: How They Build Effective Literacy Learning in the Lives of Their 2nd Grade Children

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It is important to support teachers to adapt and apply effective literacy instruction strategies. Teachers may receive support from many sources, such as pre-service developers, principals, supervisors, literacy coaches, parents, colleagues and peer teachers. Perhaps most importantly, the teaching of literacy requires the support of the principal, literacy coach, and others who can collaborate with the classroom teacher to implement effective literacy instruction and strategies (Vallejo & Wren, 2009; Cole, 2008). All of these supports play a role in effectively achieving high literacy levels among students (Cole, 2008). Thus, teachers should work to maximize the benefit they receive from these supports.

This is a qualitative study, which used a phenomenological approach to data collection. The researcher focused on capturing the professional lived experiences of ten 2nd grade teachers as they describe their approaches to literacy teaching, their thinking as they make their literacy practice choices, and professional colleagues who influenced the choices they made. The population and sample in this study were 10 teachers teaching full time in elementary schools located in 3 different mid-sized city school district in the Midwest. Direct interviews were used to discover: 1) the strategies and instructional practices for the teaching of literacy that the teachers found to be effective and 2) the support and influence that the other adults in their teaching environment, such as peers,
coaches, supervisors, and principals, had on the teachers with the adoption and implementation of literacy teaching strategies.
DEDICATION

My work is dedicated to my great parents, my beautiful family (my lovely husband, my sweet daughter, my nice son, and my cute twin boys), my dear siblings, and my wonderful advisor in my Masters Program and also my Co-Chair in my Doctoral Program, Dr. Lynn Nations Johnson. Without their love, belief, and support in me, I would never have become the person I am now.
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With the completion of this dissertation, I am prompted to think of the road that guided me to this place and time in my life and those along the way for whom I am really and greatly thankful. This process of conceiving of, preparing for and writing this dissertation would not have been as meaningful without my lovely father’s support. He has provided continuous support and encouragement from when he first encouraged me and suggested I go into studying here in the U.S.A., and for this, and everything else, I thank him and acknowledge his assistance with my mother’s prayer on every aspect of my life. I also would like to thank my husband, Mohammed for his support throughout my study away from our homeland and my family; without him I would not have gone to college and the library to study alone to become a Doctor of Philosophy in Education. I would also like to acknowledge the sacrifices of my family throughout my journey, especially my children. Your patience and love mean more to me than any gift, recognition, or appreciation I could ever receive. I also wish to acknowledge and thank my sisters, brothers, and friends; without their feelings and encouragement none of this would have been possible.

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Acknowledgments - continued

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Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Literacy is essential to help children succeed in their lives today and in the future. There are a variety of ways that literacy is fundamental, such as for personal, social, and economic well-being. Teachers from a variety of backgrounds and experience across America and in other countries teach literacy using a variety of methods and strategies, such as phonics, context to aid comprehension, or collaborative learning (Leinhardt, Zigmond & Cooley, 2011). In addition, children learning to read require a variety of teaching methods in order to become good readers. This is because literacy is a complex process that requires a great deal of early engagement between instructors and students. This early engagement is necessary in order for students to perform at an adequate level on standardized tests (Houston, Kosanovich, Rissman, & Torgesen, 2007). Therefore, teachers must be knowledgeable when making decisions about the strategies they choose to use with their students to develop their learning.

It is important to support teachers to adapt and apply effective literacy instruction strategies. Teachers may receive the support from many sources, such as pre-service developers, principals, supervisors, literacy coaches, parents, colleagues and peer teachers. Perhaps most importantly, the teaching of literacy requires support of the principal, literacy coach, and others who can collaborate with the classroom teacher to implement effective literacy instruction and strategies (Vallejo & Wren, 2009; Cole, 2008). All of these supports play a role in effectively achieving high literacy levels among students (Cole, 2008). Thus, teachers should work to maximize the benefit they receive from these sources of support.
It is important for teachers to be knowledgeable when making decisions about the strategies they choose to use with their students to develop their learning. This study was a response to this need. The study had a two-fold focus; first, it focused on teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they make decisions to use them. Secondly, the study focused on the support teachers received from their principals and others that influenced them to adapt and apply effective strategies to improve their literacy instruction strategies.

**Problem Statement**

Reading is one of the two main subjects upon which schools are judged on standardized testing through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and it is one of the areas in which urban students of low socioeconomic status tend to perform poorly (Crothers & Hogarth, 2007). In fact, Lee, Maerten-Rivera, Buxton, Penfield, and Secada (2008), in their study of urban elementary teachers’ perspectives on teaching science to English language learners, showed that more than 50% of urban learners have an acute deficiency in reading skills even when they experience literacy-rich classroom environments. So, improving achievement in the literacy skill of elementary school students is an important goal that highly effective teachers have worked to reach through adopting and implementing effective literacy strategies, often through the support and influence they receive from peers, coaches, supervisors, and principals, among others.

Previous researchers have focused on specific classroom literacy instructional strategies that have been shown to be effective in supporting student achievement in literacy (Fecho, 2004; Chapman & King, 2012). Some researchers have focused on a specific aspect of reading, such as vocabulary, fluency, phonics, comprehension, or
writing (Chapman & King, 2012), while others have analyzed the thoughtful and purposeful choices made by teachers as they taught students how to read, as they took student experiences, cultural backgrounds, and individual interests into account (Fecho, 2004). Still other researchers have looked into the strategies chosen by teachers, which fit best with each student’s needs, and how the strategies were effective in improving students’ practice and motivation to read, helping them to then become good readers (Chapman & King, 2012). In addition, some researchers have looked into how instructional choices of teachers were influenced by the support and influence given by peers, coaches, supervisors, and principals and how these sources of support and influence affected the adoption and implementation of instructional strategies for the teaching of literacy (Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011).

Most of the recommendations from research on the use of new strategies lack the understanding of the teacher’s personal attributes and contextual perspective (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles & Niles, 1992). Minimal research attention has been directed towards qualitative investigations that directly interview teachers about their understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them in elementary schools. In-depth qualitative inquiry using direct interviews of teachers, allowed the researcher to collect data in the teachers’ own words that revealed the various experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the practicing teachers regarding effective approaches to teaching literacy and the influence or support they got from the peers, literacy coaches, principals, and/or parents (Creswell, 2014; Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011).
The researcher contended that through interviewing teachers directly, it would be possible to obtain a better understanding of the teachers’ literacy practices, their thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies, why teachers decide to use them in elementary schools, and how these decisions are related to the support and influence of other important adults in the school setting, including peers, coaches, supervisors, and principals. Through directly asking teachers about their perceptions and experiences, it was possible for the researcher to better understand the complexities associated with teaching literacy in elementary schools from the teachers’ perspective (Shin, 1997). Direct interviews allowed the researcher to obtain and examine the contextual understanding of the teachers’ feedback (Opdenakker, 2006; Kvale, 1983). The researcher’s hope was that such contextual findings would help researchers to define strategies that could be replicated for all readers, ultimately helping teachers and those who support teachers to know how to better develop literacy instruction strategies that help students increase their achievement in literacy.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies they have chosen to use and how their choices may have been influenced by those responsible for the professional support of teachers. These teachers were identified by their principals and peers as effective teachers of reading in their Midwest schools. In order to fully understand the complexities associated with teaching reading in elementary schools, this researcher believed it was necessary to interview the teachers directly. Directly interviewing the teachers was important because the researcher was able to develop enhanced, more
contextual understanding of their feedback with the benefit of non-verbal communication. Direct face-to-face interaction is a good method for understanding expression-based information, such as passion and the underscored seriousness about the subject (Opdenakker, 2006; Kvale, 1983). Teachers have firsthand experience with what works and what fails with strategies and instruction in literacy, to address the needs of at-risk readers. In addition, these interviews helped to assess the level of influence that other adults and peers had in the decision making of the teacher to use a specific strategy. The researcher sought to understand teachers’ descriptions of the support they received from their principal, literacy coach, peers, and/or others to adapt and apply effective strategies.

The researcher’s hope was that the results of this study will be helpful toward encouraging future teachers of Arabic literacy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A) to adopt effective literacy instruction strategies to improve students’ achievement, as well as help them to make meaning of how their experiences impact their development of effective literacy instruction strategies. Further, the researcher hoped that the finding of this study would provide important understanding of how teachers’ decisions regarding the adoption and use of effective strategies are influenced; these particular findings might be of benefit to those who design pre-service teaching curricula, provide professional development opportunities, or who are otherwise responsible for the professional support of teachers of reading.

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were:

1. Among teachers identified as effective literacy instructors, what strategies: (a) do they believe are the most effective? and (b) Why?
2. How do such teachers describe the support they receive from their principal, literacy coach, and/or others to adapt and apply effective strategies?

**Conceptual Framework**

Previous researchers have revealed many theories and recommendations regarding the importance of using effective strategies or practices in teaching reading (McKenna & Robinson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005; Chappuis, 2009). First, it is McKenna and Robinson’s (2009) work regarding the teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them. Also, the researcher’s professional background as a professional development provider for reading teachers in the K. S. A. whetted the researcher’s interest in the importance and outcomes of effective literacy instruction strategies that help teachers assist children toward becoming strong readers.

A second key component that was of interest in this study is the support teachers receive from their principals, peers and colleagues, literacy coaches, parents, and others to adapt and apply strategies, such as what was revealed in Taylor’s and Pearson’s (2005) research. Their work focused on the ideal conditions that allow for teachers to implement reading strategies, conditions where there are supportive school environments and accomplished teachers to manage and lead the learning encounter. Their work also focused on how effective reading strategies contribute to increased student achievement in reading. Furthermore, the family literacy theory by Philips et al (2006) focused on the role of the home and parents in children’s literacy development; they demonstrated that there is a relationship between literacy use in families’ and students’ academic achievement in literacy (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). This combination of research results
demonstrates that support from other professionals in the school and district combined with parental involvement in their children’s literacy furthers teachers’ reading instruction effectiveness and contributes to students’ accomplishing their reading goals.

According to the research cited above regarding the teachers’ understanding of effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them, it is important to interview and ask successful teachers directly about the effective literacy strategies they use and how they were influenced or supported to adopt, adapt, and apply effective literacy instruction strategies by the others around them, such as pre-service developers, principals, supervisors, literacy coaches, parents, colleagues and teacher peers. Interviewing effective teachers directly is important to provide the researcher with teachers' insights about the adoption and application of effective strategies, so that the researcher can understand the perceptions and priorities of the teachers as they discover what methods and strategies to use, and why they decide to use those approaches (Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011). This teacher insight can assist in the development of viable recommendations at the end of the research, which could transform the concept of teaching and fill in the gaps found in the research. These aspects can also help teachers to make meaning of their development of effective literacy instruction strategies and increase their understanding of how their future experiences can impact their professional development. The researcher anticipated that, based on the findings, other teachers would be able to use the research regarding literacy instructions strategies, and seek the training and support necessary to develop as effective teachers.
Methods Overview

This study used a phenomenology approach as one qualitative method to capture the experiences of teachers identified as effective and successful literacy teachers. A gatekeeper technique whereby effective teachers are identified by principals and fellow teachers was identified as the best way to identify participants for the study because according to their experiences and documentation, such as assessment for teachers, they can provide the researcher with the best connection to second grade teachers who they have identified as effective (Hatch, 2002).

The population and sample in this study was 10 teachers from elementary schools located in three mid-sized city school districts in the Midwest. Direct interviews were used to discover the effective literacy strategies and instructional practices the ten-second grade teachers found to be effective with their students. In addition, the interviews were focused on understanding the support and influence that the other adults in their teaching environment, such as peers, coaches, supervisors, and principals had on the teachers in the adoption and implementation of literacy teaching instruction strategies.

In order to better understand the complexities associated with teaching literacy in elementary schools, it was important to interview the teachers directly. Directly interviewing the teachers was important because the researcher had both the contextual understanding of their feedback in addition to the benefit of non-verbal communication. This is important in understanding expression-based information, such as passion and the underscored seriousness associated with the subject (Opdenakker, 2006; Kvale, 1983).

Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, and Niles (1992) in their study of teacher mentoring and analysis of roles, activities, and conditions, found that teachers were influenced to
change and improve their strategies and perceptions in teaching by the presence of other teachers and principals, their professional training, and past experiences, among others. Likewise, Webster, McNeish, Scott, Maynard, and Haywood (2012) in their study of what influenced teachers to change their practice, found that the teacher’s personal attributes and perceptions determined what influenced them towards changing, adapting as well as implementing teaching instructions in their environment. Therefore, conducting research through directly interviewing teachers helped the researcher to understand and recommend how professionals who support the professional development of teachers may design literacy instructional development and implementation initiatives that optimally align with the teacher’s personal attributes, so teachers may be more receptive to change. Further, Shin (1997) in his study of teaching strategies and their use and effectiveness as perceived by teachers indicated that this method helped researchers to achieve better contextual understanding that may enable those who are responsible for designing and implementing programs to support the adoption of new instructional strategies, as well as to create realistic and reasonable customization of such programs so that implementation achieves maximum success (Moreillon, 2007).

Most of the recommendations from research on the use of new strategies lack the representation of the teachers’ personal attributes and the contextual perspectives of the teachers (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles & Niles 1992). This study sought to address this loophole (Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011). The study also sought to address the deficiencies in the research base, especially in qualitative, empirical research, on the opinions and perceptions of practicing teachers about the support they get from their peers, literacy coaches, principals, and/or parents to embrace
and apply new strategies (Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011).

**Significance of the Study**

Piasta, Connor, Fishman & Morrison (2009) asserted that teachers' knowledge, understanding and thinking about literacy strategies and why they decide to use them will encourage them to provide effective literacy instruction and strategies so they can help children become good readers. The analysis produced by this study may potentially help other elementary schools teachers develop the teaching, coaching, and skills needed to improve the performance of their students. Further, the researcher anticipated that the findings of the study would provide important understanding of how these ten teachers’ decisions were influenced regarding the adoption and use of effective strategies. This may be of benefit to those who design pre-service teaching curricula, provide professional development opportunities, or who are otherwise responsible for the professional support of reading teachers.

The researcher also anticipates that in the future this study will be beneficial to the students who will be the future teachers of Arabic literacy in elementary schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A). Teaching reading in English and Arabic language requires similar literacy skills, approaches, methods, strategies, and curricula. So, once future teachers know what works, they can apply and use these effective literacy instruction strategies to help children become good readers, and then make meaning of their development of effective literacy instruction strategies and how their future experiences can impact their professional development. It is anticipated that based on the
findings, other teachers may be able to use the research regarding literacy instruction strategies, and seek the training and support to develop as effective teachers.

Chapter I Summary

Effective literacy instructions strategies play an important role in increasing elementary school students’ literacy and overall academic achievement. In the next chapter, the researcher has reviewed the current literature on effective literacy instruction strategies, and research that focuses on the importance of support from principals, literacy coaches, parents, and others to improve teachers’ literacy instruction strategies.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

While teaching learners to read remains the primary goal of education, many students, particularly in elementary schools, often have difficulties in learning basic reading skills. A survey study conducted by Guzzetti and Marzano (2014) on ‘The correlates of effective reading strategies’ indicated that at least one out of five students have significant difficulties in reading acquisition and comprehension. Similarly, a survey conducted by Criscuolc (2010) on the level of achievement of basic reading skills in national tests in the United States reported that 37 percent of elementary school students did not achieve at the most basic level. For at-risk students, learning to read is an even greater challenge. For example, according to Lee, Maerten-Rivera, Buxton, Penfield, and Secada (2008), in their study of urban elementary school teachers’ knowledge and practices in teaching reading, they found that more than 50 percent of learners in urban areas had an acute and serious deficiency in reading skills, even when they experienced literacy-rich classroom environments. They also noted that these learners did not develop curiosity about writing words while still at home.

Some studies have found a strong correlation between teaching literacy instruction strategies and increased support by parents and their child’s reading progress. For example, Graham et al. (2008), in their study of teaching reading and spelling in the primary grades, found that when teachers work in collaboration with parents, they could help students develop a curiosity that could eventually facilitate reading comprehension as well as the development of effective literacy skills. Likewise, Padron, Waxman, Lee, Lin, and Michko (2012), in their study of classroom observation of teaching and learning
in urban elementary schools, suggested that teachers should first encourage parents to
spend some time with their children while helping them to develop an interest in reading,
as this would facilitate their abilities to improve their reading skills at school.

In the United States, the term urban students refers to the learners currently
enrolled in schools located in metropolitan communities (Rachel, Aaron, Peter & Witt,
2011). The population of urban students is most often comprised of learners who come
from backgrounds that are highly diverse in cultural, ethnic, linguistic and socio-
economic characteristics. Therefore, unlike the students in suburban areas characterized
by homogenous populations of learners in terms of cultural heritage, common language,
and similar views and practices, urban students are highly diverse in all aspects (Rachel,
Aaron, Peter & Witt, 2011). For instance, in large cities, such as New York and Los
Angeles, and medium cities, such as Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, most urban children
enrolling in elementary schools are exposed to different language and cultural views at
home; therefore, it could be challenging to develop literacy instruction strategies that
capture all their views and expectations. Nonetheless, it is critical that teachers formulate
and implement effective strategies that enhance literacy skills in all their students,
regardless of their diverse backgrounds.

Based on such observations and findings, many scholars and policymakers have
come to agree that the formulation and adoption of effective literacy instruction practices
and strategies in elementary schools should be a priority because they could facilitate the
improvement of literacy skills and confidence in learners (Zhang, 2010; McKeown, Beck
& Blake, 2010; Rich & Pressley, 2010). Therefore, this literature review examines current
studies and theories regarding the most effective literacy instruction strategies, including
common practical examples. In addition, the literature review examines the importance of support that teachers receive from their principals and others, such as literacy coaches and parents, to adapt and apply effective strategies to improve teachers’ reading instruction strategies and students’ learning.

Effective Literacy Instruction

Effective literacy instruction strategies play an important role in equipping students to make sense of the written language (Chapman & King, 2012). Through effective literacy instruction, students gain or develop the fluency and comprehension skills needed to read texts with ease, quickly, comfortably, with confidence, and without errors. They also develop motivation to read because they have confidence about their skills and performance. In light of these observations and findings, this section reviews the most effective reading instruction strategies according to current best practices. Specifically, this section focuses on assessment of different approaches to reading instruction, some of the learning objectives of literacy instruction, as well as leading examples of reading instruction strategies.

Approaches to Literacy Instruction

The term “literacy instruction approaches” refers to the methods or techniques used by teachers during the teaching process in order to ensure that learners develop the relevant reading skills based on their capabilities and strengths (Guthrie, Anderson, Alao & Rinehart, 2010). Also, an approach to literacy instruction is a collection of theories, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching and learning that provide teachers with instructional techniques and practices (Reutzel, Child, Jones & Clark, 2014). Several researchers have attempted to examine some of the effective approaches to literacy
instruction. Some of the noteworthy approaches include cooperative learning, the whole language approach, a personalized approach, as well as the explicit instruction approach.

**Cooperative learning.** Cooperative learning is a teaching approach in which small groups or teams of students of different or varying levels of ability use a variety of reading and learning activities to improve their understanding and reading skills (Anderson & Roit, 2013). Examples of cooperative learning approaches include jigsaw learning, group retelling, and buddy system grouping. Jigsaw learning is an example of cooperative learning that provides students with an opportunity to help each other build comprehension. Each group member in the classroom is responsible for becoming an expert on one area of the assigned task and then teaching it to other members of the group. In a group retelling approach, learners work in pairs or in groups of three or more reading the same material, such as material containing vocabulary terms, or material written at different grade levels, but thematically related to the topic under study. Similarly, with the buddy system approach, as the name suggests, two students of varying abilities take responsibility for each other’s learning. However, differences in levels of ability are minimized to avoid both intimidation and boredom (Anderson & Roit, 2013).

Researchers who have investigated cooperative learning include Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, and Rinehart (2010), Anderson and Roit (2013), Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2014), and El-Dinary and Schuder (2013).

In their study of the importance of reading instruction strategies, Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, and Rinehart (2010) examined various approaches to reading instruction that could help facilitate learning in elementary schools. They found that teachers who used cooperative learning approaches in the classroom where able to provide students
with opportunities for learning that could not be achieved by students working individually. In a related study, Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2014) in their study of comprehension strategy instruction in core reading programs, examined the importance of the cooperative learning approach toward the improvement of reading skills among children in elementary schools. They found that the cooperative learning approach is important in elementary schools because it enhances social interactions among learners, which, in turn, influences reading strategies. In particular, these researchers reported that students in student-directed cooperative learning groups were more likely to achieve better results in reading comprehension and fluency than students in teacher-directed groups.

While examining the various ways in which teachers could benefit from using cooperative learning in the classroom, Anderson and Roit (2013), in their study of planning and implementing collaborative strategy instruction, examined the teacher’s role in the cooperative learning approach. They found that teachers should ensure that each student is placed in a group where he or she is comfortable and can participate actively. Moreover, they found that active participation in-group activities enabled each of the learners to engage in positive group interactions, to develop a stronger self-esteem, and improve their reading skills. Related studies by other researchers have also reported that, since peer interaction is a driving force that motivates learners in elementary schools, the propensity for social engagement, and interaction could be useful in configuring effective literacy instruction environments for children (El-Dinary & Schuder, 2013).

A study by El-Dinary and Schuder (2013), which focused on the analysis of how students could easily benefit from using cooperative learning techniques and approach to
enhance their reading skills, examined some of the learning techniques utilized in different urban elementary schools in Canada. They found that students often witnessed and gained significant benefits when assigned to reading groups based on their proficiency. According to El-Dinary and Schuder (2013), such groups allowed less-skilled students the opportunities to read materials and selections that were more suited to their ability levels, and participate subsequently in whole class discussion and assignments. A similar study of factors associated with success in urban elementary schools by Clark, Lotto, and McCarthy (2010), examined the benefit of using and applying cooperative learning approaches in teaching students in urban and other elementary schools. They found that both urban elementary students with and without disabilities could witness substantial gains when they participated actively in their respective cooperative learning groups.

While examining the effective ways in which teachers could formulate cooperative learning in urban elementary schools, Emmer and Gerwels (2012) in their study of cooperative learning in elementary classrooms and teaching practices, examined how this approach could be implemented in a way that captures the diverse background of learners. They found that learners put in small groups comprised of students from homogenous backgrounds when compared with learners put in small groups capturing the diverse cultural and economic nature of their cities were likely to perform better. El-Dinary, and Schuder (2013), in their study of transactional strategies instruction, also reported similar findings and further found that urban elementary teachers aiming to incorporate the cooperative learning approach in their literacy instruction strategies must ensure that they capture the diverse nature of students’ cultural and economic
background. El-Dinary, and Schuder (2013) found that when put in small groups; students from different backgrounds were able to bring diverse experience to classroom, which, in turn, helped facilitate learning. Taken together, these studies suggested that cooperative learning is one of the effective learning strategies for students with learning difficulties because it enhanced collaboration between weaker and highly skilled students. Therefore, based on the analysis of these studies, it is apparent that students benefit significantly from appropriate cooperative learning techniques, which enable them to gain confidence and high reading skills in the classroom.

**The whole language approach to reading instruction.** The whole language approach refers to the approach that involves teaching children to read by recognizing texts or words as whole pieces of language rather than individual letters (Aghaie & Zhang, 2012). Tenets of the whole language approach include the belief that language is learned through actual use; that reading is best learned through the use of authentic texts; and that learning is best achieved through direct engagement as well as personal experience (Duffy, 2013). Examples of areas in which whole language reading is applicable include individual tutorial programs and a classroom setting where the teacher interacts closely with individual students to enable them to recognize words as whole pieces of language. Researchers who have investigated this approach include Aghaie and Zhang (2012), Connor et al. (2013), Duffy (2013), and Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2014).

In their study of the effects of explicit instruction in cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies on Iranian Elementary School students, Aghaie and Zhang (2012) examined the effectiveness of the whole language approach over other approaches for enhancing the effectiveness of literacy instruction strategies adapted by teachers in Iran.
They found that, compared to learners in skill-based classrooms, students in whole-language classrooms understood much better that reading is about getting the meaning rather than correctly pronouncing the words. The findings obtained by Aghaie and Zhang (2012) are similar to the findings by Connor et al. (2013) in their study of individualizing student instruction and literacy development; they examined the importance and benefit of the whole language reading approach for students in elementary schools. They reported that students in whole-language classrooms were likely to engage in a great deal of self-regulated reflections on letter-sound relations as they could write and read while paying considerable attention to patterns in words and letters. Similarly, Duffy (2013), in his study of teachers' development in their instruction and approach to teaching reading, examined the effectiveness of the whole language approach. He found that the whole-language approach has become one of the most effective approaches to enhancing learning comprehension because it enables the teachers to make learning to read and write as meaningful and natural as possible.

Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2014), analyzed the applicability of the whole-language approach and noted that it often avoids teaching learners how to pronounce or spell words in lists and out of context sentences, because this is not naturally occurring language. As demonstrated by Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2014), the whole-language approach considers any instruction directed toward increasing pronunciation knowledge out of the context of naturally occurring sentences or language to be counter to good reading instruction. Some researchers are critical of the whole language approach in reading instruction. For example, Connor et al. (2013) reported that while the whole-language approach enables students to engage in self-regulated reflection on the letter-
sound relationship, it may have several shortcomings that reduce its applicability in a classroom setting. In particular, Connor et al. (2013) noted that by overlooking spelling and technical mistakes students make in the classroom, may also present a considerable number of problems for students with reading difficulties. Nonetheless, both researchers agree that this approach is particularly appropriate for elementary school learners. Peck (2010), in his study that focused on the relevance of the whole learning approach to urban elementary school students, examined using the whole language approach in urban elementary schools. He found that schools that focused on the whole-language approach on average registered a considerable number of students with a high degree of reading comprehension and understanding of the nature of sentences. As such, most of the studies focusing on the whole-language approach seem to agree that the approach is one of the effective approaches to improving literacy instruction objectives in elementary schools.

The whole language approach, however, is still a controversial approach to teaching reading, as some scholars believe that it has detrimental effects on students in the later years of schooling. Research on the effectiveness of the whole language approach conducted by Dewitz, Jones & Leahy (2014) in schools based in California, found that whole language was not always successful. This was the case because some students who had been in whole-language classrooms during the elementary years experienced problems in the upper grades due to a lack of conventional spelling skills, a lack of knowledge of grammar, and an inability to read fluently.

In his study of the effective implementation of the whole language approach in urban elementary schools, Jenkins (2012) examined the teacher’s role in making the whole language approach effective for increasing students’ achievement in reading, and
found that teachers must ensure that they know the first language (L1) of their students. Also, he noted that incorporating learners’ first language in reading instruction could help boost students’ performance in reading comprehension and vocabulary development. As such, this researcher recommended that teachers should provide learners with storybooks translated from English (L2) to their first language (L1), because when students alternate between first and second language, they are able to make meaning of words rapidly. Since the whole language approach focuses on helping individual learners to make meaning of what they read in a classroom setting, inclusion of the first language in the instruction strategy could benefit urban students from diverse language backgrounds. Collectively, these studies suggest that the whole language approach is one of the most effective for reading instructional programs for individual learners needing explicit instructions in selected areas, such as phonemic awareness, fluency, and phonics.

**Personalized approach.** A personalized learning approach is intended to facilitate the reading comprehension success of each learner by first determining the learning needs, aspirations, and interests of individual learners, and then providing learning experiences customized for each student (Yi-Chin, Yu-Ling & Ying-Shao, 2014; Taylor, Pearson, Clark & Walpole, 2010; Swanson, 2016). The personalized approach is similar to the whole-language approach in that they are both learner-centered, as they not only focus on the interests and aspirations of each student, but they also ensure that each student is learning at his/her pace. Examples of this approach are Guided Reading and student-teacher conferences. In the Guided Reading approach, the teacher matches texts to students’ reading abilities; they monitor carefully as students read to ascertain their progress. Similarly, during student-teacher conferencing, the teacher schedules a
conference one or two times a week with each student. During the conference, the teacher acts as a collaborator in the reading of texts, as a demonstrator of strategies, and as observer and assessor of reading behavior. Researchers who have investigated this approach include Yi-Chin, Yu-Ling and Ying-Shao (2014), Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole (2010), and Swanson (2016), as well as Cooper and White (2012).

In their survey on the relevance of personalized reading instruction in elementary schools, Yi-Chin, Yu-Ling, and Ying-Shao (2014) assessed some of the elementary schools in the United States that have adapted personalized reading instruction as a reading instruction approach. They found that teachers who understand that learners’ have different approaches to reading due to their cultural and social backgrounds are often able to witness significant success while using the personalized approach to learning. Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (2010), in their study of effective schools and accomplished teachers and literacy instruction in low-income schools, also found that the personalized reading instruction approach is more effective when teachers focus on the interests as well as capabilities of their students. While discussing the most effective ways of how teachers could apply this approach in the classroom, Swanson (2016), in his study of strategy instruction and effectively using each of the strategies within the personalized approach, examined the teacher’s role in effectively applying the personalized approach. He found that teachers must ensure that they are in a position to interact one-on-one with students in their classroom. According to Swanson (2016), such interaction enables the teacher to understand the needs and strengths of each student. As such, the teacher becomes aware of the necessary areas she needs to focus on in order to ensure that each student learns in accordance with his or her ability.
Cooper and White (2012) studied ways in which students could benefit from the personalized approach and found that since this method enables teachers and students to identify their interests as well as strengths and weaknesses, students could explore their strengths during classroom sessions while asking their teachers to assist them to improve in their areas of weakness. Similarly, Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole (2010) reported that when students are guided by their teachers to discover their weaknesses and strengths, they manage to improve significantly because they ascertain the areas they need to focus on. For instance, a student with high phonics knowledge, but low vocabulary knowledge, could consider concentrating on vocabulary while being monitored and assisted by the teacher. In another study that examined the effectiveness of the personalized approach in elementary schools, Canada, Casey, Robertson, Williamson, Serio, and Elswick (2011), found that personalized learning is effective when used as a strategy for enhancing vocabulary knowledge, fluency, and comprehension in students. In addition, these researchers reported that these areas often require teachers to pay close attention to their students; therefore, by using the personalized approach the teacher manages to monitor the progress of their students while introducing new learning strategies.

In line with urban elementary schools, Swanson (2016), in his study of strategy instruction, examined the personalized approach to teaching reading in urban elementary schools. Swanson reported that the personalized approach to literacy instruction is the most effective approach in urban elementary schools because it enables the teachers to capture the learning needs, aspirations, and interests of individual learners, based on their backgrounds. As such, this researcher also observed and found that teachers should
ensure that they conduct an extensive assessment of their learners’ background before introducing this approach. In summary, collectively, studies noted that the personalized approach has become increasingly effective in elementary schools with many children because it enables teachers to focus on the weaknesses and strengths of individual learners. Also, by ascertaining learners’ backgrounds, teachers are able to capture their needs and inspiration in order to develop effective instruction strategies.

Explicit instruction approach. Explicit instruction is a reading instruction approach that involves using highly sequenced and structured steps to teach a specific skill to the learners. Noteworthy researchers who have investigated the explicit instruction approach include Elliott-Johns and Jarvis (2013), Ferro-Almeida (2013), McIntyre et al. (2015), Pressley et al. (2012), and Reutzel, Child, Jones, and Clark (2014). Explicit instruction is different from cooperative learning in that, while cooperative learning is student centered, explicit instruction is highly teacher-centered because the teacher participates in the learning activities by using series of actions to enhance learners’ reading skills and confidence (Price, 2012). In particular, the teacher prepares the lessons, interacts explicitly with learners over the course of the lesson, and then combines and merges the lesson taught. A notable example of explicit instruction utilized in elementary schools is the responsive teaching (RT) approach which involves a teacher-directed perspective whereby the teacher provides materials and opportunities for experimentation and exploration while systematically and explicitly teaching specific concepts (Reutzel, Child, Jones & Clark, 2014). Elementary school teachers who use this approach follow the learner’s lead and facilitate the learner’s exploration by using strategies such as imitating, modeling, describing what the children are reading, and
providing materials in an environment that challenges the learner’s reading abilities (Price, 2012). Both studies agreed that the explicit instruction approach is one of the most teacher-centered approaches, and that it helps improve reading comprehension in struggling students.

In their study of the importance of explicit instruction in core reading programs, Reutzel, Child, Jones and Clark (2014) examined the achievements of various public elementary schools in the United States that were using this approach. They found that explicit instruction is highly important in elementary schools because it not only enables the students to comprehend what they have been instructed to read in the classroom, but also enables the teachers to monitor the progress of each student closely by participating actively in the reading instruction process. The findings are similar to the findings obtained by Ferro-Almeida (2013), who also reported that explicit instruction not only enhances students’ reading comprehension, but also enables teachers to identify the relevant strategies they need to use to enhance their students’ skills. A study by McIntyre et al. (2015), in their study of supplemental instruction in early reading for struggling readers, also reported similar findings, indicating that students greatly benefit from the explicit instruction of reading comprehension schemes whenever they read a text.

While attempting to understand the ways in which teachers could improve teaching strategies with using the explicit instruction approach, Pressley et al. (2012), in their study of reading comprehension strategies, found that the most important thing teachers should remember while attempting to use this approach is the skill level and capabilities of the students. To this extent, these researchers provided a list of five steps that the teacher should include when using explicit instruction in the classroom. First, as
demonstrated by Pressley et al. (2012), the teacher should provide an exact description of
the strategy, as well as explain to each learner when and how it should be used. Second,
the teacher must ensure that s/he models how to use the strategy when students are in the
process of reading. Third, the teacher should ensure that s/he works together with the
students, as well as shares the use of the strategy with the students during the reading
process. In the fourth stage, the teacher leads guided practice sessions using the strategy,
subsequently allowing for the gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the
students. In the last stage, the teacher encourages the independent use of the strategy by
the students. Specifically, Pressley et al. (2012) showed that teachers could remind
students of the name of the strategy, which enabled the students to use the technique
independently and automatically. Similar stages were recommended by Roe (2012) in her
study of reading strategy instruction, who noted that teachers who follow the stages are
often able to reap the maximum benefit of the explicit instruction approach, especially
when it comes to enhancing reading skills in students.

In his study of the effectiveness of using explicit instruction on reading
comprehension to improve reading comprehension strategies, Price (2012) examined how
students could benefit from explicit instruction strategies in elementary schools. He found
that students who take their time to understand and apply the explicit instruction
strategies introduced by their teachers in the classroom often witness significant
improvement in reading comprehension and fluency. The finding is similar to findings
obtained by Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2015), who found that teachers who want students
to benefit from this approach should always ask students to apply each reading strategy
they learn during explicit instruction to a wide variety of texts and texts levels. Likewise,
Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2015), in their study of the effects of explicit reading strategies instruction and peer tutoring, also indicated that students often witness and gain significant benefit when their teacher gradually releases the responsibility for the application of explicit instruction strategies to the students. In particular, Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2015) agree with Price (2012) that teachers should ensure that they allow students to take control of the approach introduced by the teacher. Especially, as demonstrated by Price (2012), when students take control of their learning process, they are able to learn about their weaknesses, passions, and areas that need particular attention. As a result, learners are able to improve on their reading skills by focusing on their strengths while seeking their teachers’ guidance to address areas of weakness.

In their study of the most effective way of incorporating explicit instruction in urban elementary schools, McIntyre et al. (2015) examined including explicit instruction as one of the effective approaches to reading instruction in urban elementary schools, and found that series of actions to enhance learners’ reading skills and confidence must be in line with the diverse cultures of learners in urban elementary schools. The finding is similar to finding by Winitz (2016) who noted that teachers who include learners’ cultural heritage and beliefs in reading instruction are often able to enhance vocabulary and reading comprehension in learners. Particularly, teachers are able to introduce reading instruction materials, such as books and pictures familiar to students when they understand their backgrounds well. In turn, this helps boost the learning environment for each learner.

In summary, based on the analysis of the various approaches to reading instruction, it is apparent that each of the approaches is suitable for a particular learning
environment. Therefore, teachers aiming to improve their literacy instruction strategies must ensure that they have conducted a careful assessment of their classrooms to identify the most effective approaches for their students. The subsequent section will provide a critical review of the literature that examined some of the important learning objectives of literacy instruction strategies used by teachers in elementary schools.

**Examples of Literacy Instruction Strategies**

The term used in this section, “literacy instruction strategies,” refers to the specific instructional strategies that utilize structural and explicit teaching routines. For example, teachers using reading instruction strategies to formulate teaching models, as well as explain and guide learners through extended practice of reading skills or concepts until the learners achieve mastery (Good, Grouws & Mason, 2010). Examples of reading instruction strategies commonly used in elementary schools include: Oral language, six thinking hats, directed thinking instruction, mind mapping, and students’ self-assessment. Researchers who have investigated reading instruction strategies include: Williams, Weinstein, and Blackwood (2010), Weaver and Kingston (2012), Barton and Sawyer (2013), Good, Grouws, and Mason (2010), and Williams and Staulters (2011) among other scholars. Most of these studies have focused on the analysis of relevance and effectiveness of these reading strategies for enhancing reading skills and achievements in elementary schools.

**Oral Language.** Oral language is an example of a literacy instruction strategy that enables learners to learn and practice texts orally in order to improve on their literacy skills (Williams, Weinstein, and Blackwood 2010; Good, Grouws, Mason, 2010). Developing oral language of learners, therefore, means developing the knowledge and
skills that provide the foundation for the learners’ reading, listening, and speaking (Williams, Weinstein, and Blackwood, 2010). Oral language is a reading instruction strategy that helps students become good readers by providing them with several activities that develop their language. Examples of oral language activities include: reading aloud, discussion in groups, and collaborative learning. Teachers can increase these activities in order to improve students’ reading performance. As a result, teachers who use collaborative learning approach, help their students build oral language (Williams, Weinstein & Blackwood, 2010). In their study that focused on the analysis of the relevance of oral language as a reading strategy, Williams, Weinstein, and Blackwood (2010) examined the relationship between oral language strategy and students’ achievement in five elementary schools. They found that oral language has a profound and a helpful impact on the academic achievement of children in elementary schools, as well as on their success throughout their academic career. In a different study, Weaver and Kingston (2012), in their study of modeling the effects of oral language on reading language, examined the role of oral language instruction in developing reading skills for students in elementary schools. They reported that oral language instruction facilitated the vocabulary development of elementary school students.

Other studies focusing specifically on urban elementary schools, such as a study by Good, Grouws, and Mason (2010), found that oral language enables learners to acquire diverse skills in various areas including grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and morphology. Good, Grouws, and Mason (2010) focused on the analysis of how teachers could obtain maximum benefits for their students while they focus on oral language, and found that oral language is particularly beneficial when used for vocabulary development.
in students. However, Barton and Sawyer (2013) observed that teachers could effectively use oral language to enhance communication skills as well as reading comprehension, because oral language enables teachers to communicate directly with learners during the teaching session. Further, these researchers found that students are ready for comprehension instruction in the elementary school and reported that elementary school students benefit from oral language by interacting directly with their teachers in order to improve their reading skills.

In their research of the urban elementary schools in the United States, Barton and Sawyer (2013) examined using oral language as one of the effective strategies to improve reading skills for students in elementary schools. They found that elementary school students benefit from oral language by interacting directly with their teachers in order to improve on their reading skills. This finding is supported by Good, Grouws, and Mason (2010) who observed that direct oral interactions between urban elementary school teachers and their students contributed to high reading skill development because teachers were able to improve students’ mistakes as well as monitor their progress by communicating to them orally. Therefore, it is clearly apparent that teacher-centered approaches such as direct and implicit instruction enhance oral language in urban elementary schools in the U.S., which, in turn, enhance reading skills.

**Six Thinking Hats.** The Six Thinking Hats strategy, designed by Edward De Bone, is one effective strategy for literacy instruction. It aims to support students’ thinking by helping them look at a problem or topic from several perspectives (Drevitch, Kosarik, Minner & Steele, 2007). The Six Thinking Hats strategy is a powerful instructional strategy that enables learners to move outside their habitual thinking style in
order to get a more rounded view of situations. Williams and Staulters (2011), in their analysis of the relationship between Six Thinking Hats and reading achievements in elementary school students, conducted a survey of the schools that adapted Six Thinking Hats as a reading instruction strategy. They found that this strategy not only enhances reading comprehension, but also enables learners to be creative when analyzing texts. This finding is similar to Kucan and Beck (2010) who found that Six Thinking Hats has become an important instruction strategy in elementary schools because it helps enhance collaborative learning as well as facilitate reading acquisition through interactive learning.

Benner, Nelson, Ralston & Mooney (2010) on their study of the effectiveness of reading instruction on the reading skills of students with behavioral disorders examined some of the effective ways teachers could use to enhance reading acquisition while using Six Thinking Hats. Benner, Nelson, Ralston & Mooney (2010) ascertained that teachers who incorporate Six Thinking Hats with cooperative learning not only facilitate increased interaction of students, but also enable students to develop relevant reading skills through collaborations with other students. In a similar study, Wise and Olson (2015) demonstrated that in a classroom setting learners could benefit from this strategy by collaborating with their teachers. In elementary schools, especially urban elementary schools, such collaboration enables them to explore their creativity while also developing reading skills.

In urban elementary school settings, as demonstrated by Kucan and Beck (2010), teachers often incorporate Six Thinking Hats by providing a collaborative learning environment. Therefore, most urban schools in the United States that utilize Six Thinking
Hats in an attempt to enhance reading skills often encourage a cooperative learning environment where students are put into small but highly diverse groups. Besides, as demonstrated by Williams and Staulters (2011), the diversity in such groups enhances creativity and close interactions.

**Directed Thinking Instruction.** Directed thinking instruction refers to a literacy instruction strategy that guides learners in making predictions about texts and then reading in order to confirm or refute their predictions. Fisher and Frey (2012), in their study of close reading in elementary school, examined the importance of reading strategies, such as directed thinking instruction. They noted that directed thinking instruction is particularly important because it teaches learners to determine the purpose of reading. In addition, they found that this strategy not only encourages students to be thoughtful and active readers, but also enhances their comprehension. Fisher and Frey (2012) also argued that direct thinking instruction not only enables learners to determine the purpose for reading but also enables them to make adjustments to what they anticipate would come next based on the text. Peterson (2014), in his study of reading instruction, also noted that teachers aiming to improve reading acquisition and skills in their students should always make sure that they guide the reading instruction process as well as break reading into small sections in order to enable learners to have time to synthesize and process texts or information. Likewise, Zhang, (2010) in his study of strategic reading instruction and exploring pathways to reading skills development, demonstrated that student obtain benefit from directed thinking instruction by interacting closely with their teachers who, in turn, guide them toward achieving better reading skills.
Shannon (2013), in his study of the most common types of instruction in U.S. urban elementary schools, demonstrated that direct thinking instruction is among the most common strategies. As demonstrated above, in most U.S. urban elementary schools, teachers utilize this instruction strategy by breaking reading into small sections in order to enable learners to have adequate time to synthesize as well as process text.

**Mind Mapping.** A mind map refers to a framework created around a single concept, usually drawn as an image in the center of a page, to which relevant representations of ideas such as words, images, and parts of words are added (Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2015). Likewise, mind mapping refers to a reading instruction technique in which the teacher introduces powerful graphic techniques to unlock the potential of the learner’s brain (Duffy, 2013). Its effectiveness revolves around the fact that it is usually centered on one aspect or a single concept so that learners can concentrate and master that concept fully. Duffy (2013) found that mind mapping not only improves learning in elementary schools, but enhances clear thinking in learners as well as improving students’ achievement in various subjects. Zhang (2010), on the other hand, reported that mind mapping is perhaps the most creative way of improving reading comprehension in elementary schools. Moreover, according to Zhang (2010), mind mapping enables students to structure and order their thinking through creation of visual representations of concepts and texts.

While analyzing the effective ways of improving learning through mind mapping, Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2015), in their study of the effects of reading strategy instruction on reading comprehension and self-efficacy perceptions, examined mind mapping as one of the effective reading instruction strategies to develop reading
achievement for elementary school students. They found and ascertained that this strategy is mainly effective when used in summative tasks and assessments. When used in this context, mind mapping enables learners to display their thinking, as well as process what they learned from reading a text. Connor, Lara, Crowe & Meadows (2013), in their study of instruction, student engagement, and reading skill growth in reading, examined the role of teachers during the use of mind mapping with their students. They found and demonstrated that teachers should use mind mapping as part of culminating assignments or reviews, as this enables teachers to gauge the performance of their students as well as their levels of achievement in reading comprehension. Similarly, students aiming to benefit from mind mapping, as demonstrated by Connor, Lara, Crowe & Meadows (2013), should use the strategy to review their reading acquisition in the classroom. In elementary schools, particularly in urban areas, most researchers agree that mind mapping encourages and increases vocabulary development and reading comprehension in learners.

Based on this review of a broad range of research literature focused on examples of reading instruction strategies, it is evident and apparent that various examples of reading instructions are particularly suited and appropriate for a particular objective. Therefore, teachers in elementary schools could first explore the objective of their literacy instruction strategies before introducing some of the examples discussed in this section. For instance, among urban elementary school teachers who are focused mainly on improving vocabulary development and reading comprehension in their learners, it is observable that the most appropriate example of a reading strategy they could use is mind
mapping. To this end, teachers must ascertain what the relevant strategies for their classrooms are.

In U.S. elementary schools, particularly in urban area, most researchers agree that mind mapping is mainly used as a tool to review the performance of students in classrooms (Connor, Lara, Crowe & Meadows, 2013; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2015). According to Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2015), U.S. urban elementary schools acknowledged that when they used a performance review tool, mind mapping tools often helped in increasing vocabulary development and reading comprehension in their learners.

In conclusion, this literature review has provided an extensive review and exploration of the various literacy instruction strategies in terms of the variety of approaches and learning objectives they offer and address. The section has also provided an extensive review of the various examples of literacy instruction strategies commonly used by teachers in elementary schools. Based on the findings obtained following the review of this literature, it is apparent that the effectiveness of literacy instruction strategies depends on various factors, including the intended objective of those literacy instruction strategies as well as the various examples of reading strategies used in the classroom. Teachers who formulate and implement relevant literacy instruction strategies for their classrooms and outline proper objectives for those strategies often see their students achieve improved reading skills as well as increased academic performance.

**Learning Objectives In Literacy Instruction**

Learning objectives in literacy instruction are important components of reading instruction strategies that describe what learners will learn or be able to do after
instruction (Anderson & Barnitz, 2014; Rystrom, 2010; Holmes, 2014; Wise & Olson, 2015). Because learning objectives specify what the teacher would teach and assess, it is extremely important that teachers outline the key objectives that they would be focusing on before introducing reading instruction strategies. Examples of the learning objectives commonly outlined in elementary schools include: Better reading comprehension, increased fluency, building vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and stronger content area literacy. This section provides a critical review of the literature that focused on learning objectives in reading instruction.

**Reading Comprehension.** Reading comprehension in broad terms may be defined as the ability of learners to read text and process it, as well as understand its meaning (Rystrom, 2010). In other words, reading comprehension occurs when individuals are able to interpret written symbols in order to make meaning. A reader internalizes and adopts the accrued meanings and relates that to previous knowledge, experiences, and texts they’ve read before. Several researchers who have investigated reading comprehension as an objective of reading instruction include Onwuegbuzie et al. (2014), Rystrom (2010), Anderson and Barnitz (2014), Harlaar et al (2010), and Wonder-McDowell, Reutzel & Smith (2011). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2014), in their study of the importance of reading instruction, examined the benefits achieved by African American students across the United States who had been aiming to better their reading comprehension skills. They found out that reading comprehension is particularly important because it enables learners to develop insights into other worlds, including noticing and accumulating or collecting words and language patterns, as well as learning to discuss an idea from a text with confidence. These researchers also noted that
comprehension enables learners to go beyond words in order to understand the ideas and the relationships between ideas conveyed in a text. Similarly, Wonder-McDowell, Reutzel, and Smith (2011), in their study of reading instruction and the effects on struggling second graders' reading achievement, examined the importance and benefit of reading comprehension as one of the key objectives for learning to read in elementary schools. They found that enhancing reading comprehension skills is one of the most important objectives of reading instruction because it not only allows individuals to learn how to read words, but also enhances the ability of learners to learn to discuss ideas read from a text with confidence. Rystrom (2010), in his study of the effective strategies for achieving reading comprehension, examined some of the techniques and strategies implemented by teachers in elementary schools across the public schools in the United States. He found that guided repeated oral training is one of the most effective ways of helping students improve their comprehension skills. Anderson and Barnitz (2014), in their study of cross reading comprehension instruction, also identified that teachers who utilize cooperative approaches to learning, such as enabling students to read and discuss what they have read, often achieve higher levels of comprehension among their students. Likewise, Harlaar et al. (2010), while examining the various ways students could use to improve their comprehension skills, found that elementary school students who monitor their own readings and check for their own understanding, as well as students who ask questions in order to identify key points in text and work to remember them, often achieve better comprehension skills.

In their study of effective ways of enhancing comprehension in urban elementary schools in the United States, Anderson and Barnitz (2014) examined the different
approaches implemented in urban elementary schools in New York and Los Angeles. They found that teachers who provide supplemental instruction programs to their students often manage to enhance reading comprehension because such programs manage to capture the different abilities and preferences of the learners. Similarly, as demonstrated by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2014), struggling readers in urban elementary schools often improve significantly when supplemental instruction, such as intensive intervention, are incorporated in reading instruction that aim to enhance reading comprehension in students.

**Increased Fluency.** Reading fluency is an important reading instruction objective that refers to the ability of learners to read texts quickly, accurately, and with expression (Haynes & Jenkins, 2016). Fluency instruction provides a bridge between being able to read a text and being able to understand it. Researchers who have investigated reading fluency include Connor, Lara, Crowe, and Meadows (2010), and Leinhardt, Zigmond, and Cooley (2011), Miller and Schwanenflugel (2010), Haynes and Jenkins, (2016) and Meisinger, Bloom, and Hynd (2010).

Meisinger, Bloom, and Hynd (2010), in their study of the relevance and importance of reading fluency phonemic awareness, examined the importance of increasing reading fluency with children, who with disabilities in elementary schools in the United States. They found that fluency is important to all learners, including learners with disabilities, because it helps provide a bridge between word recognition and text comprehension. A similar study of the importance of reading fluency conducted by Miller and Schwanenflugel (2010) revealed that learners who are fluent in reading are
more likely to choose to read, meaning that reading fluency enhances the ability of learners to enjoy reading, even outside the classroom.

While examining the effective ways of enhancing reading fluency among elementary school students, Leinhardt, Zigmond, and Cooley (2011) in their study of reading instruction and its effects, compared the levels of fluency of elementary school students with the various reading instruction approaches implemented by teachers. They found that teachers who use the whole-language approach often see their students obtain a high level of reading fluency. Connor, Lara, Crowe, and Meadows (2010), in their study of instruction, student engagement, and reading skill growth in Reading First classrooms, echoed a similar finding that the whole-language approach is effective for obtaining improved fluency because it enables learners to pronounce the words efficiently, as well as understand their meaning. Similarly, Haynes and Jenkins (2016), in their study of reading instruction, examined the benefit of learning objectives for learning instruction. They reported that elementary school students could obtain this objective by making conscious and aware inferences about the texts they are reading, as this enables them to improve on their accuracy and speed while reading texts.

Rasinski (2012), in his survey of the strategies for ensuring reading fluency in urban elementary schools in the United States. He examined the effects of repeated reading on enhancing reading fluency, and he found that urban elementary school teachers who regularly encouraged and guided their students in reading and re-reading vocabularies and storybooks were likely to see their students achieve students higher fluency. This finding agrees with another finding by Connor et al (2013) who found that, in urban elementary schools where the diverse nature of students could impede some
bilingual learners from improving on fluency; encouraging repeated reading is the most effective strategy for increasing fluency. In other words, repeated reading was a gateway to mastery of vocabulary and fluency. This finding is closely related to the ‘three times’ technique because learning a word or a series of words three or more times not only guarantees efficiency, but also fluency (Connor et al, 2013). Taken together, these studies examined the effective ways to support increasing reading fluency for students in elementary schools.

**Building Vocabulary.** Vocabulary refers to the words learners must know in order to read and communicate effectively (Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis & Kouzekanani, 2013). Vocabulary building or development refers to the process by which learners acquire words (Holmes, 2014; Wise & Olson, 2015). Most studies agree that building vocabulary should be a critical objective of any reading instruction strategy. Various researchers who have investigated vocabulary development include Peterson (2014), Holmes (2014), Wise and Olson (2015), Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis, and Kouzekanani (2013), and Lesaux (2012).

In his study of the importance of vocabulary instructions, Peterson (2014) conducted a survey of the various elementary schools that have included vocabulary development in their reading instruction objectives. He found that vocabulary development not only enhances reading comprehension, but also enhances academic success in the later years of schooling. Holmes (2014), in his study of vocabulary instruction and reading, examined the role of vocabulary building toward improving reading skills of students in elementary schools, he noted that vocabulary development plays an important function of bridging between word-level of phonics and the cognitive
process of comprehension. Therefore, building vocabulary is significant to all students in elementary schools because it facilitates word identification and enables comprehension. Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis, and Kouzakanani (2013) reported a similar finding. In their study of the effectiveness of supplemental reading instruction for learners with reading difficulties, examined the importance of vocabulary in understanding the text. They found that if a word is not in a learner’s vocabulary, the learner cannot apply word recognition strategies effectively, and reading comprehension is hindered.

Conversely, while examining the effective ways teachers could use to encourage their students’ vocabulary development, Wise and Olson (2015), in their study of awareness and reading instruction, found that teachers who use explicit instruction approaches often witnessed the gains in high vocabulary development they observed in their students. Similarly, Lesaux (2012), in his study of reading and reading instruction for children from low-income families also found similar findings and further noted that explicit instruction emphasizes strategies for directly teaching vocabulary, which may include detailed definitions and examples given before, during, or after reading classes. This researcher also found that learners could build vocabulary effectively by consulting with their teachers on a regular basis regarding terms they do not understand. In line with this finding, it is justifiable to observe that all reading instruction strategies must ensure that they adapt vocabulary development in their objectives, as it helps facilitate comprehension and fluency.

In his study of vocabulary problems in the urban elementary school, Seegers (2012) examined some of the critical issues that prevent urban students from achieving
high vocabulary development. He found that considerable numbers of urban learners in the United States are bilingual; as English Language Learners (ELLs), they only get to learn English vocabulary acquisition in school while they speak in their first language at home. This researcher, therefore, recommended that urban schools should encourage a parent-implemented approach in order to facilitate vocabulary development in students. This finding is supported by Peterson (2014) who observed and found that urban elementary schools that encourage parents to participate in their children’s’ reading instruction by reading to them at home are likely to achieve high vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, building vocabulary in U.S urban schools requires the incorporation of parents and teachers. Taken together, these studies examined the importance of the relevance of vocabulary development as well as the effective ways of improving vocabulary strategies in elementary schools.

**Phonemic Awareness.** Phonemic awareness is a reading instruction objective that refers to the ability of learners to notice and think about, as well as work with, individual sounds in spoken words. In other words, phonemic awareness refers to the understanding that, in a spoken language, sounds often work together in order to make words. Researchers who have investigated phonemic awareness and its relevance as a primary reading instruction objective include Shannon (2013), Freebody and Byrne (2010), Snider (2010), Bentin and Leshem (2013), and Shepherd (2014). Collectively, the researchers agreed that phonemic awareness has become an important component of learning objectives in elementary schools.

In their study of the importance of phonemic awareness in elementary schools, Bentin and Leshem (2013) examined the interactions between phonological awareness
and reading acquisition across fifteen elementary schools based in California. These researchers found that phonemic awareness and reading acquisition had a direct relationship in all of the schools they studied. The findings of this study are supported by Snider (2010) in his study of the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading achievement. He observed and found that phonemic awareness is extremely important for elementary school children in their later reading achievement.

On the other hand, the study of interaction between phonological awareness and reading acquisition by Bentin and Leshem (2013) examined and focused mainly on the analysis of various ways to improve phonemic awareness. They found that a cooperative and personalized approach to reading instruction has been among the most effective reading instruction teachers use to obtain phonemic awareness. Similarly, Shepherd (2014), in his study of reading performance and reading instruction, examined applying and using the cooperative learning approach to increase phonemic awareness. He found that teachers who incorporate cooperative learning in small groups give their students opportunities to understand the various sounds when reading aloud with other group members. Moreover, he also noted that students should focus on comparing different sounds with other students in order to obtain phonemic awareness skills. In summary, most scholars agree that phonemic awareness is often easily obtained through effective collaborations of learners as well as through teachers’ assistance.

Similar to vocabulary development in U.S. urban elementary schools, Nilsen and Don (2013) found that urban elementary schools that encourage the participation of parents are likely to achieve higher reading skills in terms of phonemic awareness than schools that do not encourage parent-implemented reading and literacy intervention. In
addition, these researchers noted that teachers and parents who read regularly to children often encourage phonemic awareness. To this end, it is apparent that in U.S urban elementary schools, encouraging phonemic awareness requires the involvement of parents and teachers.

**Content Area Literacy.** Content area literacy may be defined as the ability to understand and analyze a variety of words and texts and to communicate and write persuasively (Stewart & Cross, 2013). Researchers who have investigated content area literacy and its relevance as an integral element of reading instruction objectives include: Stewart and Cross (2013), McDonald et al. (2012), Fang (2012), and Bentin and Leshem (2013). Collectively, the researchers established that content area literacy is an important component of learning objective in elementary schools.

Stewart and Cross (2013), in their study of the relevance of content area in elementary schools, examined the relationship of content area literacy and the development of reading skills in learners across elementary schools in New York City. They found that students who have developed stronger content area literacy are likely to demonstrate a high level of other reading skills such comprehension and fluency. This finding is similar to McDonald et al. (2012), who found and supported this finding and further ascertained that students with high content area literacy skills are likely to have high understanding of the words and texts they read in classrooms.

While focusing on the various ways of improving content area literacy, Fang (2012), in his study of approaches to developing content area literacies, demonstrated that teachers who utilize a personalized learning approach in their classrooms are likely to achieve high content area literacy. This finding is similar to findings by McDonald et al.
(2012) who found that the personalized approach enables teachers to monitor the progress of their students closely as they explain to them the meaning and nature of the texts they are currently learning in the classroom. A personalized approach can help achieve high content area literacy because attention is on one individual and the content covered is based on the learner’s level of understanding. Likewise, the teacher can easily monitor the progress of their students because the one-on-one sessions can help the teacher identify the student’s weaknesses while focusing on his/her strengths as explained by McDonald et al. (2012).

Most studies that have examined the various ways of incorporating content area literacy in the U.S. urban elementary schools, found that teachers who explain to their students the word vocabularies and texts before and after reading instructions often tend to enhance content area development in their students (McDonald et al., 2012; Bentin & Leshem, 2013). Therefore, most urban schools in the United States tend to utilize student-centered approaches, such as content area literacy, which enables teachers to monitor students’ progress while explaining the meaning of text.

In conclusion, following this review of literature on the learning objectives of instruction strategies, it is apparent that teachers in elementary schools have several objectives that they must implement in their classroom in order to ensure that their students develop the required reading skills. In particular, in urban elementary schools where learners are too young to formulate their objectives, teachers must ensure that they formulate objectives in line with the instruction approaches and strategies they would be utilizing in the classroom. For instance, learning objectives, such as building vocabulary and enhancing fluency require extensive use of learner-centered instruction strategies,
such as cooperative learning. When students work in groups, they are able to compare their progress in achieving some of these objectives. As such, they improve in noticeable ways, developing the required reading skills.

**Teacher Literacy Instruction Support**

A number of research studies have focused on the analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of literacy instruction approaches for educators in elementary schools. Similarly, several theories of the reading process have been assumed to help teachers in teaching reading comprehension. As demonstrated by Brown (2011), in his study of strategies for encouraging reading fluency, effective literacy instruction provides ample opportunities for learners to engage successfully and efficiently with connected texts in a manner that encourages the development of fluent and skilled reading. For that reason, teachers, particularly those in elementary schools, should strive to find the most effective reading instruction strategies that facilitate fluent reading in learners. The following section will provide a critical review of some of the current studies as well as theories regarding the importance of literacy coaches, principals, and parents among other stakeholders in elementary schools.

The most important objective of literacy instruction in elementary school is to enable learners to acquire and obtain the knowledge and skills they need in order to read grade-level text not only fluently, but also with good comprehension (Bos & Vaughn, 2012; Evers & Spencer, 2011; Scott & Scott, 2010). Teachers play an important role in formulating and adapting the necessary literacy instruction strategies that would enable the learners to achieve the above-mentioned goal (Alfassi, 2013; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). Although the role of teachers in the formulation and implementation of literacy
instruction strategies are profound, several studies have noted that teachers cannot adapt effective literacy instruction strategies without commitment and support from various stakeholders, such as parents, literacy coaches, peers, and schools principals. Morrow, Kuhn, and Schwanenflugel (2016), in their study of the family fluency program and the reading teacher, examined the relevance of a supportive environment in enhancing reading strategies. They found that a supportive classroom environment is essential to the achievement of the goals and objectives of an effective reading program or strategy. In light of this finding, Morrow, Kuhn, and Schwanenflugel (2016), concluded by suggesting that teachers should strive to get support from key stakeholders, such as school principal, literacy coach, peers, and parents, as the support they receive would help improve their literacy instruction strategies. This section or stage will review the relevance of support from literacy coaches, parents, principals, and peers in facilitating the implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies.

**Support from Literacy Coaches**

A literacy coach may be defined as a literacy leader working collaboratively with administrators, teachers, department staff, and school board members in order to improve student achievement in literacy and reading comprehension (Commeyras & Mazile, 2011). The literacy coaching programs are often designed to improve reading instructions by providing ongoing, consistent, and relevant professional development to teachers (Commeyras & Mazile, 2011; Walpole & McKenna, 2012; Shernoff, Lakind & Frazier, 2015; Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines & Vernon-Feagans, 2016).

According to Commeyras and Mazile (2011), in their study of exploring the culture of trading among primary schools, literacy coaches play a critical role in serving
as instructional coaches for classroom teachers. In particular, literacy coaches provide teachers with explicit guidance and instructions on reading processes and instructional strategy.

To this extent, Commeyras and Mazile (2011) also found that the primary role of literacy coach is to support teachers to become more effective and to set goals as well as to refine and improve what the teachers are doing while implementing reading instructions. A different study by Hong, Greene, and Hartzell (2011), in their study of cognitive and motivational characteristics of elementary teachers, examined the literacy coaches’ role in supporting teachers. They found that while teachers are responsible for identifying their strengths, as well as growing their capabilities, literacy coaches are there to assist them in identifying those strengths and capabilities. Therefore, it is clear that the role of literacy coaches does not entail or involve telling teachers what they need to do; instead, it involves supporting teachers in shaping and achieving their overall reading instruction strategies.

Several literatures and empirical studies agree that support from literacy coaches is important to teachers aiming to adapt effective reading instruction programs and strategies (Massey, 2011). For example, Massey (2011), in his study of the roles and responsibilities of elementary reading coaches, examined the literacy coaches’ role and the apparent influence of teacher knowledge and instructional practice, and found that literacy coaches not only help teachers in recognizing what they know and can do, but they also assist teachers in strengthening their abilities to make effective use of what they know and do. Similarly, Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, and Sammons (2010), in their study of professional development in reading instruction, examined the teachers who work
collaboratively with literacy coaches. They found that these teachers are often able to learn more and do more when implementing reading strategies and programs for their classrooms. Teachers often want to learn what matters to their duties and work with their students in their classroom. Similarly, literacy coaches can provide support for those kinds of duties and work.

The opportunity to work collaboratively with literacy coaches capable of facilitating school wide approaches to advancing literacy skills is extremely important to all teachers (Farmer, 2014; Doneski-Nicol & Bartz, 2015; Le, 2014). Reid (2013), in his study of reflection among pre-service teacher candidates and understanding what matters of discovery, conducted a survey aimed at assessing how literacy coaches could assist elementary and high school English teachers in implementing effective reading strategies. The findings of his study revealed that literacy coaches could assist teachers in recognizing when learners are not making meaning with text in order to provide appropriate strategic assistance that would enable students to read course content effectively. Also, Reid (2013) in his study of reflection among pre-service teacher candidates, examined the literacy coach as one support teacher to adopt and apply effective reading instruction strategies. He noted that literacy coaches could assist teachers in creating environments that allow learners to engage in critical reading and examination of texts.

Making and creating appropriate environments for improving students’ achievement in reading by literacy coaches is particularly possible because literacy coaches are often capable of exploring, analyzing, and reconstructing or rebuilding effective learning environment that facilitate and help students to engage in meaning
making and reading comprehension processes. The findings by Reid (2013) relate to findings by Taylor and Duke (2013), in their study of the Handbook of Effective Literacy Instruction, who found that literacy coaches are excellent teachers who not only understand how children learn, but also know how to facilitate the creation of an environment that meets learners’ social-emotional and instructional needs. Therefore, most findings seem to agree that literacy coaches could support teachers in various ways in order to help them adapt and implement effective reading instructions programs and strategies.

Other studies, such as a study by Walpole and McKenna (2012), in their study of The Literacy Coach’s Handbook, examined and focused exclusively on how effective literacy coaching could enable teachers to implement effective reading instruction strategies in elementary schools. They found that effective literacy coaching must involve collaborative dialogue for teachers and literacy coaches at all levels of experience and knowledge. In particular, they found that the effort of literacy coaches should be available to all members of elementary school regardless of their experience and knowledge about given topics as well as years of teaching experience. To this extent, researchers noted that failures of elementary schools to involve all elementary teachers in coaching opportunities could have an adverse and negative effect on the ability of the school to become a learning environment capable of making coordinated decisions about implementation of reading instruction strategies.

Commeyras and Inyega (2010), on the other hand, in their study of improving teaching reading in elementary schools, examined the role of literacy coaches in helping teachers apply the effective literacy instruction, and found that literacy coaches could
only assist in the implementation of effective literacy instruction strategy when the focus on the interaction between a literacy coach and teachers is guided mainly by analysis of students’ learning. In particular, the analysis demonstrated by Commeyras and Inyega (2010) mainly stems from the examination of both to data and actual work of students in classroom. Thus, they reported that a good literacy coach must be capable of suggesting and helping teachers learn to formulate, administer, and interpret data related to students’ work in the classroom, in order to facilitate the effective adaptation of effective reading instruction strategies.

Taken together and based on these findings, it is apparent that literacy coaches not only play a critical role of supporting professional development, but also play the vital role of assisting the teachers in formulating and improving instructional practices. Especially, most of the studies reviewed agree that they (literacy coaches) help teachers in planning for instruction, as well as support teachers developing manageable routines, and organizing instructional materials in order to create an engaged learning environment for children.

**Support from Parents**

A parent in this context refers to the caregiver or guardians for students learning reading comprehension skills. In the past few decades, there has been a concerted focus on improving the reading instruction strategies for children learning to read fluently and ways to efficiently involve their parents in order to enhance the reading achievement of their children (Hunzicker et al., 2016). Similarly, several studies have found that in order to become effective; schools must make a concerted effort to involve parents as partners (Topping, Duran & Van, 2015; Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung & Davis, 2010).
According to Topping, Duran, and Van (2015), in their study of using peer tutoring to improve reading skills and a practical guide for teachers, teachers must first concentrate on securing the confidence of parents, and then work with parents on ways they could support the literacy development of their students. To this extent, they noted that the most important role of parents involves engaging their children in reading at home.

A survey conducted by Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, and Vernon-Feagans (2016) reported that schools that strive to enhance direct communication between teachers and parents often witness and observe improved reading comprehension in students. In particular, this means that the interaction between teachers and parents enable parents to formulate effective literacy instruction strategies that, in turn, enable learners to improve in their reading comprehension. Similarly, a study by Shernoff, Lakind, Frazier, and Jakobsons (2015), in their study of coaching early career teachers in urban elementary schools, examined parents’ involvement in development literacy achievement. They found that when parents’ involvement is encouraged in the school, they are often able to assist the teachers in implementing effective literacy instruction strategies that help increase reading comprehension. Parents’ involvement in general involves behaviors of parents in home and school settings meant to support the educational progress of their children. Therefore, it is extremely important that parents should work collaboratively with teachers in order to assist the teachers in implementing and adopting the effective literacy instruction frameworks and strategies.

Undoubtedly, reading is a top priority for elementary school teachers in schools around the country. Nonetheless, the researchers who have investigated support from parents to apply and adapt effective reading instruction include Shernoff, Lakind, Frazier
and Jakobsons (2015) and Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung, and Davis (2010) agree that without the help of parents, most studies agree that many children would not be able to achieve their highest reading potential. According to Shernoff, Lakind, Frazier, and Jakobsons (2015), getting parents into school teams to assist teachers with implementing reading instruction strategies will enhance student achievement as well as schools’ test scores. In line with this observation, they noted that parents could facilitate the implementation of effective learning strategies by providing an effective learning environment at home, as well as encouraging their children to have a positive attitude towards learning.

Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung, and Davis (2010), on the other hand, in their study of effective reading programs for the elementary grades, examined the parent’s role in the implementation of effective literacy instruction, and they found that the various ways support from parents could help teachers with adopting effective reading instruction strategies. Likewise, Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, and Vernon-Feagans (2016) found that parents who work collaboratively with teachers in developing monthly reading projects they can do with their children at home enhance the ability of teachers to deliver reading instruction strategies comprehensively to their students. As a result, by engaging and collaborating with parents, teachers are able to identify specific areas that they need to focus on to enable children to improve their reading comprehension and skills. On the other hand, Topping, Duran, and Van (2015) reported that parents could assist teachers in the implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies by sharing the strength of their children as well as interest and talents with the children’s teachers. In particular, by sharing their children’s strength and interests, parents enable teachers to
implement literacy strategies that are in line with the needs and preferences of a particular child at the school.

Similarly, as presented by Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung, and Davis (2010), parents could support teachers by sharing expectations and setting goals that are in line with the instruction provided by the teacher. Thus, parents manage to engage their children at home and encourage them to reach milestones predetermined by their teachers at school. Another survey conducted by Linas and Aitken (2012) was a study of competent communication in urban elementary schools. Linas and Aitken (2012) concluded that parents who understand and reinforce school expectations and rules at home often enable their children to improve significantly in developing reading skills. In line with this conclusion, they noted and suggested that parents are often able to assist teachers in adapting relevant or effective literacy instruction strategies by providing a learning environment at home that encourages learners to focus on instruction given by their teachers.

A similar study by Konrad, Helf, and Joseph (2011) in their study of strategies for increasing instructional efficiency, examined the parents’ collaboration with teacher to improve their children’s achievement. They found that parents who share their family’s culture, values, and parenting practices with their children’s teachers; this enables the teachers to incorporate relevant practices that would help make learning instruction strategies more customized to the needs of all children at the school. The researchers concluded that parents can play an important role during the teachers’ implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies.
While most studies have focused on the extensive analysis of the role of parents in supporting teachers in the implementation of effective reading instruction strategies, other studies have focused specifically on the role of parents in urban elementary schools settings. For instance, Linas and Aitken (2012), in their study of competent communication in urban schools, examined the parents’ role in supporting teachers in the implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies. They reported that parents in urban areas need to become involved in their children’s learning by participating in parenting classes focused on child development, discipline, and expectations, among others. Further, according to Linas and Aitken (2012), most children in urban elementary schools often have tough times developing reading comprehension skills because their parents do not collaborate with their teachers in order to design effective learning strategies. Also, most of the parents in urban settings are often busy with earning a living for their families and are not available to work collaboratively with teachers in order to assist their children to improve their reading comprehension.

In addition, Linas and Aitken (2012) recommended that parents in urban settings should first consider participating in parenting classes on child expectations, discipline, and development because such classes would enable parents to acquire adequate understanding of the interests and expectations of their children. Therefore, by sharing their understanding of their children’s expectations and interests, parents would be able to assist teachers in the adaptation of effective reading comprehension strategies that incorporate the needs and interests of their children. Taken together, these studies agree that effective collaboration between teachers and parents whose children are in urban elementary schools would not only enhance the ability of teachers to adapt effective
reading instruction strategies, but would also result in the improvement of learning skills in their children.

**Support from School Principals**

A school principal refers to the educator tasked with the responsibility of managing a school. Konrad, Helf, and Joseph (2011), in their study of strategies for increasing instructional efficiency, examined the role of elementary school principals. The elementary school principal role requires making important school-based decisions with respect to instruction and allocation of resources. They found that some of these decisions include scheduling of classes, assignment of students to classes, and planning of professional development and support for teachers and students at each grade level. In line with the allocation of resources, the school principal’s role often includes the distribution of resources needed to support extra instruction for learners who need it.

Similar to parents and literacy coaches, elementary school principals can play an important role in assisting teachers in formulating and adapting effective literacy instruction strategies for learners (Davis, 2011). The support that school principals provide in order to facilitate teachers’ adaptation of effective learning strategies can be divided into three distinct categories including instructional focus, monitoring of students’ progress, and instructional evaluation (McEwan-Adkins, 2014; Stegman, 2014). Instructional focus in this context refers to the strategies principals use in order to support teachers’ reading instruction methods and the necessary modifications to the materials and approaches the teachers need to make in order to meet the needs of their students.

In addition, instructional focus involves the allocation and distribution of materials and resources as well as frequent visits to classrooms in order to ascertain the
Another study by Keengwe, Onchwari, and Hucks (2014) in their study of literacy enrichment in pre-service teacher education, examined the role of the principal in the development of teacher’s instruction. They found that principals who participate in the instructional process through consultation and discussion with teachers on instructional issues often facilitate the effective implementation of effective reading instruction strategies. To this extent, it is apparent that principals should engage in discussion with teachers on a frequent basis in order to help them formulate appropriate strategies as well as provide them with adequate resources needed to enhance reading comprehension in students.

Instructional evaluative approaches of principals that could facilitate the implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies include providing feedback on literacy instructional strategies and materials utilized by teachers (McEwan-Adkins, 2014; Stegman, 2014; Linas & Aitken, 2012). Providing the relevant feedback to teachers and school principals enables teachers to formulate and modify their current instruction strategies in order to come up with the most effective strategies that can potentially improve reading comprehension skills in their students. In particular, Keengwe, Onchwari, and Hucks (2014) found that instructional evaluative actions of school principals involve the use of data in order to focus attention on the various ways that could be used to improve instructional approaches and curriculum, as well as to determine appropriate development activities for teachers.

In line with monitoring student progress, school principals focus mainly on the outcome of students by leading teachers to analyze student data and to evaluate effective instructional approaches for improving reading comprehension and reading fluency of...
students. Taken together, these studies agree that by monitoring students’ progress, principals in collaboration with teachers are able to obtain the relevant data the teachers need to formulate or modify their literacy instruction strategies. Also, in light of these findings, it is justifiable to say that elementary principals, regardless of whether or not they are in an urban setting, play an integral and important role in facilitating the adaptation of effective reading instruction strategies that would help enable students to improve their reading literacy and comprehension skills.

**Support from Colleagues and Grade-Level Teachers**

Balachandran (2015), in his study of factors influencing teaching style, stated that if a child is not in a position to learn through the teachers’ ways, then instructors should teach the way the students learn. Despite the sensibility of this statement, rarely do the teachers follow this direction. The current studies seek to identify effective strategies for teaching reading in urban elementary schools. In particular, it aims at establishing how teachers adopt these strategies from other teachers. Besides, there is a need to determine the factors that affect the teachers’ choice of instruction strategies. Particularly, the study attempts to find out how teachers develop professionally in-service; consequently, there is a focus on experiences that help teachers in the identification of effective strategies and their application.

According to Balachandran (2015), in his study of factors influencing teaching style, a student’s learning style is the manner in which new information is internalized, processed, and retained. Also, researchers have concluded that all students do not have similar learning methods (Balachandran, 2015; Alaka, 2011). For example, Alaka (2011), in his study of learning styles and what impact the learning style differences make,
examined the importance of various styles of learning for students. He noted further that unique learning styles are dependent on conditions and contexts that students learn in. Thus, there is a need for teachers to attempt and match their teaching methods to students’ reading styles so that learners perform better in school. For this reason, it becomes relevant to understand and employ effective strategies for teaching reading.

In the teachers’ attempts to seek to match their teaching styles to the learning needs of their students in reading, they may learn effective teaching strategies from their fellow tutors. This learning process from other teachers is what Cole (2012), in his study of linking effective professional learning with effective teaching practice, refers to linkage as professional learning. There are some difficulties in the definition of professional learning as some define it as the skills one acquires in a workshop or conference. However, in the teaching profession, it is the practice of a teacher sitting down with a colleague to prepare for a lesson (Cole, 2012). Moreover, he found that professional learning does not have to be a complicated process; casual advice qualifies as professional learning, and there is the promotion of professional awareness through the sharing of expert knowledge and developing teaching competencies.

Similarly, ACPLTSL (2012) Australian Charter for the professional learning of teachers and school leaders (2012) agrees with Cole that a professional learning culture in an institution is useful in helping teachers acquire strategies that will improve students’ reading abilities. However, this study noted that professional learning culture is helpful if it meets the following requirements: 1) it is available when needed and 2) it has links to the schools’ and systems’ initiatives and goals. Taken together, the culture of professional
learning should encourage teachers to develop new solutions to students’ persisting issues and identify students’ needs.

Now that it is clear that teachers learn from their colleagues through engagement in professional learning, it is important to take a look at the factors that influence the choice of strategies. Principals, peers, coaches, parents, and the law have some impact. The law generally and indirectly stipulates and requires that strategies should help improve the outcomes for students. School management, such as school principals, may exercise some influence on the strategies adopted by teachers. For example, Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010) in their study of how principals and peers influence teaching and learning cited above, investigate the relationship between school management and student achievement. One key finding was colleague and peer teacher was importantly related with instructional practices and English language arts student learning (Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010). These researchers explained that even though no evidence exists about the direct impact of the principals’ leadership on student learning, the principals’ behavior appears to impact the professional culture in a building by influencing the amount and quality of teacher conversations and interactions around instruction, which in turn was found to be significantly associated with changes in instruction and increased student learning in English Language Arts. Over seventy research studies support the conclusion that principals play an important role in supporting student performance (Keengwe, Onchwari & Hucks 2014; McEwan-Adkins, 2014; Stegman, 2014; Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010). Thus, principals have a responsibility to establish a culture that promotes strategies supporting reading.
Similarly, Clifford, Behrstock-Sheraff, and Fetters (2012), in their study of quality school leadership and the ripple effect, called the factors affecting teacher’s choice of strategies as the ripple effect of principals and others in their institutions. They found that the principals’ effect is not only dependent on policy, but also on finances available. As such, administrators introduce individual systems based on funds in an institution, which may influence the overall learning process of children. This finding agrees with another finding by Goldring, May, and Huff (2010). In their study of principals’ leadership practices over time and contextual influences on what principals do, the principals in schools with more resources spend much of their time on a variety of activities, while those in more challenging institutions focus on student affairs or institutional leadership. On the other hand, Mizell (2010), in his study of why professional development matters, noted that parents do not play a significant role in the selection of strategies in the school setting as they do not have the necessary professional experience in reading strategy development.

As mentioned before, teachers have an opportunity to learn when in service. There are various strategies that these professionals may undertake and assume; however, some mistakes and stumbling blocks should be taken into consideration, factors that cause teachers to have little or no contribution to what is taught or what they learn, and this can make it hard to practice in the classroom (Grimm, Kaufman & Doty, 2014). In addition, Grimm, Kaufman, and Doty (2014), in their study of rethinking classroom observation, examined the two shortcomings that make the learning process complex. They found that teachers should apply a technique called teacher-driven observation, which allows them to gather and, then, analyze data about a class by engaging peers. As a
result, this approach has been useful in improving student achievement as it emphasizes the leading role of a teacher in the process of observation.

The mechanism underlying teacher-driven observation has three components: focus meeting, observation, and post-observation debriefing. Teacher-driven observation can lead to the implementation of the curriculum. Arshavsky, Edmunds, Charles, and Rice (2012), in their study of a classroom observation protocol-training manual, examined the role and importance of independent observations. They found that independent observations should help describe and clarify the current curriculum in regards to its efficiency and students’ perception. As a result, these observations assist the teacher to attain teacher-stated goal(s); in this case, it is an active application of strategies in teaching reading.

Mizell (2010), in his study of why professional development matters, examined the importance of professional development. He found that professional development constitutes a formal process, which may include a workshop, seminar, conference, university or college course, or collaborative learning among team members through mentoring. Nevertheless, professional development can also occur in an informal context, such as learning from an instructor or discussions with colleagues. In both cases, professional development is useful in devising effective strategies by focusing on skills that educators use to address learners’ primary learning challenges. Furthermore, it is helpful as college and university programs are not always in a position to equip teachers with the learning experiences that can lead to effective strategy development. Mentoring as a form of professional development assists the teacher with learning from one with an extensive expertise in the elaboration of an efficient strategy. Similarly, Van der Nest
(2012), in his study of teacher mentorship as professional development and experiences of Mpumalanga primary school, supports the positive influence of mentorship on professional development. As a result of the study of 7 teachers in South Africa, it was revealed that after mentorship, science teachers were able to plan their classes well (Van der Nest, 2012). Moreover, they were able to participate in meetings aimed at addressing the reading problems of students. However, it was impossible to measure the effect of mentorship on the improvement of students’ results.

Overall, various issues impact the development of effective strategies by teachers. The teachers’ learning process through professional education is an excellent way to unite all teachers in the school organization so that they are available to work as a team. Principals, peers, curriculum makers as well as policy and law affect teachers’ choices of strategies most, but parents play an insignificant role in child development as far as adoption of learning processes is concerned. In-service professional development takes place through observation that is teacher-driven. Teachers should always voluntarily participate fully and engage others. Finally, professional development and mentoring help supplement experiences from formal graduate coursework in literacy instruction development.

**Chapter II Summary**

This chapter evaluated theories advanced from research studies regarding collaborative efforts in teaching literacy practices and their impact on teaching literacy in elementary schools. These aspects of the literature are important for establishing the efficacy of existing teaching practices as well as ascertaining theories and arguments for a variety of effective strategies, which are all essential in evaluating my study.
Furthermore, this research is informative to this study’s focus on the role of the teacher in collaborative efforts toward improving the teaching of reading. In chapter III, the researcher will discuss the methodology for this study as she look to understanding the teacher’s voice in what matters most in the pursuit of how to best teach children to read.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies they have chosen to use and how their choices may have been influenced by those responsible for the professional support of teachers. These teachers were identified by their principals and peers as effective teachers of literacy in their Midwest schools. In order to fully understand the complexities associated with teaching reading in elementary schools, this researcher believed it was necessary to interview the teachers directly. Directly interviewing the teachers was important because the researcher was able to develop enhanced, more contextual understanding of their feedback with the benefit of non-verbal communication. Direct face-to-face interaction is a good method for understanding expression-based information, such as passion and the underscored seriousness about the subject (Opdenakker, 2006; Kvale, 1983). The teachers have firsthand experience with what works and what fails with strategies and instruction in reading, to address the needs of at-risk readers. In addition, these interviews helped to assess the level of influence that other adults and peers had in the decision making of the teacher to use a specific strategy. The researcher sought to understand teachers’ descriptions of the support they received from their principal, literacy coach, peers, and/or others to adapt and apply effective strategies.

The researcher’s hope was that the results of this study will be helpful toward encouraging future teachers of Arabic reading in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A) to adopt effective literacy instruction strategies to improve students’ achievement, as well as
help them to make meaning of how their experiences impact their development of effective literacy instruction strategies. Further, the researcher hoped that the finding of this study would provide important understanding of how teachers’ decisions regarding the adoption and use of effective strategies are influenced; these particular findings may be of benefit to those who design pre-service teaching curricula, provide professional development opportunities, or who are otherwise responsible for the professional support of teachers of reading. The research questions for this study were:

1. Among teachers identified as effective reading instructors, what strategies: (a) Do they believe are the most effective and (b) Why?
2. How do the participating teachers describe the support they received from their principal, literacy coach, and/or others to adapt and apply effective strategies?

**Research Design and Rationale**

This phenomenological study utilized a qualitative research methodology to understand and investigate the teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them in elementary schools. This methodology was selected because the researcher was interested in capturing deeper information about teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies, why they made decisions to use the literacy strategies they chose. This allowed the researcher to describe and understand the individual experiences of teachers (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Phenomenology is considered a process as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to identify patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 2009).
Phenomenology is a kind of qualitative research that emphasizes, “experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The tenets of phenomenological research support the belief in which knowledge and understanding are embedded in our everyday world. Therefore, phenomena that either influenced or reflected teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective reading instruction strategies they had chosen to use and how their choices had been influenced by those responsible for the professional support of teachers were examined in this study.

**Population, Sample, Site**

This study took place in the Midwest in locations with ten-second grade teachers in non-school sites, such as a university campus, a cafe, a park, or the teacher’s home. The participants in this study were ten-second grade teachers who had been identified as effective and successful literacy teachers in their respective settings. Since this was a phenomenological study, it was important that these teachers have their unique, individual literacy instruction experiences, including their skills, and grade levels taught, (Creswell, 2013).

**Instrumentation**

This study used a phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method, to capture the experiences of ten teachers identified as successful reading teachers. The gatekeeper technique whereby effective teachers were identified by fellow teachers and principals was the best way to identify prospective teacher participants for the study because they had the relationship and experience with prospective teacher volunteers that allowed for them to determine who was best suited to participate in the study (Hatch, 2002). Their experiences included working with teachers’ daily, observing them
informally on a regular basis and being familiar with the formal assessments that were used to assess teachers.

As a courtesy to the prospective teacher participants, the teacher gatekeepers contacted those teachers they thought were best suited to participate and asked them if they were willing to meet with us to discuss the study and what it entailed. We requested that they use direct personal contact, personal e-mail and phone contact methods to invite prospective teachers during out-of-school time. The teacher gatekeepers then provided us with the contact information for those teachers who indicated they were willing to meet with us to discuss participation.

In addition, the main instrument for this study was the application of direct interview using an interview protocol (see Appendix A) developed by the researcher to gather data from the teacher participants. The interview questions consisted of three main open-ended questions to gather information that allowed the teacher participants to reflect about their practice, their daily literacy teaching strategies and their sources of support among their teacher colleagues and other stakeholder groups. For the most part, the research adhered to the interview protocol since it was important for the researcher to eliminate his/her feelings, perspectives, assumptions, and biases. The researcher was accountable for recording respondents’ answers, for truthful records (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). At the same time, if the researcher determined that there would be benefit in requesting that the teacher participants elaborate on an answer to provide greater clarity and/or detail, then the researcher invited the teacher participants to expand on what they had said.
Data was collected using an audio recorder during the interview, and then the recording was transcribed and analyzed. Once the data was transcribed and analyzed, both the record and the transcripts were placed in a locked file cabinet in the WMU office of Lynn Nation Johnson (co-primary investigator). After 3 years’ time, the data will be shredded.

Teachers participants are only referred to by number in the data; therefore, their participation was kept completely confidential. No teacher names appeared anywhere in the data.

This research was conducted in public elementary schools and other public locations designated by the teacher participants. The research locations were with teachers who were teaching in three mid-sized Michigan cities with sizeable populations of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as a high percentage of their populations living in poverty. The research began after these steps had been followed and in this order:

1. Meeting with each principals and teacher gatekeeper.

2. Having the principal and teacher gatekeepers identify the second grade teachers they considered to be the most effective as literacy teachers.

3. Having the principal and teacher gatekeepers contact those teachers who they considered best suited to participate in this study to determine if they were interested to participate.

4. Having the principal and teacher gatekeepers provided us with the personal contact information for those teachers who indicated they would participate.
5. Setting up a meeting with those second grade teachers who had been identified to invite them to participate,

6. Sharing the written invitation to participate with each teacher,

7. Obtaining a signature from those who decided to volunteer, and

8. Having those who volunteered identify a date and time convenient for them to participate in an interview in each teacher’s preferred location, such as a public school after the end of the school year, on a university campus, in a public library, a cafe, a park, or the teacher’s home.

In qualitative research, gatekeepers would be used to assist the researcher in gaining access and developing trust with the community of study (Hatch, 2002). In this study, the gatekeepers were teachers in elementary schools who were asked to help recruit second grade teachers who they deemed to be effective literacy instructors. The participating teachers were general second grade classroom teachers in elementary schools with a large number of children from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as a sizeable population of children living in poverty.

The research conducted the approach to the teachers (gatekeepers) as follows:

1. The researcher contacted teachers who the research had association with and teachers they recommended via personal phone or personal e-mail. The researcher sent them the Invitation to Participate along with an Abstract of the study, and asked them to recommend second grade teacher colleagues they knew of who might have interest to participate in an interview about their literacy practices. Some of the gatekeeper teachers were second grade teachers, and they were
invited to participate upon the recommendation of other teachers and teacher educators.

2. The gatekeeper teachers were asked to provide personal contact information for those teachers they had recommended or to forward the abstract and invitation to participate to the teachers they had recommended in person or via the teachers’ personal e-mail.

3. After the teachers decided they wanted to participate in the study, the researcher provided them with the Invitation and Informed Consent Form, obtained their signature, and scheduled an interview date, time and location during non-school hours.

Only the researchers were aware of which teachers chose to participate and which chose not to. This information was kept confidential. All communications for interviews were done with personal phones, personal e-mails and in non-school locations.

**Interview Questions.** In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews as the primary research approach. The interview questions were open-ended and were in a predetermined sequence and wording with the same set of questions asked of each teacher from second grade. The questions were specific and direct to help minimize error and information that might or might not contribute to the study. The interview questions were written without bias (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The teacher interview questions were divided into two sections. The first section of the interview included general questions focused on identifying the strategies they used and that they believed were effective. The second section of the teacher interview
included questions geared toward identifying and obtaining teachers’ descriptions and perspectives about how the instructional choices of the teachers were influenced by the support and influence given by peers, coaches, supervisors, and principals and how these sources of support and influence affected their adoption and implementation of instructional strategies for the teaching of reading. In addition to the original questions, there were follow up questions that emerged from the interview. (See Appendix A for the full list of interview questions, as aligned with the research questions for this study. Also, see pages 97-106 for a detailed examination of the emergent questions).

**Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection is an important component of the research process. The data is the information analyzed to create the finding of the study and is key because the information will be analyzed to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). One source of data was accessed, which involved interviewing teachers. In this study, the understanding and thinking of the teacher-participants were collected using an in-depth and semi-structured interview method. The data collected included more than words; it was also included observations of attitudes, feelings, vocal and facial expressions, and other behaviors that were also involved in this data collection (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

All interviews were tape-recorded and were expected to vary in length from one to two hours. The interviews were informal and open-ended, and were carried out in a conversational style. Also, during the interview, the researcher took notes. Teachers were reminded that breaks were allowed if they felt the need to do so. They also were informed that to protect their identity, they needed to provide a pseudonym and these were used
when doing the analysis. Each participant was provided with the consent documents and were told that they could withdraw from the study at any point (Creswell, 2007).

Field notes were written in conjunction with the interviews. Notes and journals also were written while listening to taped interviews, typing transcripts, and reflecting upon a particular interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2006 & Falk & Blumenreich, 2005).

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is the process of inspecting, organizing, and transferring collected data into a form of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Before the data for this study was analyzed, the researcher created Microsoft Word files for the transcribed interviews, field notes, and journal entries. All files were protected by setting a password, and it was saved with the laptop computer to which only the researcher had access. The process of transcribing allowed researcher to become well acquainted with the data. The data was not coded sentence-by-sentence or paragraph-by-paragraph, but coded for meaning (Saldana, 2013; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Following the analysis, all themes were used to conduct the cross-phenomenon analysis. Themes salient across all phenomena were kept as well as those that were extremely different. For the thematic analysis, the researcher followed Saldana (2013) and Braun and Clarke’s (2006) step-by-step guidelines. These guidelines were (1) familiarizing yourself with your data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) reading through each transcript to become immersed in the data, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.
**Coding.** For effective coding and categorization of data to be realized, it was important for the researcher to identify the meaning of a concept in question, such as teachers’ understanding and thinking regarding effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decided to use them. The researcher then refined her understanding of these concepts by investigating their meanings. Upon understanding the meanings, it was important for the researcher to incorporate the concept in a way that explained the relationship between the effective literacy instructor, reading instruction support, and developing reading achievement. A well-designed chart in the form of a matrix could be used for successful categorization and the coding processes to ensure that the information collected on the variables addressed the research questions (Saldana, 2013; Kothari, 2010).

All of the taped interviews and field notes were entered into computer files. The researcher used a specific software program, Dedoose, that used a coding system organized around different topics and themes found in these files, (Saldana, 2013; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

It was important that verbatim transcripts were used, as they played an important role in the data analysis. They allowed the researcher to compose a full description of the phenomena, analyzing the themes, and expressing the thoughts and feelings of the teacher participants’ experiences (Saldana, 2013; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Thus, during the cycle one coding phase of data reduction, both descriptive and conceptual codes were assigned to phrases. During second-level (cycle) coding, clusters of similarly coded units were considered to be categories and assigned a more conceptual label. This information could then be compared with participants’ perspectives of issues
discussed in interviews. The data was analyzed participant-by-participant through thematic analysis, and later by cross-phenomena analysis (Saldana, 2013; Creswell, 2007 & Falk & Blumenreich, 2005).

**Interview Analysis.** According to Saldana (2013), Creswell (2007), and Marshall and Rossman (2006), these were steps of the data analysis procedure with the interviews transcripts that the researchers followed throughout the complete analysis:

1. reading each interview transcript,
2. highlighting common phrases or statements in the interview transcripts (coding),
3. committing to performing a code/recode strategy which called for the initial coding to be discredited and the reading and coding process must be restarted from the beginning,
4. rereading the interview transcripts,
5. coding common phrases and sentences in the interview transcripts,
6. comparing the coded phrases and sentences from the initial reading against the coded sentences and information from the second reading,
7. using the coded phrases and sentences to create categories which will be the collective thoughts of the participants, and
8. creating generalizations as they relate to the phenomenon being studied (Saldana, 2013; Creswell, 2007).

**Validity, Credibility, and Dependability**

In this qualitative research study, the researcher served as the primary data collection instrument, which placed the responsibility of gathering accurate and valid data upon her. So, it was important for the researcher to remove all biases, assumptions, and
preconceived ideas about the phenomenon and focus on data collection methods (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Objective and valid data could only be acquired when the researcher eliminated all forms of bias and preconceived assumptions and focused on the use of effective methodologies in the data collection process. Bias could be minimized by using reputable sampling techniques that provided members of the target population an equal opportunity of being selected to participate in the research process (Creswell, 2014 & Falk; Blumenreich, 2005 & Patton, 2002). This means that it was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the data collection process was effective. This would only be possible if the researcher ensured that the data collection process was accurate and ensured a high level of objectivity and validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Validity was achieved through what Creswell and Miller (2000) referred to as trustworthiness. For example, trustworthiness was addressed in the full recording of each participant’s experience in such a way that it maintained respect for the context of the data and presented all perceptions similarly. Verbatim transcripts were prepared to create a second authentic record of what each participant experienced (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In addition, trustworthiness was established by credibility and dependability. Initial, credibility refers to the believability of data and the confidence and sureness in the truth of the results. Credibility for this study was achieved using the validation strategies of researcher reflexivity, thick and rich description and peer debriefing (Li, 2004; Creswell & Miller, 2000). For instance, through researcher reflexivity, the researcher described her attitude and stand on the issue, as well as any potential biases. Thick and
rich description was achieved by presenting the participants’ voices and perspectives with each emergent theme and by providing detailed description of each of the phenomena (Li, 2004; Creswell & Miller, 2000). In addition, peer debriefing was reached by discussion between Researcher 1 and Researcher 2\(^1\), about the research process to analysis, findings, and conclusion. Peer debriefing was a good way to provide the researcher a sounding board to test her developing ideas, views, perceptions, or interpretations and to recognize her own biases (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Also, related to the peer debriefing, Researcher 2 was present in all ten interviews that Researcher 1 conducted. This allowed Researcher 2 to come to the research discussions with full knowledge of the interview process and content.

Next, dependability was recognized with the analysis in a way that included keeping and utilizing all audio-tapes, transcripts, and notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Dependability was achieved using the code-recode strategy. The researcher coded the same data (transcripts of interviews) twice by giving at least one or two weeks’ period between each coding to compare the results from the two coding sessions to see if the results were the same or different (Chilisa & Preece, 2005).

**Limitations**

This research design used a qualitative approach in understanding the teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they make decisions to use them among teachers who have been identified as effective reading instructors in their respective Midwest school settings. Additionally, this study sought to understand the teachers’ perceptions regarding the literacy instruction support they

\(^1\) Researcher 2 was the dissertation Co-Chair Dr. Lynn Nations Johnson.
received from their principal, literacy coach, and/or others to apply the effective literacy instruction strategies. However, a primary limitation of the qualitative approach to research was in the inability to generalize findings considering that they were not quantifiable (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the findings of this study would be unique to the few individuals included in the study. On the other hand, individual interviews based on feelings and attitudes were subjective in nature and objective generalizations were relatively difficult to develop considering the differences in the feelings and attitudes of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The findings from this research would, therefore, have limited credibility considering that they could be influenced by the personal biases and idiosyncrasies of the respondents toward the researcher (Hellens, Sue & Jenine, 2004). This means some teachers would not feel comfortable sharing their experiences, perspectives, and perceptions, so this would negatively impact the findings and results. In addition, difficulties might arise from this approach to study in that it was time consuming in terms of the process of data collection and analysis.

**Chapter III Summary**

This chapter detailed the methodology that the researcher planned to utilize to interview ten elementary school teachers to understand their use of effective literacy instruction strategies to help children become good readers, and the support they received from their principal, literacy coach, and/or others. Chapter IV presents the findings and analysis of the data that was collected with the ten teacher participants.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies they have chosen to use and how their choices may have been influenced by those responsible for their professional support. The research questions for this study were: (1) Among teachers identified as effective literacy instructors, what strategies: (a) do they believe are the most effective and (b) Why? (2) How do the participating teachers describe the support they received from their principal, literacy coach, and/or others to adapt and apply effective strategies?

During in-depth interviews, study participants described their perspectives and experiences with the effective literacy instruction strategies they have chosen to use. They also discussed the sources of support that they received from principals, literacy coaches, parents, colleagues and peer teachers to adapt and apply effective reading instruction strategies.

The research findings that this chapter reports are based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews in which they participated.

Participant Profiles

It is essential to indicate or highlight the aspects of the participants’ school demographics and the details of the students’ socioeconomic status in the schools where each teacher taught, because the researcher required examining the qualitative results of this research within the context of the participants’ shared characteristics (Creswell, 2013; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The particular characteristics of participants likely influenced the data collected and the voices of the ten elementary
school teachers examined in this study (see Table 1&2).

Table 1: *Participants’ Schools Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Ethnic Distribution</th>
<th>European American</th>
<th>Latin American</th>
<th>Asian American</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Multi Ethnic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 1</td>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 2</td>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 3</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 4</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 5</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 6</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 7</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 8</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 9</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 10</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Details of Students’ Socioeconomic Status in Each Teacher Participant’s School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of Students’ Socioeconomic Status in Each Participant’s School</th>
<th>Eligible for free breakfast/lunch</th>
<th>Eligible for reduced breakfast/lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 1</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 2</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 3</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 4</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 5</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 6</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 7</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 8</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 9</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Teacher 10</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants in this study were 10-second grade teachers who volunteered and had been identified as effective and successful literacy teachers in elementary schools with a high percentage of students living in poverty. The schools were located in three mid-sized city school districts in the Midwest. Six of the teacher participants taught in public schools located in City 1, two taught in public schools in City 2 and two taught in public schools located in City 3. The teacher participants ranged in age from 25 to 60 years of age. One teacher participant was male, and nine were female.

**Teacher 1**

Teacher 1 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for three years and at the time of the interview was teaching the
second grade. Teacher 1 was teaching in a public elementary school in Southwest Michigan, which was located in City 1. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—60% of the students in her school identified as European American, 24% of the students in her school identified as African American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 2% Asian American, 0.4% Latin American, and 10% multiracial (which was usually African American and European American). Approximately 28.3% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch and 6.1% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. The students in her school came from a slightly different range of ethnic and racial backgrounds when compared to the larger district student population.

**Teacher 2**

Teacher 2 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for four years and at the time of the interview was teaching the second grade. Prior to teaching the second grade, she was an Academically Talented Teacher for the same district in grades 3 through 5. The school was a public elementary school in Southwest Michigan located in City 1. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—60% of the students in her school identified as European American, 24% of the students identified as African American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 2% Asian American, 0.4% Latin American, and 10% multiracials (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 28.3% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch.
and 6.1% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. The students in her school came from a slightly different range of ethnic and racial backgrounds when compared to the larger district student population.

**Teacher 3**

Teacher 3 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for nineteen years and at the time of the interview was teaching the second grade. Prior to her second grade assignment, she had taught third grade for 17 years. Within that period of time, she also taught a two-three split for three years (half of her class was in the second grade and half in the third). The school was a public elementary school in Southwest Michigan located in City 1. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—68.5% of the students in her school identified as European American. 17.4% of the students in her school identified as African American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 2% Asian American, 5.3% Latin American, and 6.8% multi ethnics (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 30.4% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 4.8% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. The students in her school also came from a decidedly different range of ethnic and racial backgrounds when compared to the larger district student population.

**Teacher 4**

Teacher 4 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for thirty-one years and at the time of the interview was teaching the
second grade. Her experience in teaching elementary schools was in different socio-economic classes, which included middle and working class as well as children living in poverty. The school was a public elementary school in City 1 in Southwest Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—56.3% of the students in her school identified as African-American, 23.1% of the students in her school identified as European American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 0% Asian American, 7.8% Latin American, and 12.5% multi ethnics (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 88.8% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 4.1% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. Demographically speaking, the student population in her school was representative of the larger district student population.

Teacher 5

Teacher 5 was an African-American female. She had been teaching elementary school for six years and, at the time of the interview, was teaching the second grade. She was a participant in the family literacy workshops that were conducted through the school district where she was teaching. She was similar to a literacy coach and would work with families to promote literacy practices in their homes in addition to the experiences that their children had at school. The school was a public elementary school in City 1 located in Southwest Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—63.1% of the students in her school identified as African-American, 14.2% of the students in her school identified as European American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international
immigrant and refugee families, such as .03% Asian American, 13.5% Latin American, and 8.9% multi ethnic (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 96.6% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 2.5% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch.

Demographically speaking, the student population in her school had one of the highest levels of children living in poverty when compared to the larger district student population.

**Teacher 6**

Teacher 6 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for twenty-three years, and at the time of the interview was teaching the second grade. During the first year of her twenty-three years of teaching, she taught fourth grade in the afternoon literacy program at one school and then drove over to another school and taught kindergarten. She went on to teach third grade for almost 16 years and then for the last 5 years she had been teaching second grade. The school was a public elementary school in City 2 in Southwest Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—66.2% of the students in her school identified as European American, 13.1% of the students in her school identified as African American, and the remaining of percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 5.1% Asian American, 3.5% Latin American, and 11.8% multi ethnic (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 47.8% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 6.7% of them qualified for
reduced breakfast and lunch. The students in her school came from a very similar range of ethnic and racial backgrounds when compared to the larger district student population.

**Teacher 7**

Teacher 7 was a Western European American female who taught in a charter school in City 3 in Southwest Michigan. She had been teaching elementary school for 2 and 1/2 years and at the time of the interview was teaching the second grade. Her first year of teaching was in sixth grade for a six-month period of time. While teaching the sixth grade, she taught English language arts and social studies. For the last two years, she had been teaching 2nd grade. The school was a charter school in Southwest Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—94.7% of the students in her school identified as African-American, 1% of the students in her school identified as European American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 4.3% Latin American; there were no Asian American or multi-ethnic students attending the school. Approximately 83.7% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 2.3% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch.

The student population in the district that surrounded this charter school included an average of 79.6% African American students, so this charter school had a higher population of African American students than the district in which it was situated. At the same time, the free and reduced breakfast and lunch percentages in this charter school were representative of the larger district student population where the charter school was located.
Teacher 8

Teacher 8 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for seven years and at the time of the interview was teaching the second grade in a charter school. Prior to her second grade position, she taught kindergarten for 5 years in a nearby school district. She had always taught young children and had spent her career focused on early literacy. The school was a charter school in City 3 in Southwest Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—94.7% of the students in her school identified as African-American, 1% of the students in her school identified as European American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 4.3% Latin American; there were no Asian American or multi-ethnic students attending the school. Approximately 83.7% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 2.3% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. Like Teacher 7, every student in her school lived in poverty. The student population in the district that surrounded this charter school included an average of 79.6% African American students, so this charter school had a higher population of African American students. At the same time, the free and reduced breakfast and lunch percentages were representative of the larger district student population where the charter school was located.

Teacher 9

Teacher 9 was a Western European American male. He had been teaching elementary school for five years and, at the time of the interview, was teaching the second grade. The school was a public elementary school in City 2 in Southwest
Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—66.2% of the students in his school identified as European American, 13.1% of the students in his school identified as African American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 5.1% Asian American, 3.5% Latin American, and 11.8% multi ethnic (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 47.8% of the students in this school qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 6.7% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. The students in his school came from a very similar range of ethnic and racial backgrounds when compared to the larger district student population.

**Teacher 10**

Finally, Teacher 10 was a Western European American female. She had been teaching elementary school for two years and, at the time of the interview, was teaching the second grade. She taught all subject matters, and she had a really great experience at her school because she had been provided with a lot of support just through her co-workers and also coaching opportunities that helped her literacy practice grow. The school was a public elementary school in City 1 in Southwest Michigan. The school was a diverse school demographically speaking—62.9% of the students in her school identified as African-American, 16.6% of the students in her school identified as European American, and the remaining percentage of the student population came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly international immigrant and refugee families, such as 7.9% Latin American and 12.6% multi ethnic (which was, in most cases, African American and European American). Approximately 92.9% of the students in this school
qualified for free breakfast and lunch, and 3.9% of them qualified for reduced breakfast and lunch. Demographically speaking, the student population in her school had one of the highest levels of children living in poverty when compared to the larger district student population.

Presentation of Themes

It is important to note that pages 81-83 include a description and discussion of the analysis for both cycles one and two. The final results of the dissertation study emerged in the second cycle. This is a report of those results.

Cycle Two Analysis

Four important questions framed this research. The first two questions are original research questions for this study; they were both addressed in the ten interviews.

1. Which do you believe are the most effective literacy instructional strategies? and
   (b) Why?

2. Would you describe the support you received from your principal, literacy coaches, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your literacy instruction strategies?

Questions 3 and 4 are questions that emerged as follow-up questions in the first interview. After examining the data from that first interview, it was determined that these two questions needed to be addressed with the nine remaining teacher participants when their interviews took place.

During Interview 1, there were two exchanges between the researchers and Teacher 1 that were particularly informative. The verbatim transcript of the two exchanges follows;
Exchange 1

**Researcher 1:** What factors do you take into account when you choose literacy instruction strategies?

**Teacher 1:** I base it on the reading levels, on their background, on their exposure to certain types of text or their life experiences. Uhm, based on past experiences that I’ve had, if I liked what I was doing, if I enjoyed it and I thought it was working.

**Researcher 2:** I'm interested to know what you mean by “basing it on their life experiences.”

**Teacher 1:** I had a student this past year that was a little bit, he had amazing vocabulary, he had traveled a lot with his family, he was talked to not at, moreover his reading level seemed to be so low though, but he had such a great way of expressing himself. And his writing seemed to be higher, so when I was pulling out certain text I could tell if he had experienced something. He had way more background knowledge, but if I pulled out another book and he just couldn't figure out pictures with the words, he could almost figure things out from what he had seen or what his parents had done with him.

Exchange 2

**Researcher 1:** What do you think about others factors, such as curriculum, environment, or other factors that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their instructional strategies in literacy?

**Teacher 1:** Absolutely. I think classroom environment is huge. This year I started doing more morning meetings where we got to just open up dialogue and talk to
each other and just get to know each other and build trust and any kind of relationship. I think that helps a lot so not only is it just me as the teacher. I'm in charge of everybody; they learn from each other and depend on each other. I think that actually environment is important for sure. I think curriculum, when we are given differentiated curriculum that is all of our books that are all leveled out for us, I think that's really good support so we have different reading curriculums that we go off of, something that helps. Not all children are going to learn in the exact same way or from every single thing. A variety of resources help a lot, as well. Question 3 was framed as a result of these two exchanges. The importance of classroom environment became clear through this exchange, and Question 3 was developed as follows:

What do you think about others factors, such as curriculum and classroom environment that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their instructional strategies in literacy?

During Interview 2, Question 3 was asked. However, Teacher 2 was not forthcoming in response to Question 3:

**Researcher 1:** What do you think about others factors, such as curriculum and classroom environment that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their instructional strategies in literacy?

**Teacher 2:** Okay, so classroom environment.

**Researcher 2:** How does classroom environment impact literacy?

**Teacher 2:** I think it is a contributing, big factor.
As a result of Teacher 2’s limited response, Question 3 was reframed a second time to include the key words, “relationships with students.”

To further explain, during Interviews 1 and 2, the researcher did not include a question that specifically addressed the relationship between teachers and their students. Rather, the researcher believed that the relationship between teachers and their students was strongly related with the environment of the classroom and would naturally emerge in the course of the interview. Therefore, the researcher did not include the topic of “relationships between teachers and their students” with Question 3. However, when the participants in Interviews 3-9 didn’t talk about it or mention it, the researcher asked about the relationship between teachers and their students as a follow up question to Question 3. As a result, Interviews 3 thru 9, included the original Question 3 with a follow-up question, as follows:

Original question 3. “What do you think about factors, such as curriculum, classroom environment, or other factors that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their instructional strategies in literacy?”

Follow-up question to question 3. Also, what do you think about the relationship between teachers and students as an effective way or strategy to improve instructional strategies in literacy and improve students’ skills in literacy?”

An example from the interview with Teacher 4 follows:

Researcher 1: What do you think about other factors, such as curriculum, classroom environment, or other factors that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their instructional strategies in literacy?
**Teacher 4:** The curriculum. Well, it—and it's a national problem. It just, it is. And I always tell my parents I'm a runner and so I always compare it to running. If I said to the two of you let's go run a half marathon tomorrow, could you do it? No, because your muscles aren't developed. It’s the same thing; their little brain is not where we're asking them to be; and there's so much pressure, so much pressure; you know, we now have data books for each child and that child has to know what's in their data book and they have to be responsible for their scores. And all this, and I keep thinking, oh my god they’re seven, they’re seven. You know, it’s very frustrating. So, I often think, you know, our curriculum is appropriate for some of our kids; and, I know that we've got our core standards and we have to do all these things, but I think part of our problem is—it’s we're not letting them go out and play; that’s part of development up here (pointing to head) and you know come back to sit with me.

**Researcher 1:** How about the classroom environment?

**Teacher 4:** I have such a fun classroom environment. I love it. Oh, my god, I love my room. Well, I moved rooms; well I will be moving rooms.

**Researcher 1:** Okay. Also, what do you think about the relationship between teachers and students as an effective way or strategy to improve their instructional strategies in literacy and improve their students’ skills in literacy?

**Teacher 4:** It is huge. And that was another thing at the model school conference; they asked us what's most important, rigor, relationships, and I can't remember what the third one was. And everyone around me went well, rigor rigor, and I’m like I disagree; it is relationships. And it was relationships; you
cannot teach a child who does not trust you, you cannot teach a child who does not like you, and that's the most fun part of my job is building those relationships.

Those relationships are critical. Those kids have to know you love them and I tell them and I probably could be sued, but I say to them I love you; you know, I do when they left that last day of school, I’m like, I love you.

And, you know, say—we were at dinner on [Street of City 1] two weeks ago, and it’s in the neighborhood of where my school is and I have this one little guy that I got from DJ. He came into my room last year as though he was a wild, untamed animal; he scared me. I’m terrified of him jumping off furniture. It took three grown men to catch him in my room and physically to bring him in and the things he said, oh my goodness, and I knew right then, I’m like, oh my gosh, I’m going to fall in love with him. I just know I’m going to because he needed so much. We were on our way home from dinner two weeks ago, and we were gonna take the highway, and I said to my husband,

“Like you know, we could go down East Main.”

“You want to go look for (Student Name).”

So, like, anyway, so we go down and sure enough, he was outside. And (my husband) said,

“Do you want to stop?” and I said,

“No, no.” and then I said, “Like yes!”

So he turned and I like popped outta the car and he was stunned.

He said “Ms. Teacher 4!” and I’m like, “I like told you I would, like every day—you know."
And he was so excited. And he immediately started telling me about our book program that [District in City 1] does.

“I got my books in the mail, and I've already read one of them.”

And you know so you have to do those things; it makes me so happy, too, because I love them.

Finally, during Interview 10, the question about the relationship between teachers and their students emerged naturally in Question 3 and so a follow-up questions was not necessary.

**Researcher 1:** Your answer leads me to ask you about what you think about other factors, such as curriculum, the relationship between teachers and their students, or a classroom environment that impacts teachers to improve and to be creative in their reading instruction strategies?

**Teacher 10:** Yes, we have a saying at (Name of school) that you need to go slow to go fast or start slow to go fast. And so a lot of the time the first few weeks of school I'm not heavily focused on curriculum because I'm focused on relationship-building. Our students thrive on being able to trust an adult. They don't have a lot of adults that they can trust in their life, and so I can't expect them to read or want to read if they don't even like me; or they don't ask me if they don't feel like it's a safe space; and so we do a lot of relationship building at the beginning of the year with myself with the students and with each other because the goal is that as the year progresses I can start to pull back and they can start to do more independent or partner work, but they're not going to do that if they don't feel safe in the classroom and so that's a heavy focus for us. I try really hard to keep it a positive
space at all times. Mistakes happen; it doesn't make us terrible at something, it doesn't mean that we're failing, yet we learn from our mistakes and we improve the next time. And then the curriculum piece; I do feel really fortunate that we do have a really comprehensive curriculum provided for us, and so there are materials and extra supplemental material that we can use in small group or when we do interventions. So I feel lucky that I have that at my hands and it's just a matter of me kind of picking it apart to what best suits my group.

Researcher 1: How about the classroom environment?

Teacher 10: Yes. I. Some different ways that I create a good classroom environment is through those team building in relationship exercises that we’ll do at the beginning. I try to keep it very calm in my classroom. I know other teachers have found success with high-energy, and at times we have that, but I've really found my niche of just keeping it a calm and cool environment. Just even the little things, I don't use the overhead lights a lot. If we have daylight, I use daylight. I have you know when they're not at their seats and we're not doing whole group during centers, I've got more comfortable seating options for them. Through the district you know they're provided with breakfast so that's a nice part because we usually do reading in the morning, so all students get breakfast when they come to school and so that's kind of is already getting one of our barriers out of the way that if they didn't get it at home they're not going to be sitting there hungry while we're trying to get phonics out of them. But I've, I think creating a positive classroom environment is something that I've done relatively well with because I just don’t, I don't push them beyond that breaking point. I have a good gauge of
how they're feeling, you know what I mean; and you know, if they need a break, they need a break, and they can take a break. I'm not going to drill them to where they’re in tears, you know, or they’re having a fit or something; and I try to encourage the students to treat each other the same, you know, that we're supporting. We have a family feel in our room so that everybody is comfortable to kind of push themselves out of their comfort zone a little bit.

As a result of the contributions of these teachers, the final format for Question 3 was:

3. What do the participating teachers think about other factors, such as curriculum, a classroom environment, the relationship between teachers and their students, and others that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their reading instruction strategies?

Question 4 was a part of the original interview protocol as listed below:

4. What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective Literacy instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?

While the themes are reported as being separate or discrete, there is considerable overlap among them. Moreover, participants’ responses to interview questions often addressed more than one theme, so the interview data are addressed where they appear to fit most logically.
Cycle Two Terminology Used In Table 3

The researcher 1 and researcher 2 (peer debriefing) agreed that the names of the themes were the best reflection of the data and decided to keep and maintain the following-mentioned themes.

The analysis of the research questions that were addressed in the interview resulted in four Themes, fifteen Core Ideas, and twenty-five Emergent ideas (See Table 3 for Summary of Results). The results are organized first by theme, second by core idea, an idea that was akin to a sub-theme, and lastly by emergent ideas, the significant or particular points found within the core ideas ((Saldana, 2016).

Data was grouped first by theme. Then, one or more core ideas emerged within each theme. The core ideas were identified to capture and categorize smaller nuances or differences of information within the theme. The emergent ideas highlighted particular components of participant experience within each theme. Direct interview quotes were used to highlight and personalize the data. In addition, descriptions of the participants were provided to offer context and depth regarding the results. The quotes have been edited for grammatical clarity and all names have been changed to protect participant identity.

In this study of 10 participants, emergent ideas that occurred for just one participant are labeled Rare. Emergent ideas that occurred for two to four participants are labeled Limited. Emergent ideas that occurred for five to eight participants are labeled Majority. If an emergent idea occurred for nine to ten participants, it is labeled Super Majority.
Table 3: Summary of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Core Idea</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Emergent Idea</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question 1: which do you believe are the most effective literacy instructional strategies? And Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Identifying Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Different Strategies for Building Vocabulary, Increased Fluency, Reading Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Super Majority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Small Groups</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Super Majority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Whole Group</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Reading Assessment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. Making Decision about Literacy Instruction Strategies as Effective</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Different Assessments and Testing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Super Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. What Works with Students’ Needs, their Interest and knowledge</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Literacy Coach’s Help</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. District Curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Grade-Level Teacher Meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Monitor Students Progress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – continued

2 **Effective Support Resources In Literacy Learning Development**

Question 2: Would you describe the support you received from their principal, literacy coaches, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your literacy instruction strategies?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Principal</td>
<td>1 Direct Engagement</td>
<td>8 Majority</td>
<td>2 Indirect Engagement</td>
<td>2 Limited</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Literacy Coach</td>
<td>1 Direct Engagement</td>
<td>10 Super Majority</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Parents</td>
<td>1 Direct Engagement</td>
<td>4 Limited</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Indirect Engagement</td>
<td>6 Majority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Disengagement</td>
<td>2 Limited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Colleagues/ Peer Teachers</td>
<td>1 Direct Engagement</td>
<td>9 Super Majority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Indirect Engagement</td>
<td>1 Rare</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E. The Most Supportive</td>
<td>1 Literacy Coaches</td>
<td>7 Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Grade-Level Teachers</td>
<td>2 Limited</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Parents</td>
<td>1 Rare</td>
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3 **Effective Factors In Literacy Development**

Question 3: What do you think about other factors, such as curriculum, a classroom environment, the relationship between teachers and their students, and others that impact teachers to improve and be

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Knowing about Students’ Background and their Life Experiences</td>
<td>1 Essential</td>
<td>10 Super Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Relationships between Teachers and Students</td>
<td>2 Essential</td>
<td>10 Super Majority</td>
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</table>
The interview question that focused on effective literacy instruction strategies was, “Which do you believe are the most effective literacy instructional strategies? And Why?” Two core ideas emerged from this theme focus: 1) Identifying Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies and 2) Making Decisions about Literacy Instruction Strategies as Effective.

**Identifying Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies.** The first core idea, identifying effective literacy instruction strategies, contained a variety of effective literacy instruction strategies explored in the interview process. The analysis resulted in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative in their literacy intersection strategist?</th>
<th>Knowledge of Curriculum and Pedagogy</th>
<th>3 Essential</th>
<th>10 Super Majority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. Creating Positive Classroom Environments</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 Essential</td>
<td>10 Super Majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>4 Challenges and Difficulties In Literacy Learning Development</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 4:</strong> What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective literacy instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.</strong> Time Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B.</strong> Students’ Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.</strong> Students’ Demographic Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D.</strong> Support from Parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies**

The interview question that focused on effective literacy instruction strategies was, “Which do you believe are the most effective literacy instructional strategies? And Why?” Two core ideas emerged from this theme focus: 1) Identifying Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies and 2) Making Decisions about Literacy Instruction Strategies as Effective.
the identification of four effective literacy instruction strategies that were identified by
the super majority of the ten teacher participants. These four emergent ideas were: 1) Different Strategies for Building Vocabulary—Increased Fluency, Reading Comprehension and Phonemic Awareness, 2) Small Groups, 3) Whole Group, and 4) Reading Assessments.

**Emergent Idea 1—Different strategies for building vocabulary, increased fluency, reading comprehension and phonemic awareness.** The first emergent idea results \((n=10)\), was super majority in frequency and all ten participating teachers agreed independently that these different literacy strategies were effective. One participating teacher stated that reading aloud was effective for phonemic awareness. Another participating teacher stated that partner reading in small groups was effective for increased fluency. Also, another participating teacher found that making predictions for the meaning of vocabulary was effective for reading comprehension and building vocabulary. A fourth participating teacher noted that reading several types of books, such as fact and fiction, was effective for reading comprehension. Another one of the ten participating teachers noted that reading independently was effective for building vocabulary. The other two participating teachers found that using whisper phones made with PVC pipe were effective for phonemic awareness. Additionally, two of ten participating teachers stated that using graphic organizers like venn diagrams and T-charts was effective for reading comprehension.

Specific in reading achievement; um each day, we focus on a different reading strategy, a different, whether it be vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, anything like that. We always tried to differentiate that. I do give weekly assessment just to
see if I need to go back and re-teach certain things or if I can move on because all the kids are getting’ it or are maybe getting bored. With the same things again. We do review weeks every 5 weeks. We have a review week just to go back and maybe hit some goals that students missed. Uhmm. Reading tests just to make sure that they're making progress, we have spelling tests just to test and see if they’re getting the phonics, phonics patterns each week. I think those are the main ones just to kind of make sure that they are achieving and growing each week or each month (Teacher 1).

One thing I will not do, like I all-out refuse to do are worksheets. I’m just going to say I never, never use worksheets—don’t ever—always, I always use graphic organizers. And it could be Venn diagram, a T-chart. It may be a specific one to the story we’re working on that week. And the kids do note taking (Teacher 4).

**Emergent Idea 2 —Small groups.** The second emergent idea (n=10), was also super majority in frequency and all ten participating teachers agreed that this type of literacy instruction strategy was effective, because through it teachers would be able to focus on what student needs and struggles are, given that such different ranges of understanding exist within a single classroom.

Whole group instruction is great for introductions and things, but being able to work with small groups, being able to work with students on their own needs and what they need is more important because you can focus right (Teacher 3). Another participant discussed the importance of small groups as the most effective way to reach the students and then working to improve their literacy skills.

To meet kids where they are and so that's why it's so important to have that
small group time, and I think that's probably the most effective for each individual kid’s growth (Teacher 5).

**Emergent Idea 3—Whole group.** The third emergent idea, Whole Group, was the second most common of effective literacy instruction strategies according to participating teacher voices in this study (n=7). This instruction strategy was identified as being effective because it helps students become good readers by providing them with several activities and other strategies that develop their language.

Whole group time, it's effective just to hear fluent reading, so I do a lot of read-aloud myself (Teacher 5).

Another participating teacher noted that whole group is a successful strategy to improve the literacy skills of children.

I found success with whole group activities (Teacher 10).

**Emergent Idea 4 —Reading Assessments** *(formative and summative).* The final emergent idea within Identifying Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies was Reading Assessment (n=6). The majority of reading assessments were addressed or discussed as the teacher participants made reference to two types of reading assessments: 1) computer-based tests or online version tests that are created by educational companies, such as the Lexia and STAR Early Literacy tests as well as level book tests and 2) pencil and paper or alternative-based tests that are created by teachers, such as comprehension questions, quizzes, and spelling tests. For the purposes of this study, the second type of test will be referred to as alternative-based tests, such as a project or poster. The participating teachers who like using reading tests stated that reading tests are important to measure children in their literacy learning, both formative and summative tests *(specific skills and
overall ability). As Teacher 1 stated,

Reading tests just to make sure that they're making progress (Teacher 1).

Teacher 3 noted that reading tests are an appropriate strategy to measure students’
skills in reading comprehension.

They get to pick what they want to read, and then they can take tests on
them for comprehension and things and understanding of the book
that they read (Teacher 3).

Another participating teacher noted that reading tests or quizzes were an effective
way to make sure about children’s achievement in specific literacy skills.

If its comprehension a lot of times, we give a lot of quizzes like to see if they're
comprehending towards the end of the week (Teacher 7).

Two of the participating teachers stated that reading tests were effective to determine the
level of book for second grade children.

They take the STAR test and it tells them approximately what level book
would be good for them (Teacher 3).

Other participating teachers noted that spelling tests were effective tests to
measure phonemic awareness for children.

We have spelling tests just to test and see if you’re getting the phonics
(Teacher 2).

Some participating teachers recommended using Lexia tests for measuring
children’s’ skills in phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

Lexia is wonderful. It—Lexia is a—we thought was phonics, mostly phonics-
based, but as the year went on, we discovered it wasn't. Then they go into Lexia
their very first time, they take a little quiz; it places them. And they go ahead and do these wonderful, fun games—but they’re phonics, fluency, and vocabulary-based (Teacher 4).

**Making Decisions about Literacy Instruction Strategies as Effective.** Stepping back to the broader study focus, Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies, the second core idea identified by the teacher participants was “Making Decision about Literacy Instruction Strategies as Effective.” This core idea describes the ways in which the participating teachers’ apply their literacy teaching and learning knowledge when making decisions about the strategies they choose to use with their students to develop their literacy learning. Six emergent ideas emerged related to teacher decision making: 1) Different Assessments and Testing, 2) What Works with Students’ Needs, Their Interests and Their Knowing, 3) Literacy Coaches’ Help, 4) District Curriculum, 5) Grade-Level Teacher Meetings, and 6) Monitoring Students’ Progress.

**Emergent Idea 1 — Different Assessments and Testing.** This emergent idea includes various types of assessments and data testing, such as LLI test, QRI test, NWEA/MAP test, Lexia test, running records, and short quizzes (n=9) (see Appendix A for a description of each testing type). Two participating teachers stated that according to the students’ achievement in these assessments, they decided which area that students needed more work and focus, and then they decided which strategies most effectively worked for the children to be successful in literacy.

Lexia that’s been really effective with our kids because this is a system that meets them at where they need to be and then it sends you emails telling you about your student—these students have successes that they need to celebrate and these
students, these are the skills that they need, here are the links to all of the lessons that you can use to teach them (Teacher 8).

Another participating teacher noted that running records or the notebooks about her students played a role in making decisions about the strategies she has chosen to use with her students to develop their literacy learning.

Any recording notes that I have from them reading to me; just depends on what I'm looking for that week that's needs to be improved (Teacher 7).

Some participating teachers described the importance of using those assessments and testing data,

If they're too low for LLI or they’re too high, it kinda’ helps me determine like what to do with them to help them move to the next level (Teacher 5).

**Emergent Idea 2 — What Works with Students’ Needs, Their Interests and Their Knowledge.** A number of the participating teachers (n=8) reported that making decisions about the strategies they choose to use with their students to develop their learning is dependent on their efficiency in increasing students’ accomplishments in literacy.

We taught them different levels and we try to move them up. And we try to see if that strategy’s working to see if that is affecting their needs and what they need (Teacher 3).

Other participating teachers noted that making decision to use particular strategies or changing them depended on students’ interest.

If I don't feel like they’re interested in teaching that, I need to change what I doing (Teacher 2).
Emergent Idea 3—Literacy Coaches’ Help. Literacy Coaches’ Help was the third way that participating teachers followed for making decisions about the strategies they have chosen to use with their students to develop their literacy learning ($n$=5). One of participating teachers discussed how literacy coaches helped teachers to find or create effective literacy instruction strategies to improve students’ achievement.

Meetings at least one to two times a month where we meet and we look at those little mini quizzes that we are giving those kids and they help us come up with strategies that will best work with those kids (Teacher 4).

Emergent Idea 4—District Curriculum. A number of participating teachers ($n$=5) noted that they made their decision about the strategies they have chosen to use with their students to develop their literacy learning through their district curriculum; they looked at the curriculum to pick up the strategies that worked most effectively with their students.

You have to really look at your curriculum and take a step back and decide, you know, how you push the child because you want them to learn things (Teacher 4). I feel lucky that I have that at my hands and it’s just a matter of me kind of picking it apart to what best suits my group (Teacher 10).

The curriculum is really important because we have to use that, so you see, it really makes a difference whether it’s good or not. And so, we have, like I said, just a lot of options to choose from, so that's the reason that, that's the pro. I would get Reading Street [a curriculum created by an educational company]. Sometimes, even that one curriculum that has so many options, there isn't enough. So you have to figure out for your kids (Teacher 5).

That’s really good support to have a couple different reading curriculums
that we go off of, something that helps. Not all children are going to learn in the exact same way. Every single thing variety of resources helps a lot (Teacher 1).

Another participating teacher stated that sometimes she used particular strategies as effective because the district requested that she use these strategies.

A lot of it comes from what the district mandates that I use (Teacher 3).

**Emergent Idea 5—Grade-Level Teachers’ Meetings.** A number of participating teachers ($n = 3$) described how grade-level teacher meetings were a successful way for making decisions about the strategies they have chosen to use with students to improve their literacy learning.

We talk about a child and what their needs are and then we all brainstorm ideas on how to help them (Teacher 3).

We meet about that and say okay what did you guys do? How did you guys teach this? Okay. So you had a really good score on at your class did really wellness tell us, how you taught us that we can improve this for next time with a lot of ideas off each other now they don't always work (Teacher 7).

A really nice time to sit down and look at the data and look at where we are and where we need to go and how we need to get there (Teacher 8).

**Emergent Idea 6—Monitor Students’ Progress.** This was the final emergent idea within this area of focus. It reflected the experiences of just a couple ($n = 2$) of the participating teachers related to monitoring students’ progress as an effective way for making decisions about the strategies they choose to use with their students to develop their literacy learning.

One participating teacher clearly described the process of progress monitoring,
So I progress monitor every single Friday, and I close my door and pray that an administrator not to walk in because I'm not doing groups those days. The kids are busy working and doing their thing. But, every Friday I meet with every child and progress monitor. So every Friday I will meet with a child for maybe two minutes. I mean it's that quick. The child comes; we sit; I pull out and I've got two set of books that have the number of words and questions that go with them, and I will set the timer and the child reads to me for one minute. So, I punch in the numbers, their errors, how many self-corrections they made and it gives me all the information I need (Teacher 4).

Effective Support Resources in Literacy Instruction

The interview question that led to the second focus area, effective support resources in literacy instruction, was “Would you describe the support you received from their principal, literacy coaches, parents, as well as others help you have and can apply to improve your literacy instruction strategies?”

This theme focus area included five core ideas: 1) Support from Principals, 2) Support from Literacy Coaches, 3) Support from Colleagues/Level-Grade Teachers, 4) Support from Parents, and 5) The Most Supportive Resource.

Core Idea 1—Support from Principals

The first core idea, Support from Principals to improve literacy learning for second grade students included two approaches that principals use: 1) Direct Engagement and 2) Indirect Engagement.

Direct engagement in literacy learning development. The majority of participating teachers (n=8) noted that their principals had direct engagement in literacy
instruction strategies development for second grade students. One of the participating
teachers described her experience with her principal and how he had direct engagement
in literacy learning development for second grade students.

I’ve had different levels of support. There have been principals that have been
very supportive and have time for you. The principal at my school is that way. I
can go in and brainstorm with him. I can sit down and talk with him and come up
with ideas, and he’s got a lot of good ideas (Teacher 3).

Another participating teacher described her experience with her principal’s
engagement in literacy learning development.

We have a tremendous of support in our building. I’ll start at the top, Mr. (name
of the principal), he’s my principal, and he is fantastic. The second best principal
I’ve worked with. (Name of the principal) is my first. And I tease and tell him that
I like him second best. He–whatever you need if he can get it, he will get it. And
you have to have that (Teacher 4).

Another participating teacher noted that her principal would provide her with the useful
and supportive resources to improve the literacy learning for second grade students.

From the principal we get to hire reading and math tutors; that’s super helpful
from my principal (Teacher 1).

*Indirect engagement in literacy learning development.* A couple (n=2) of the
participating teachers reported that their principals had indirect engagement in literacy
learning development.

The principal in literacy learning development. Um- not previously; she would if I
asked her to, but she’s, I wouldn’t say, maybe not so much into the new
curriculum. And we have a lot of district coaches that she probably just refers me to and I’m not sure about that, why don’t you just ask (name of the literacy coach) to come in, or why don’t you ask for (name of school) to come help, you know, so why don’t you just go straight to the source (Teacher 5).

**Core Idea 2—Support from Literacy Coaches**

Direct engagement from literacy coaches in literacy development for second grade students was the most common experience of participating teachers ($n=10$). All ten participating teachers noted that the literacy coaches had direct engagement in literacy instruction strategies development for second grade students. One participating teacher described a direct engagement from literacy coaches to improve the literacy instruction strategies for second grade students.

We co-teach lessons together, or they’ll observe me, not in an evaluate-me form, but to then say you know what I noticed the student doing the, so let’s try that because you can’t see everything you teach (Teacher 4).

She will demo it for me so I can sit back and observe while she’s teaching my students. We can co-teach it or I can then teach it and she’ll observe me and provide me with feedback. And so I do feel like there are so many opportunities for us to try new strategies or try new activities or approaches that will work with the students. So I think that having those coaches available is probably one of the most impactful for really seeing that growth in data for our students you know (Teacher 10).

She came in, observed, and she’s like I would like to show you that you can
add this to your reading block, and ahhh, that’s a great idea (Teacher 5).
That really helped me get an understanding of how everything should go
higher and should work, and so I feel like that really helps me as a
teacher to stay focused on all we need to do within the structures and routines for
the students day in and day out (Teacher 9).

Core Idea 3—Support from Colleagues/ Grade-Level Teachers

There are two approaches that the teacher participants associated with support
from their colleagues—direct engagement and indirect engagement.

**Direct engagement in literacy instruction strategies development.** Direct
engagement from colleagues/grade-level teachers in literacy development for second
grade students was the most common experience of participating teachers ($n=9$). The
super majority of participating teachers noted that colleagues/grade-level teachers had
direct engagement in literacy instruction strategies development for second grade
students. One of the participating teachers described her experience with her
colleagues/grade-level teachers and how they had positive direct engagement in literacy
learning development for second grade students.

Other second grade teacher we do a lot of sharing of comprehension strategies or
certain books that have worked for lessons that we’re teaching (Teacher 1).
I guess I should add that once a month, once or twice a month, we meet
as grade levels to discuss either reading or math just depends on the time of the
year and the strategies that we’re using as a team to best meet the needs of
our students (Teacher 10).
We have grade level meetings and so whether it’s a weekly or by-weekly, we
would come together and we can talk about the things; we would have an agenda and whatever the things would be. Also, sometimes if there’s a topic about it, we felt like if we needed to talk about it we would discuss reading, your reading block, or how are you doing this? Or what are you doing for this part, do you include this part of your reading block or not and why? (Teacher 5).

**Indirect engagement in instruction strategies development.** This was not a common experience for participating teachers \( (n=1) \). This particular participating teacher described indirect engagement of colleagues/ grade-level teachers in literacy instruction strategies development for second grade students.

This is hard. But, it would be really cool to think about the ideas of having interviews and prompting the other teachers about what they can do better and pushing their thinking. We can try to do that as much as possible, but a lot of the time we come to this conversation that I’m going to level, or this kid’s at a level, at one two, or this kid’s at a level F. Or, he’s low (Teacher 2).

**Core Idea 4—Support from Parents**

A total of three emergent ideas comprise this core idea, Support from Parents to improve literacy learning for second grade students: 1) Direct Engagement, 2) Indirect Engagement, and 3) Disengagement.

**Direct engagement in literacy instruction strategies development.** A number of the participating teachers \( (n=4) \) reported that students’ parents had direct engagement in literacy instruction strategies development. One of the participating teachers described her experience with parents’ role in supporting literacy instruction development for second-grade students.
It’s amazing to me and the parents are so supportive, and I can call them and talk to them and say your child’s not meeting their accelerated reader level or this or that. The parents, they’re going to the public library; they’re doing all these wonderful things with their kids. I sit down—you can really tell a child has been read to, as opposed to child that isn’t, as a child doesn’t have reading materials in the home (Teacher 3).

The parents. Parents I had a few of them, and I’m thinking more along the lines like my lower students. I had multiple conversations with them. I’ve met with them after school and then I would call them at night sometimes; they would call me just kind of checking, and I feel like again that’s goes along with that creating a relationship space because you know I want them to feel comfortable coming to me about any of the issues that they’re having (Teacher 9).

Another participating teacher described the role of the parents’ background in their children’s achievement in literacy and their role in the implementation of effective literacy instruction.

From parents—just sometimes just meeting the parents and seeing where students come from, and how much they’re exposed to literacy at home. Really helps me understand how much more work or where I need to take my teaching. They will express to me whether or not they feel the homework is effective with the reading whether or not they feel students are not reading enough, or if they’re reading the right books and it just helps open up that dialogue, so I can really get my goal and my objective across to them’ cause that only, I mean obviously we work all day at school; we’re trying to get them where they need to be, but once I
go home it’s kind of out of my hands. So I just try to keep all that dialogue open, so they know what my goal is and I know how I can support them (Teacher 1).

**Indirect engagement in literacy instruction strategies development.** A number of the participating teachers (n=6) reported that students’ parents had indirect engagement in literacy instruction strategies development. These teachers noted that some parents want to support their children to increase their achievement in literacy, but they don’t know how.

But for the most part our parents really struggle, and I don’t think it’s because they don’t want to be part of their child’s school life, I don’t think they really know how to be part of their child’s school life. And they don’t really know how to help them; like we’ve been had a parent this year called us and said, I’m not doing homework with my daughter anymore. And I said why not? And he said it’s too hard, she’s struggling. And I knew she was a struggling writer, so I said okay, well, I’ll just send home decodable. And at least if you could just read the decodable with her, it’s something that she can sound out on her own and something that she’s worked on in school, it’s just like extra reinforcement. And he still refused to do it, but it might be because he didn’t know how (Teacher 8).

Other participating teachers described their experiences and perspectives about some parents who want to support literacy development for their children; however, they don’t know how.

I think a lot of them, I guess I should clarify; a lot of them want to see their student successful. I think the challenge is they don’t know how to support. Sometimes, you know; they want to support, but the don’t know how. And you
know reflecting on that, you know; that’s something that I think education in
general needs to kind of work on how do we help these parents who don’t know
how to help their students. Or if we have a parents themselves who don’t know
who to read, how expect to help student to read at home? And so that would be a
deficiency for me and some of my colleagues. Parents really wanting to support,
but not knowing how. So they want to be able to come in and volunteer in the
classroom, but finding a way that they could be successful with that can be
difficult (Teacher 10).

Parents do the best they can for their child, so they love their child, and they’re
going to do whatever they can to help that child. So, I have to always think that in
my head, so if I’m saying well they’re not reading at home, or they’re not doing
this. And I have to stop that and say okay, what can I do to help support that
parent and it may be that they don’t, they work all night, they see their child only
on the weekend (Teacher 6).

Another participating teacher noted that some parents had indirect engagement in
literacy development for their children because they lived in poverty, so they were not
able or not qualified for this support.

That's where you start putting a lot more reading into your day to try to make up
for the reading that's not being done at home. Part of what's interesting is they
have dialect, I have dialect. When it comes to you know what some people refer
to as slang or as broken English. I do wish that they'd hear more of their parents
and them speaking and reading fluently, but you have to also take into account
that their parents don't read fluently or don’t all read. This year; I had a parent
Hispanic student and only one parent spoke English and read English; the other didn't at all. I had another Hispanic student where both parents could, one could read very little, could spoke, “excuse me,” could speak um can speak enough to talk to me; mom couldn't do any. And so just knowing kind of how your parents are really affects those things, but to get over that you can't really account for them to do this at home. So, like when I send home homework or reading, I don't expect my students to bring it back. I can't ever rely on that happening, so I have to do things in the classroom to make up for that. In that sense, a lot of that comes with adding at the end of the day, reading time or buddy system so, or not buddy system, buddy readings (Teacher 7).

**Disengagement in literacy instruction strategies development.** A couple \((n=2)\) of the participating teachers reported that some parents’ disengagement in literacy learning development for their children.

About the support from parents, not so much, not so much. And this is the culture we’re trying to change, is to get them in more and more. And they’ve had experiences in school that have not been positive, so they don’t want to be there. But, I must say I had a hundred percent at parent conferences second semester – 100 percent (Teacher 4).

One of these two participating teachers noted her experience connecting with students’ parents.

It’s difficult. I can’t speak for my colleagues. I do a lot to reach out to parents through newsletters, class Doe Joe, which is an app that I have that allows us to communicate with phone calls home, whether they’re positive or for redirection
with the student but that’s definitely, I would say, that is a challenge for us is the support that we’re receiving from parents (Teacher 10).

Core Idea 5—The Most Supportive Resource

A total of three emergent ideas comprise this core idea, The Most Supportive Resource: 1) Literacy Coaches, 2) Colleagues/ Grade-Level Teachers, and 2) Parents.

Emergent Idea 1—The most supportive was the literacy coaches. This was the most experience for participating teachers (n=7). The majority of these participating teachers noted that the literacy coach was the most supportive in literacy instruction strategies development for second grade students.

My principal is really supportive, but the coach is the one that’s able to be in the room with you and demo lessons for you, and give you that feedback, and she’ll even sit with us as a grade level, and will set goals for all of the second grade classrooms, and she’ll make her rounds visiting all of us and helping us track the data. So, I think that having those coaches available is probably what’s the most impactful for really seeing that growth in data for our students, you know principals and parents are extremely helpful and supportive, but if you don't have that professional who's able to kind of step in and provide more hands-on guidance for teachers and just assist with the data part of it, I think it's a little bit more difficult to see movement (Teacher 10).

Emergent Idea 2—The most supportive was the colleagues/ grade-level teachers. A few participating teachers (n=2) noted that the colleagues/ grade-level teachers was the most supportive in literacy instruction strategies development for second grade students.
From what I'm seeing in our school, it's definitely our team is the most effective. I know in some other schools it would probably be like the parents would be like your number one partners. But definitely in our school, it’s the grade level team (Teacher 8).

**Emergent Idea 3—The most supportive was the parents.** This was not a common experience for the participating teachers \( n=1 \). This particular participating teacher was teaching in a school that had the highest socio-economic status among the teachers who participated in this study. She stated that the parents were the most supportive in literacy instruction strategies development for second grade students, then after parents, she valued literacy coaches.

The literacy coaches coming in and actually working with the kids in the classroom would be the second, but, the parents, always the most important.

Any time you can work with a parent that’s the most important thing because then you know you’re being backed at home too (Teacher 3).

**Effective Factors in Literacy Instruction Development**

The interview question that led to the third focus area, Effective Factors in Literacy Instruction Development, was “What do you think about other factors, such as curriculum, a classroom environment, and the relationship between teachers and their students that impact teachers to improve and to be creative in their reading instruction strategies?”

This theme focus area included five core ideas: 1) Knowing about Students’ Background and Their Life Experiences, 2) Relationships between Teachers and Students, 3) Knowledge of Curriculum and Pedagogy, and 4) Creating Positive
Classroom Environments.

**Knowing students’ background and their life experiences.** All ten participating teachers (n=10) commented on how knowing about students’ backgrounds and their life experiences was essential in literacy learning development for second grade students. All participating teachers discussed the significance of knowing about students’ backgrounds and their life experiences in literacy learning development for second grade students.

One of the ten participating teachers explained her perspective about the importance of knowing about students’ backgrounds and their life experiences.

When I came from (name of school) there to here as well the demographic of students is very different, and I had a really change the way I approached students and the way that I carried myself. I could be a little a little bit softer maybe with certain students. I think we'll even just like the free and reduced lunch percentages are very different they’re up in the 90’s at (name of school) and we are I think would be the 30 to 40’s here, so even just parent involvement here is extremely different than being there. Adapting to the environment around you to whether or not your students are fluent readers or they’re beginning readers at second grade is huge as well. It’s so hard to describe because it's just to it's so natural to teachers to just adapt to each student. Uhm, also I guess building on their background where they come from what their home life is like I think it's a huge effect on how I approach students. A student who has high parent involvement and is way more supported at home I would probably approach a little differently than the student who doesn’t in the sense of I might have different expectations for them about where my goal for them is at the end of the year based on how
much exposure they're getting at home (Teacher 1).

Another participating teacher noted her experience with using students’ backgrounds and their life experiences in literacy teaching with her students as a way of teaching literacy.

So definitely to be able to do that, I have to know and have a strong relationship with the student, so that I can use the student’s background knowledge to make the new connections to a new word or sound or meaning of the text. So getting a book in front of the students, getting their background knowledge, it's like survey the text, predict, and question. We do that before we read any text, go over vocabulary they might see in the book, and then we come to make those good predictions, we have to have a conversation about their background knowledge; then they're already into the text of having their connections into the story (Teacher 2)

**Relationships between teachers and students.** All ten participating teachers (n=10) discussed the significance of relationships between teachers and students, and they noted that this relationship was essential to improve literacy learning for second grade students. One of them described her experience with building relationships with her students.

They’re having a fit or something and I try to encourage the students to treat each other the same, you know that we’re supporting we have a family feel in our room. So that everybody is comfortable to kind of push themselves out of their comfort zone a little bit (Teacher 10).

I try my absolutely best to try and build really good relationships with all the
students. You know I have taken tons and tons of training and where; really gonna to talk about that today. Building relationships is what is at the foundation of all of this. If we're not, if the students don’t, that if they feel don’t care about them, then they're not going, they're not going to want to work for us, they’re not going to work with us. And so you know we try really really hard to try and build those relationships in the beginning, and not just with us, but you know amongst the students as well. You know I go out of my way, and I'll have lunch with the kids and stuff like that just to try you know, at the first I'll do it in groups just everybody to come in and just hang out, but then an eventual I'll let them, you know, we do like a classroom store and they can buy lunch with me and stuff like that as a prize for, you know, doing good behavior (Teacher 9).

Another participating teacher nicely described her relationship with her students. I am married, I have no children though, but all of my kids at school think, seem to think, that they’re my children and that’s okay, too (Teacher 7).

Another participating teacher explained the importance of the positive relationships between teachers and students in the development of literacy learning for students. They definitely, they they have to be comfortable with their teacher. So if you just think that your teacher’s super mean and when you go read to them they’re just gonna tell you all other bad things you did you're not going to want to go read to them. So you definitely just have to build a relationship to where your kids are comfortable and want feedback. So like I was saying like the kids love to come like, “can I read with you next? So really they want to do it, and I think that's a
big thing. So just not only having like a relationship period, but just being comfortable, and for the kids to respect you enough to say, “Oh my teacher knows what she's talking about when she says I need to work on this. “ And so if the if the students can realize to respect their teachers’ opinions and say, “Oh so, you know my teacher said I needed to work on my fluency, so I'm going to go, you know, read these plays or something with someone with-so-and so, who's really good at it, and we'll work on, you know, doing expressions or something.” And so it doesn’t have to be a complex relationship, it just needs to be comfortable (Teacher 5).

Another participating teacher noted that a positive relationship between teachers and their students was essential to implement effective literacy instruction strategies to increase students’ achievement in literacy.

The relationship between teachers and their students is a huge. And that was another thing at the model school conference; they asked us what’s most important, rigor, relationships, and I can’t remember what the third one was. And everyone around me went well, rigor, and I’m like I disagree; it is relationships. And it was relationships; you cannot teach a child who does not trust you, you cannot teach a child who does not like you, and that’s the most fun part of my job is building those relationships. It is a critical, it is critical. I love them so much. And, so, that’s relationships. You have to, you know, get in there and what do you like? You know tell me about yourself, and so that’s where the relationship works so you can implement the strategies (Teacher 4).
Another participating teacher described her experience in establishing a connection with her students and noted that a strong relationship between teachers and their students was essential and more important than working on curriculum.

A lot of the time, the first few weeks of school I’m not heavily focused on curriculum because I’m focused on relationship-building. Our students thrive on being able to trust an adult they don’t have a lot of adults that they can trust in their life and so I can’t expect them to read or want to read if they don’t even like me or they don’t ask me they don’t feel like it’s a safe space and so we do a lot of relationship building at the beginning of the year with myself with the students and with each other (Teacher 10).

Knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy. All ten participating teachers (n=10) discussed the importance of knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy in literacy learning for second grade students, and they noted that knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy is essential.

The curriculum is really important because we have to use that, it’s really, it makes a difference. We have, like I said, just a lot of options to choose from, so that’s the reason that, that’s the pro. So curriculum has so many options, there isn’t enough. So you have to figure out for your kids (Teacher 5).

One of the participating teachers described her knowledge and experience with curriculum from the district.

The curriculum we have now, I think it works very well. We start out we have a main story of the week. We have different things that we focus on, different words, different grammar practices, and things like that that we focus on within
the classroom. But, it also gives me time to break up with a student. We have—they have leveled readers that come with this particular curriculum that we have and so I can give books to kids at their level. While they’re reading you come back together and meet them as a group and talk about the book they’re reading, have a different strategies to work with in different groups and different groups need different strategies. So, they’re reaching outside the curriculum. What (City 1 District) likes us to do is use everything within the curriculum first before you branch out. So, and then we branch out, but I try to look for something then I try to find books that are interesting for those kids and to keep them interested and to get them in the chapter books (Teacher 3).

Other participating teachers discussed curriculum and pedagogy issues and how deal with them.

The curriculum. Well, it—and it’s a national problem. So, I often think, you know, our curriculum is appropriate for some of our kids; and, I know that we’ve got our core standards and we have to do all these things, but I think part of our problem is—it’s we’re not letting them go out and play; that’s part of development up here (pointing to head) and you know come back to sit with me. So, I think, I think the curriculum is very intensive, for some kids again; it’s wonderful and they do great. But for some kids, it’s very hard and they act out. You know they struggle and they, they know, I can’t do this and so then you have behavior problems. So, I think that, you know, you have to really look at your curriculum and take a step back and decide, you know, how you push the child because you want them to feel successful, you don’t want negative self-talk from
them; you know they can’t do things; it's so hard because you know, you build them up all week, and build them up, build them up, but then they have to go take this assessment, and that assessment it just smacks them right back down because they know they weren’t successful (Teacher 4).

Other participating teachers discussed their knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy and its role in increasing the literacy achievement for their second grade students.

I think it’s been helpful with the support that I’ve been given from my administrator and from coaches to really pick apart the curriculum, how it’s going to best serve my students. And so when you’re given the curriculum that we have in the district it can be really overwhelming. There’s a lot of different parts to it. There’s a lot of pieces to it, and there’s no way that you could fit it all into one day. And so the best advice I’ve been given is to really home in on what the kids are missing, and what they need the most. And that’s what you’re going to focus on, and don’t get lost in teaching material that they’re not ready to learn yet (Teacher 10).

**Creating positive classroom environments.** This final emergent idea within this theme reflects the experiences of participating teachers about the importance of creating a positive classroom environment. All ten participating teachers (n= 10) noted that creating positive classroom environments was essential in literacy learning development for second grade students.

The classroom climate and seeing that reading is important is very important and not just handing kids books and saying, “Here, you need to read this. Let’s
talk about it.” But seeing that reading is important and makes all the difference in the world in (Teacher 3).

Other participants described how literacy learning achievement changed after creating a positive and safe classroom environment.

The classroom environment is a very big factor that building a safe environment that they feel comfortable in, and you know, specially for those students if they're struggling as readers and they're not, they're not comfortable in the classroom, they're already not comfortable with their ability. So now you've got to try and build a community in your classroom a sense of belonging for everybody, so that they feel that they're in a safe place and that they can make some type of progress (Teacher 9).

A lot of the student success depends on what happens in the classroom (Teacher 7).

Another participating teacher described in detail her experience with creating a positive classroom environment to help her students to increase their literacy learning and achievement.

I have such a fun classroom environment. I love it. Oh, my god, I love my room. Well, I moved rooms; well I will be moving rooms. Yes, but I think your classroom has to be—and this would be another reason why I’d want you to come it has to be inviting. It has to be full of anchor charts and things where the kids can go to get help. So that when you are working one-on-one or in a small group, they don’t always have questions; they can go, oh, it’s on that anchor chart. At one time, I had notebooks on my students’ desks that they would share and I
took a binder—you turn it inside out and you can buy these clips and it holds it up like a tent—and I put all their anchor charts in there. And so when we got to something, if we were done with reading, then we went to math; they would flip and then everything, you know, all the vocabulary, everything was right there for them. That turned out to be more work than it was worth, but it was, you know, worth a try, but you have to have all sorts of things up, but not to the point where it’s distracting. In my classroom I have as many carpeted areas as the room will allow. So I’ve got one huge carpet area where we do whole group reading instructions, but then I have another area that one—early in the school year, I call it the living room because there are chairs and bean bags and cozy lights—fun, child-friendly lighting that think they think’s really neat, and I will have tubs of books there. I also have made out of PVC pipe, little telephones and they whisper in it and can hear themselves read, but no another one else can hear it. It’s remarkable. You can just take a little piece of tubing pipe this big and then you get the curly part. I don’t know what it’s called—But it looks like this and then you whisper in it. It’s so loud, so they hear themselves and doesn’t bother anyone else. I have headphones in there, so that if they have some sensory issues, they can quietly do their thing there. I also have little carpet squares and if they want to go work under a table, go work under the table. I let them pretty much go work wherever they want because I know I would not want to sit at a table all day long. You know, and I had to do that in the conference last week, and I’m like for two days; so they get to move around; if they want to stand up and work, then stand up and work; stand on your head; I don’t care (Teacher 4).
Other participating teachers discussed the importance of collaboration in the classroom environment.

So I feel like collaboration, a classroom environment of collaboration, is important and um choice, so they can work. I’ll give them like a checklist of things I have to do; and they work at their own pace; and they figure out what they need to do next; and it kind of gives them like responsibility; and they have to decide all this is a priority and to get this done, or probably can spend all day on the computer (Teacher 5).

**Challenges and Difficulties**

The interview question that led to the third focus area, Challenges and Difficulty for Implementation of Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies, was “What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective reading instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?”

This theme focus area included four core ideas: 1) Time Issues, 2) Students’ Behavior, 3), Students’ Demographic Challenges, and 4) Support from Parents.

**Time issues.** Some participating teachers \((n=4)\) discussed time issues as a challenge that they were facing when trying apply and use effective literacy learning to improve their students’ achievement in second grade. One of them noted that was not enough time to implement several types of effective literacy instruction strategies.

That's what I was having a problem with, was uh taking too much time. I need to, because I need to get to my small groups, so I don't take it too much time whole group wise. And so just having people be able to come in and watch, and say, uh you know what, you could do this or you could not do so much of that, and taking
it and using it (Teacher 5).

Another participating teacher stated that sometimes some of the test and assignment were not important because they were not necessary for students. She found that unnecessary tests and assignments caused to lost time that they have to used for need more important things.

Testing you know. They test test test test test test test. And then, I don't find a lot of time the some of test that they want us, that they ask us to give, are doing, I mean the whole idea of an assessment is to find out where the kid’s at, and how to get them to change that and find a strategy to work. And a lot of time some of these tests, it's a test that you have to do to jump through a hoop for the state or the federal government. And that’s very frustrating. So, I know sometimes we might have to waste time that I don't have on something that I don't get an assessment that I don't get anything out of and that's very, very frustrating (Teacher 6).

Moreover, the same participating teacher above noted that they found solutions for time issue by using smart time.

It kind of was something that started and people said, “No we can’t do it, we can’t do it, we can’t do it.” In different grade levels we're trying it; we tried it in math for second grade and it worked amazingly. But, so now what she wants to do, with the district, I mean school-wide. So, it’s a time you set aside. The whole building does it at the same time. Um, one trimester it's reading, one it’s writing, and then one it’s math. Um, so then you take your kids, and your second grade kids and your second grade kids. So you’re looking at the data every week to say:
Where? How can we? What are we going to do with these kids? And then use that smart time to figure out just another resource to help those very, those lower achieving kids especially, but I mean all kids. You know, I guess, the panic for me, too, is another, say it’s 30 minutes, where am I going to find another 30 minutes, you know and still be able to do everything I need to do, and still teach science and social studies ‘cause those poor little things are the red-headed cousins that no body pays attention to, you know (Teacher 6).

**Students’ behavior.** In addition to the experience of closure through the interview process, some participating teachers \((n=3)\) discussed students’ behavior as one of the challenges that faced them when trying implement effective literacy instruction strategies.

A lot of the time it’s behavior. Certain kids are in certain moods certain days. Uh they take away from teaching time for sure. So that has a big deal on how much instruction I get to do if someone’s having a really rough day. I had a student this year that I had a lot of challenges with, and it just depended on whether or not it was a break. Maybe he had to call home. Maybe he needed to have some free time. He needed to remove himself from the classroom. If I’m losing time, I will probably just remove that student because I can’t risk the rest for one for one day (Teacher 1).

**Students’ demographic challenges.** Two of the participating teachers \((n=2)\) discussed the challenges associated with students’ demographics as one of the difficulties that faced them when trying to implement effective literacy instruction strategies.

A general challenge is that some of the effective strategies or strategies that are
effective for other second grade classrooms might not always be successful or effective at my building based on the difference in demographics (Teacher 10).

**Support from parents.** One participating teachers (n= 1) discussed support from parents as a challenge she was facing when trying to apply and use effective literacy instruction strategies to improve her students’ achievement in second grade. The participating teacher described this challenge according to her experience.

I think the challenge is they don't know how to support sometimes, you know they want to support, but the don’t know how. And you know reflecting on that, you know that's something that I think education in general needs to kind of work on how do we help these parents who don't know how to help their students, or if we have a parent themselves who doesn't know who doesn't know how to read, how can we expect to help student to read at home? (Teacher10).

**Chapter IV Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings of this study. These findings are based primarily on the analysis of ten interview transcripts. Findings were discussed as four themes that correspond with the four major questions that emerged from the data. A brief summary description of the findings follows (see Summary of Results Table 3, pp. 107-109). Data in the first theme focused on effective literacy instruction strategies. In the area of effective literacy instruction strategies, participants described (a) Identifying effective literacy instruction strategies and (b) Making decisions about literacy instruction strategies as effective.

The second theme focused on effective support resources in literacy instruction strategies. Participants described a variety of effective support resources in literacy
instruction strategies, which were then analyzed and grouped into five emergent ideas: (a) Support from principals, (b) Support from literacy coaches, (c) Support from colleagues/level-grade teachers, (d) Support from parents, and (e) The most supportive resource.

The third theme focused on effective factors in literacy instruction development. The teacher participants described a number of factors in literacy instruction development, which they considered to be particularly effective. These factors were then analyzed and grouped into four emergent ideas: (a) Knowing about students’ background and their life experiences, (b) Relationships between teachers and students, (c) Knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy, and (d) Creating positive classroom environments.

The fourth theme focused on the challenges and difficulties they had experienced in the implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies. Participants described a variety of challenges and difficulties, which were then analyzed and grouped into four emergent ideas: (a) Time issues, (b) Students’ behavior, (c) Students’ demographic challenges, (d) Support from parents.

In Chapter 5 the purpose of this study and implications of the findings are organized within the conceptual framework that has guided this research (see page 14). Recommendations for future study and the implications are presented and discussed as they correspond with current research.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore ten teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective reading instruction strategies they have chosen to use and how their choices may have been influenced by those responsible for the professional support of teachers. Research was conducted through face-to-face interviews with ten elementary school teachers. Data analysis revealed four themes, fifteen core ideas, and twenty-five emergent ideas. This chapter reviews, analyzes, and discusses, in light of the relevant literature, the findings of this study. This chapter also outlines the implications of the findings for this study. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Three Key Elements

This study rests on a conceptual framework consisting of three key elements. The first key element is found in McKenna’s and Robinson’s (2014) work regarding the teachers’ understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them. A second key element that was central to this study is the support teachers received from their principals, peers and colleagues, literacy coaches, parents, and others to adapt and apply strategies, such as what was revealed in Taylor’s and Pearson’s (2005) research. Their work focused on the ideal conditions that allow for teachers to implement literacy strategies, conditions where there are supportive school environments and accomplished teachers to manage and lead the learning encounter. Thirdly, the family literacy theory by Philips et al (2006) focused on the role of the home and parents in children’s literacy development; they demonstrated that there is a relationship between literacy use in families’ and students’ achievement in literacy.
(Tracey & Morrow, 2012). This combination of research results demonstrates that support from other professionals in the school and district combined with parental involvement in their children’s literacy furthers teachers’ literacy instruction effectiveness and contributes to students’ accomplishing their literacy goals. This conceptual framework is aligned with the results of this study.

**Relationship of Results to Existing Studies**

Four important questions framed this research. The first two questions are original research questions for this study; they were both addressed in the ten interviews. As described on page 97-106, Questions 3 and 4 are questions that emerged as follow-up questions in the first interview. After examining the data from that first interview, it was determined that these two questions needed to be addressed with the nine remaining teacher participants when their interviews took place:

1. Which do you believe are the most effective reading instructional strategies? and Why?

2. Would you describe the support you receive from your principal, literacy coaches, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your reading instruction strategies?

3. What do you think about other factors, such as curriculum, a classroom environment, the relationship between teachers and their students, and others that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their reading instruction strategies?

4. What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective reading instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?
These questions were answered by themes that emerged from interview data, and were reported in Chapter 4.

In brief, this study examined the effective literacy instructional strategies used by teachers and their impact on second-grade students. Further, this study looked at teachers' views and voices on the support they received from stakeholders (principals, literacy coaches, colleagues/peer, and parents), their perception of curriculum and the influence of the classroom environment. Moreover, this study examined the teacher-student relationship and students’ backgrounds that impact the creativity of teachers in the employ their instructional approaches. Lastly, the study addresses the challenges encountered by teachers in using the most efficient instruction methods and the responses to those methods.

**Discussion of Theme 1: Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies**

Theme 1 corresponded with the research question, “Among teachers identified as effective literacy Instructors, what strategies do they believe are the most effective? and Why?” From the analysis, this study identified four areas of effective literacy instruction strategies for 1) building vocabulary, increased fluency, reading comprehension, phonemic awareness, 2) small groups, 3) whole group, and 4) reading assessment. It has been established from the teachers' responses that a variety of instructional methods were useful to improve students’ achievement in literacy skills. Regarding strategies for building vocabulary, increased fluency, reading comprehension, and phonemic awareness, ten teachers participated by giving their opinions and perspectives. Such as, reading aloud was particularly applicable to building phonemic awareness. There are a number of studies that support these participating teachers’ voices about effective literacy
instruction strategies to improve second-grade students in literacy learning. For example, Anderson and Barnitz (2014), in their study of cross reading comprehension instruction, identified that teachers who utilize cooperative approaches in small groups for learning, such as enabling students to read and discuss what they have read, often have found that their students achieve better comprehension. Also, Shepherd (2014), in his study of reading performance and reading instruction, examined applying and using the cooperative learning approach to increase phonemic awareness. He found that teachers who incorporate cooperative learning in small groups give the student opportunities to understand the various sounds when read aloud with other group members. So, phonemic awareness is often easily obtained through the effective collaboration of students as well as through the teachers’ assistance.

Seven of the ten teachers who participated in this study noted that working with a whole group of students was convenient for the introduction of general concepts and also helps students become good readers. All ten participating teachers agreed that small groups are most efficient to work with students when instructing, as it gives an opportunity for individualized instruction and development. For example, some teachers observed that working in small groups is a primary way for reaching students by focusing on students’ individual needs to enhance their literacy skills. According to Yi-Chin, Yu-Ling & Ying-Shao (2014), the individualized approach to learning aims at facilitating success in reading comprehension for each student through recognizing their interests, needs, and ambitions. According to Anderson and Roit (2013), cooperative learning is a teaching approach in which small groups or teams of students of different or varying
levels of ability use a variety of literacy and learning activities to improve their understanding and literacy skills.

In the area of reading assessment, six participating teachers responded that a reading assessment was influential whether computer-based, paper or an alternative-based test. It is evident from the teachers’ perspectives that a reading-test is one of the ways to evaluate the students generally or on specific intended learning outcomes. In addition, a reading assessment which involves spelling tests is of benefit in enhancing how students apply phonemics in literacy learning.

The literacy instructional support strategies that the participating teachers found to be the most effective have been organized into six areas: 1) Different assessments and testing, 2) What works with the needs of students and their interests, 3) Help offered by literacy coaches, 4) The district curriculum, 5) Grade-level teacher meetings, and 6) Monitoring student progress.

**Literacy instructional support strategy 1—Methods of assessment and testing.** First, regarding the method of assessment and testing, various ways, such as Lexia test, LLI test, QRI test, NWEA/MAP test, short quizzes, and running records were applicable for these teachers. For example, one of ten participating teacher cited Lexia as being useful as it helps in meeting most students’ needs besides describing each student’s needs and progress through emails.

**Literacy instructional support strategy 2—What works with the students’ needs and interests.** Making the decision on what works with students' needs was noted as depending on several factors, which include the efficiency of teachers in enhancing students' achievement in literacy. The decision also depended on the interest of students;
it was noted, however, that the decision about what works to address students' needs, is made on the evidence gathered regarding students’ interests. This finding is supported in the literature. For example, Arshavsky, Edmunds, Charles, and Rice (2012), in their study of a classroom observation protocol-training manual, examined the role and importance of independent observations. They found that independent observations should help describe the current curriculum in regards to its efficiency and students’ perception. As a result, these observations assist the teacher to attain teacher-stated goals; in this case, it is an active application of strategies in teaching reading. Keengwe, Onchwari, and Hucks (2014) found that instructional evaluative actions of school principals involves the use of data in order to focus attention on the various ways that could be used to improve instructional approaches and strategies in curriculum to work with all students, as well as to determine appropriate development activities for teachers and students at the same time.

**Literacy instructional support strategy 3—Help offered by literacy coaches.**

The help offered by literacy coaches formed another starting point in deciding on the effective literacy instructional strategies that teachers used. Five of ten participating teachers stated that teachers have to meet at least two times each week with literacy coaches to discuss the assessments, tests, and quizzes they give to the students that help in making decisions on the most efficient literacy instruction strategies to apply with second-grade students to increase their achievement in literacy. According to Commeyras and Mazile (2011), in their study exploring the culture of trading among primary schools, literacy coaches play a critical role in serving as instructional coaches for classroom
teachers. In particular, literacy coaches provide teachers with explicit guidance and instructions on reading processes and instructional strategy.

**Literacy instructional support strategy 4—The district curriculum.** The decision on what effective literacy instruction strategies to use and adopt depended on the district curriculum. Some participating teachers reported that they have to go through the curriculum provided by the district to know what the curriculum objectives are. As a result of this review, they were able to choose the best instruction styles for their students. Furthermore, the curriculum itself at times required that a specific strategy be used for literacy instruction with their students. In keeping with this finding, Keengwe, Onchwari, and Hucks (2014) found that instructional evaluative actions of school principals involves the use of data in order to focus attention on the various ways that could be used to improve instructional approaches and strategies in curriculum to work with all students, as well as to determine appropriate development activities for teachers and students at the same time.

**Literacy instructional support strategy 5—Grade-level teacher meetings.** As a base for deciding on the best literacy instruction strategies to apply in teaching, grade-level teacher meetings were viewed as one of best ways to decide, Teacher described being able to share their experiences and materials and then find or devise appropriate ways to help students. This finding is aligned with Mizell (2010) in his study of why professional development matters. He examined the importance of professional development. He found that professional development constitutes a formal process, which may include a workshop, seminar, conference, university or college course, or a collaborative learning among team members, such as literacy coaches, colleagues/peers,
and principal through mentoring. Nevertheless, professional development can also occur in an informal context, such as learning from an instructor or discussions with colleagues.

**Literacy instructional support strategy 6—Monitoring students’ progress.**

Monitoring students’ progress, was a measure used by these teachers to make decision to track students’ progress in literacy achievement. Two of the participating teachers described their views based on their monitoring schedule, where on a weekly basis each student's progress was evaluated through a quick interview lasting a few minutes. During such discussions, each child was asked to read particular paragraphs as well as answer a set of questions. Based on the outcome for each student, teachers could formulate appropriate strategies, interventions, or solutions that worked for each child. Several studies support these participating teachers’ perspectives and their voices about monitoring students’ progress in literacy learning as a one-on-one strategy. For example, according to Swanson (2016), in his study of strategy instruction and effectively using each of the strategies within the personalized approach, particularly examined the teacher’s role in effectively applying the personalized approach. He found that teachers must monitor and observe students’ progress in literacy learning and ensure that they are in a position to interact one-on-one with students in their classroom because such interaction enables the teachers to understand the needs and strengths of each student. As such, the teacher becomes aware of the necessary areas he needs to focus on in order to ensure that each student learns in accordance with his or her ability.

**Discussion of Theme 2: Effective Support Resources in Literacy Instruction**

Theme 2 corresponded with the research question, “How did the participating teachers describe the support they received from their principal, literacy coach, and/or
others to adapt and apply effective strategies?” The descriptions of support that teachers received have been put into five emergent ideas. The five emergent ideas include 1) Support from principals, 2) Support from literacy coaches, 3) Support from colleagues and grade-level teachers, 4) Support from parents, and 5) The most supportive resource.

**Support source 1—Principals.** Support from principals was described as being through direct or indirect engagement. Eight of the ten participating teachers noted that there was an express commitment by their principals on strategies regarding literacy instruction, where the principals went to the extent of giving ideas on the best approach to adopt, engaging with the students, providing help regarding needed material resource, and even employing literacy tutors when the need arose.

The teachers also found that direct engagement by principals enabled accelerated growth in literacy learning since teachers and students fully owned the learning process while unfulfilled promises of principal support created a feeling of neglect in teachers and students that slowed down literacy development.

Several studies support these eight participating teachers’ voices about their principals’ direct engagement in literacy learning for their second-grade students. According to Keengwe, Onchwar, and Hucks (2014) examined the role of principal in development teachers’ instructions. They found that principals who participate in the instructional process through consultation and discussion with teachers on instructional issues often facilitate the effective implementation of effective literacy instruction strategies. To this extent, it is apparent that principals should engage in discussion with teachers on a frequent basis in order to help them formulate appropriate strategies as well.
as provide them with adequate resources needed to enhance reading comprehension in students.

On the other hand, two teachers who participated in this study noted that their principals engaged indirectly in the learning and development of literacy at second-grade. These two teachers believed that direct engagement from their principals in literacy instruction development for second-grade students was not a basic part in their jobs as principals because there were others who would help them instead of their principals, such literacy coaches. Konrad, Helf, and Joseph (2011), in their study of strategies for increasing instructional efficiency, provide support for these two participating teachers’ voices about their principals’ indirect engagement in literacy learning among their students. According to Konrad, Helf, and Joseph (2011), in their study of strategies for increasing instructional efficiency, examined the role of elementary school principals which requires making important school-based decisions with respect to instruction and allocation of resources. They found that some of these decisions include scheduling of classes, assignment of student to classes, and planning of professional development and support for teachers and students at each grade level. In line with allocation of resources, schools principals’ roles often include the distribution of resources needed to support extra instruction for learners who need it.

Support source 2—Literacy coaches. In like manner, support from literacy coaches in this study is viewed as direct engagement. The ten participating teachers stated that their literacy coaches engaged directly in literacy learning and instruction for second-grade students, where they co-taught lessons, observed teachers while administering lessons, conducted demonstrations and even taught some lessons. Accordig to the
participating teachers, this deep engagement by literacy coaches had a strong impact on students’ literacy development. Massey (2011), in his study of the roles and responsibilities of elementary reading coaches, examined the literacy coaches’ role and the apparent influence of teacher knowledge and instructional practice, and found that literacy coaches not only help teachers in recognizing what they know and can do, but they also assist teachers in strengthening their abilities to make effective use of what they know and do.

**Support source 3—Colleagues and grade-level teachers.** Support from colleagues and grade-level teachers were described as cooperative and helpful support that the participating teachers had received. Two teachers responded to the question based on what manner of support they got from their colleagues, which, again, they found could be either direct or indirect. Most of the teachers who participated noted that their colleagues gave unswerving support in the literacy instruction for their second-grade students through sharing of comprehension strategies, sharing books, discussion on strategies that work in meeting students’ needs and holding regular meetings where they brainstormed on the best approach to adopt. This support enabled the teachers to adjust their instruction methods to meet the needs of their learners when the need arose. A lack of support or minimal support was uncommon among the teachers who took part in this study. Other studies support these participating teachers’ voices about the support of their colleagues and grade-level peers toward enhancing student engagement in literacy.

Mizell (2010) in his study of why professional development matters, examined the importance of professional development. He found that professional development constitutes a formal process, which may include a workshop, seminar, conference,
university or college course, or a collaborative learning among team members, such as literacy coaches, colleagues/peers, and principal through mentoring. He also found that professional development can also occur in an informal context, such as learning from an instructor or discussions with colleagues.

**Support source 4—Parents.** Support from parents to improve literacy instruction is a controversial matter, but all of the ten teachers who participated in this study agreed that support from parents is essential to increase literacy achievement for their children. There are some studies that support the participating teachers’ voices about the importance of parents’ direct engagement in literacy learning for their students. For example, Graham et al. (2008), in their study of teaching reading and spelling in the primary grades, found that when teachers worked in collaboration with parents, they could help students develop a curiosity that could eventually facilitate reading comprehension as well as the development of effective reading skills. Likewise, Padron, Waxman, Lee, Lin, and Michko (2012), in their study of classroom observation of teaching and learning in urban elementary schools, suggested that teachers should first encourage parents to spend some time with their children while helping them to develop an interest in reading, as this would facilitate their abilities to improve their reading skills at school.

In this study, the participating teachers viewed parental differently. Four of the teachers viewed parents as having direct engagement in literacy learning development. Six of the teachers viewed parents as having indirect engagement, and two of the
teachers viewed some of the parents as disengaged in the literacy learning development of their second-grade students.

**Directly engaged parents.** Four participating teachers noted that the parents of their students had direct engagement in the support of the literacy learning for their children. According to Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, and Vernon-Feagans (2016) schools that strive to enhance direct communication between teachers and parents often witness and observe improved reading comprehension in students. In particular, this means that the interaction between teachers and parents enable parents to formulate effective reading instruction strategies that, in turn, enable students to improve in their reading comprehension. According to Shernoff, Lakind, Frazier, and Jakobsons (2015), studied the coaching of early career teachers in urban elementary schools and they examined parents’ involvement in the development of literacy achievement in these same schools. They found that when parents’ involvement is encouraged in the school, they are often able to assist the teachers in implementing effective reading instruction strategies that help increase reading comprehension. Parents’ involvement in general involves behaviors of parents in home and school settings meant to support the educational progress of their children. Therefore, it is extremely important that parents should work collaboratively with teachers in order to assist the teachers in implementing and adapting effective reading instruction frameworks and strategies. According to Shernoff, Lakind, Frazier, and Jakobsons (2015), getting parents to assist teachers in implementing reading instruction strategies will enhance student achievement as well as schools’ test scores. In line with this observation, they noted that parents could facilitate the implementation of
effective learning strategies by providing learning environments at home, as well as encouraging their children to have positive attitude towards learning.

**Indirectly engaged parents.** Six participating teachers noted that parents of their students had indirect engagement to support literacy learning for their children. According to Linas and Aitken (2012), most children in urban elementary schools often have tough times developing reading comprehension skills because their parents do not collaborate with their teachers in order to design effective learning strategies. Most of the parents in urban settings are often overwhelmed with providing for their families, which makes it difficult to work collaboratively with teachers in order to assist their children toward the improvement of their reading comprehension. Rather, these parents provided indirect engagement, such as supporting their children with the completion of their literacy homework, reading to their children at home and providing print material in the home for their children to have access to.

**Disengaged parents.** Two participating teachers noted that some of the parents of their students were disengaged from the literacy learning of their children. Teachers described disengaged parents as wanting to support but not knowing how. According to Linas and Aitken (2012), in their study of competent communication in urban schools, examined the parents’ role in supporting teachers in the implementation of effective reading instruction strategies. They reported that parents in urban areas often need to become involved in their children’s learning by participating in parenting classes on child development, discipline, and expectations among others.

**Support source 5—The most supportive source.** Overall, the majority of participating teachers in this study indicated that the support they got from literacy
coaches was the most supportive in providing literacy instruction development for second-grade students. Most teachers taking part noted that as much as their principals give a lot of moral, material and financial support, it was the literacy coaches who went into their classrooms with them, to demonstrate for them how best to conduct lessons and set goals.

Additionally, only two teachers noted colleagues and grade-level teachers as the most supportive resource. One teacher, who taught in a school where the socio-economic status of her school population was the highest among the 10 teachers, stated that the parents are the most helpful resource in literacy instruction. She also asserted that that it was so encouraging to be able to consistently enlist the help of parents who always were helping in whatever way they could. She went on to say, that these same parents support students by giving additional instruction on literacy at home, which made the parents her most beneficial source of support in literacy learning. Socio-economics appears to be a factor in the level of support that these ten teachers found among the parents of their second grade students.

**Discussion of Theme 3: Effective Factors in Literacy Instruction Development**

Theme 3 corresponded with the question, “What did the participating teachers think about other factors, such as curriculum, classroom environment, and the relationship between teachers and their students that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their reading instruction strategies?” Teachers' perspectives’ and voices about other factors that influence literacy instruction development have been organized into four sections, which include: 1) Knowing about students’ backgrounds and their life
experiences, 2) The relationship between teachers and students, 3) Knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy and 4) Creating positive classroom environments.

**Knowing about students’ backgrounds and their life experiences.** First of all, knowing students’ background enables teachers to use the most appropriate ways of handling students. All ten teachers who participated in this study revealed that it is important for teachers to know and understand the personal history of their students if the literacy learning process is to be productive. Thus, when teachers recognize the importance of knowing about students’ backgrounds and their life experiences, they can use, find, or create effective literacy instruction strategies to work with all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. Rachel, Aaron, Peter, and Witt (2011), in their study of a population of urban students, found that the population of urban students is most often comprised of students who come from backgrounds that are highly diverse in cultural, ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic characteristics. For instance, most urban children enrolling in elementary schools are exposed to different language and cultural views at home; therefore, it could be challenging to develop literacy instruction strategies that capture all their views and expectations. Nonetheless, it is critical that teachers formulate and implement effective strategies that enhance reading skills in all their students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds.

**The relationship between teachers and students.** Secondly, the participating teachers had found that developing a good relationship between teachers and students is critical to improve literacy accomplishment for second-grade students. All ten participating teachers in this study agreed that a good relationship between teachers and their students is essential to build the trust of students in their teacher, to eliminate fear,
and to create a positive setting for literacy learning. As a result, it is difficult to teach students who dislike their teachers and do not trust them, so building a relationship with them is essential to foster literacy learning for second-grade students.

**Knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy.** Next, pedagogical skills and curriculum knowledge play a key role in literacy learning and development for students as asserted by the ten teachers who participated. For example, one teacher observed that the curriculum has many options to choose from and therefore one has to understand it comprehensively to ensure they give the students what is relevant to their grade level; Furthermore, the curriculum contains different parts that a teacher must put together to have complete understanding of how to apply it in giving instruction to learners. Two other participating teachers noted that the curriculum offered them freedom, so that they could choose the best approach for literacy learning and development for the students, and they could focus on different issues every week, such as having the main story vary weekly. Thus, the curriculum provided opportunity for teachers to step out of the normal class schedule, to enable them provide different literacy activities, such as reading a story book at an individual or group levels.

The participating teachers indicated that the policymakers on curriculum or those with authority over curriculum implementation in their school districts recommended that teachers should use all the requirements, options, or provisions of the curriculum before stepping out of or beyond it. One of the participating teachers asserted that the district curriculum and the pedagogical strategies provided in it worked well for some students while others were not able to cope or handle it since it was very intensive or demanding. Apparently, according to the particular participating teacher, the prescribed curriculum
did not give students space or time to go out to play, which had a negative impact on their mental and physical health. Those students who were unable to cope with the curriculum demands ended up with behavior problems. Based on such observations and findings, many scholars and policymakers on curriculum have come to agree that the formulation and adoption of effective reading instruction practices and strategies in elementary schools should be a priority because they could facilitate the improvement of literacy skills and confidence in learners (Zhang, 2010; McKeown, Beck & Blake, 2010; Rich & Pressley, 2010).

Creating positive classroom environments. Finally, all ten teachers who participated in this study supported the design and creation of a positive classroom environment that makes students feel comfortable, have a sense of belonging as well as safety. The participating teachers listed a variety of ways this can be achieved, i.e. by ensuring a clean environment, having enough lighting, having enough space among other things, fostering friendly and respectively relationships between all students and their teacher. For example, making and creating appropriate environments for improving students’ achievement in literacy by teachers who have help from literacy coaches is particularly possible because literacy coaches are often in the position and capable of exploring, analyzing, and reconstructing or rebuilding effective learning environments that facilitate and help students to engage in meaning making and reading comprehension processes. The findings by Reid (2013) and Taylor and Duke (2013), found that literacy coaches are excellent teachers who not only understand how children learn, but also know how to facilitate the creation of an environment that meets students’ social-emotional and instructional needs. Therefore, most findings seem to agree that literacy
coaches could support teachers in various ways in order to help them adapt and implement effective literacy instruction strategies in a positive classroom environment.

**Discussion of Theme 4: Challenges and Difficulties**

Theme 4 corresponded with the question, “What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective reading instruction strategies? and How did you respond to these challenges?” Based on the analysis done in the previous chapter, it appears that challenges with implementing the most effective literacy instruction strategies in this study can be organized into four emergent ideas: 1) Issues of time, 2) Students' behavior, 3) Students’ demographic challenges and 4) Parents' support.

**Issues of time.** A total of four participating teachers participated noted that the time they had at their disposal to teach was never sufficient to allow implementation of a good number of useful literacy instruction strategies. Further, they asserted that for individualized instruction, a lot of time is needed, given that the most effective instruction strategies have several teaching and learning activities. These activities include taking tests, doing assignments, doing math and even practicing the language, all of which take considerable time is needed. However, wasted time can be made up for by being smart about the usage of time in teaching students across the grades through guided reading and working with the students. Several researchers support these participating teachers’ voices about time as one of challenges that impacts literacy learning and achievement for students. For example, in his study of the effectiveness of using explicit instruction on literacy comprehension to improve reading comprehension strategies, Price (2012) examined how students could benefit from explicit instruction strategies in elementary schools. He found that students who take their time to understand and apply...
the explicit instruction strategies introduced by their teachers in the classroom often experience significant improvement in reading comprehension and fluency.

**Student behavior and demographic challenges.** In addition, teachers also experience difficulty with implementing practical literacy instruction approaches owing to the behaviors of students who have different cultural backgrounds. The difference in nurturing would occasion some students to stay out of class for long hours; others need to be enticed to learn while other students keep changing their moods. These put together with other programs such as field trips, meetings, and school assemblies consume a considerable of time that could otherwise be used for literacy learning. This challenge, however, can be defeated by creating remedial coaching outside the regular class hours to make up for the time lost as well as making the learning process interesting for grade two learners.

**Parents’ support.** Support teachers get from parents as well presents a challenge in literacy development. Teachers expect that while students go back home, parents should back them up by encouraging them to read. This is not always the case, particularly in cases where parents are unable to read or write. Such parents just won't know how to help the learners and students. Under such circumstances, the parents cannot read with their children while they are at home. The problem and the challenge, therefore, is the social and economic backgrounds of such parents who want their students to succeed. They are so willing to offer help only that they do not know how to go about it. For example, according to Topping, Duran, and Van (2015), in their study of using peer tutoring to improve reading skills and a practical guide for teachers, teachers
must first concentrate on securing the confidence of parents, and then work with parents on ways they could support the literacy development of their students.

The analysis of the outcomes of this study demonstrates that, according to the perspectives of the ten participating second grade teachers, applying the best literacy learning program or strategies must go beyond the limitations of classroom activities to include curriculum design that takes into consideration time available for its implementation, support from all participants, creating the best environment for learning and benefiting from the resources that are most helpful.

**Implications for Stakeholders**

The previous section provided an in-depth discussion and interpretation of the results of four themes that emerged from the data that could be used to address the underlying issues currently being faced by teachers at the elementary school level. This section will present the researcher's voice related to a number of the points that were discussed previously with recommendations to the stakeholders, such as districts, principals, teachers, and parents in order to facilitate the creation of stronger and more effective work environments in schools.

**Utilizing the Strength of Veteran Teachers**

As a result of these findings, I believe that the effective literacy instruction strategies, beside other support resources and factors, played an important role in developing children’s literacy achievement. All ten participating teachers had a strong background about how to develop the literacy skills of their students through effective literacy instruction strategies, effective support that they received from a variety resources, and other factors that allowed them to improve their literacy instruction. Three
of the ten participating teachers were veteran teachers and they had long and rich experience with teaching literacy in elementary schools. They had an extensive background about several types of effective literacy instruction strategies, about how to benefit from different resources of support to develop the literacy of their students, about the implications of their students’ demographic backgrounds, how to address their students’ challenges to improve their achievement in literacy, and about the different challenges that faced them daily and how they chose to respond. These three teachers had been working to develop their expertise in this area for thirty years, and they were highly effective with teaching literacy through a broad range of literacy instruction approaches.

Accordingly, in light of the teachers’ experiences and voices, I have considered how a district benefits from veteran teachers’ experiences and how new teachers learn from them. Districts should work to support their highly effective veteran teachers to stay in education instead of retiring or moving on to another profession. For example, districts should hire their veteran teachers train and prepare new teachers for the practice of teaching through workshops and special courses. Also, the district should invite them to prepare and present model lessons, and then the new teachers can observe them. In addition, districts and schools can express their appreciation for the veteran teachers in a variety of ways. For instance, districts could name some programs or schools’ libraries after veteran teachers’ name. Consequently, I believe that it is a significant matter to hear the teachers’ voices, especially veteran teachers, and learn from their voices just how to develop students’ learning in several respects, such as in their literacy learning and their discipline or behavior issues.
Given the significance of the strengths that the veteran teachers in this study exemplified for both their school and classroom environment as well as the literacy development of their students, it would be valuable for their principals to discuss literacy development issues with them, taking into account the power that their years of effective teaching can have in the learning lives of their fellow teachers and the student they serve. Areas that their principals might focus on are training new teachers, effective and appropriate literacy instruction strategies which work with all students and facilitating implementation of those strategies. As veteran teachers 3 stated,

We do have the building team that we can meet with up where we meet with the principal, the school social worker, and other professionals that come together to talk about a child and what their needs are, and then we all brainstorm ideas on how to help them (Teacher 3).

I mean it’s so important to work with other teachers, to work with your principal, to work with any professional you can get your hands on, the reading specialist that comes to the building. It’s real important to have those people (Teacher 3). Principals that have been very supportive and have time for you, I can go in and brainstorm with him. I can sit down and talk with him and come up with ideas and he's got a lot of good ideas (Teacher 3).

Consequently, if school principals can empower their veteran teachers in seeing best solutions for the issues surrounding improvement of literacy development in their schools, then teaching and learning maybe improved for both teachers and students.

Veteran teachers 4 elaborated on the importance of teachers being invited to find solutions to the literacy issues that many children and their teachers face.
He doesn’t have a whole lot of educational background, like as in a classroom. And so I feel that he really puts a lot of his faith into his teachers and their mentors and really has high hopes for what we do, and really feels like, gives us kind of the reins to do what we need to do (Teacher 4).

Work with veteran teachers needs to include respect for their experiences so that school can benefit from them, especially regarding students' development. For instance, veteran teachers are highly experienced in teaching and addressing the needs of their students, so they understand students and know that the mystery to building teacher-student relationships rests on building trust and following this with the design and implementation of interesting and engaging lesson and interesting lessons. Calling on veteran teachers as potential leaders in their schools allows veteran teachers to work with their fellow teachers as a group to engage in learning about relationship building with students and effective curriculum design.

You cannot teach a child who does not trust you. You cannot teach a child who does not like you (Teacher 4).

So that’s where the relationship works so you can implement the strategies (Teacher 4).

Finally, it is vital to respect the years of teaching and learning among veteran teachers. Certainly, in the education field, it is important for the stakeholders—teachers, principals, parents and community—to recognize that we are fortunate to work with our veteran teachers as leaders, to learn from their experiences and to pass on their wisdom and effective practices. It is important to promote these relationships with them to have insight into their significant work and support students learning development.
What We Have to Learn from the Ten Elementary School Teachers’ Voices in this Study Regarding Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies

This aids to prove and explain that in making effective decisions about literacy instruction strategies, the teachers are an important factor toward the increase of the students’ achievement in literacy. The teachers have participated in special training in the development of the literacy skills of students and have worked with specialists, such as literacy coaches and veterans teachers. Ten participating teachers were identified by their principals and peers as effective teachers of literacy in their Midwest elementary schools, with their expertise and training, there would be an advantage in the teachers keeping a record of their observations about the students’ literacy achievement and responses in the classroom. Their records will allow them, as well as other teachers they have influence with, to find, implement or create effective literacy instruction strategies that work and enhance literacy skills in all their students, regardless of and in concert with their diverse backgrounds. For instance, the teachers may vary between effective literacy instruction strategies as well as what they provide for small group, whole group, or independent work according to what the students’ need to improve their literacy. Some of the effective teachers also understand and recommended that they should give the students free time to choose their books, and they encourage students to have interest in reading and in the books they choose, so the students may become good readers who also enjoy reading. Much of the strength in this group of ten teachers is found in the variety of their approaches to literacy.

I believe these various literacy strategies and their activities are the best way for students to develop their fluency and comprehension skills needed to read texts with ease, with accuracy, efficiently, comfortably, and with confidence. With this kind of varied
experience, students also develop motivation to read because they have confidence about their skills and performance.

**What We Have to Learn from the Ten Elementary School Teachers’ Voices in this Study Regarding Building Positive Classroom Environment as an Effective Factor in Literacy Instruction Development**

According to the participating teachers’ perspectives and voices, there were some factors that affected and supported them to adapt and implement efficient literacy instruction strategies, such as creating positive classroom environments. We see in these ten teachers that it is critical to care about the classroom environment as an essential factor to improve second-grade students’ achievement in literacy. Teachers should create a classroom environment, which promotes trust and comfort among their students. The ten teachers who participated in this study had developed a classroom environment that was helpful to the students, a peaceful place to learn, a fully trusting environment where students cooperated with each other, built friendships, and loved to learn. Considering the success of the teachers who participated in this study, it is important to note that for teachers to be successful and effective with literacy instruction through various approaches, strategies, and activities, that teachers should be familiar with the strategies and the kind of environment that must be developed for success with these instructional strategies. Thus, teachers who are searching for ways to enhance their instruction, would do well to examine the kind of literacy instruction strategies and classroom environment these ten teachers are advocating.

Moreover, the teachers have the expertise and do the planning and observation that have been described here. For example, these teacher have to be organized in their planning of the literacy activities in their classroom environment that aid students to
improve their literacy skills, such as building vocabulary, enhancing fluency, reading comprehension, working with whole group and small groups, dictionary usage, phonemic awareness and silent reading by using whisper phones. Learning about effective literacy instruction in inviting classroom environments can take place with several styles of teaching; it is not confined to one style or personality.

There is also the possibility to include workshop activities in a classroom environment that include students with their parents working together on a focused literacy project that the teachers have planned according to the students’ literacy needs and their parents’ abilities. The workshops should always be focused on the development of both the students’ skills in literacy and parents' abilities to support literacy instruction development for their children.

Additionally, where the children are concerned, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, it is most important to create a classroom environment that nurtures them, that builds trust in their teachers and each other, that inspires them to enjoy learning and be at school, and that motivates them to work independently on their own learning. The teachers in this study had developed this kind of environment and it was this environment that allowed the literacy instruction for second-grade to be successful and rich. The literacy instruction strategies combined with the collaborative environment produced a good place to motivate students to become strong readers because they encourage students to enjoy and practice their literacy skills through different types of teaching strategies. The literacy instruction strategies in the classroom environment should include fostering goals for each student regardless of his/her diverse background that are both sensitive and responsive to their needs, such as providing children with an appropriate
and comfortable place for reading in small groups, and giving them opportunities to practice and increase their achievement in several literacy skills in a supportive and enjoyable way.

**What We Have to Learn from the Ten Elementary School Teachers’ Voices in this Study Regarding Effective Support Resources in Literacy Instruction (Support from Parents)**

According to the participating teachers’ voices in this study and other studies about the support from parents to improve the literacy learning development for their children, the parents’ engagement is critical. In the beginning of this study, I believed that positive parents engagement develops not only student attendance and behavior but also positively impacts student achievement. I believed that parents’ engagement in literacy progress for their children can appear in two places—at home and at school. For example, parents can be involved in literacy improvement for their children at home by assisting them with homework, reading stories with them, and providing them with several kinds of books from the library. In addition, at school, for example, parents can support by attending their children’s conferences and discussing their children’s achievement in literacy with their teachers to learn how they can support their children’s development in literacy. Also, according to one participating teacher’s voice, parents can support and be involved by volunteering in the schools’ activities and events such as literacy night.

Importantly, teachers must take into our account the parents’ background and life experiences, such as their socio-economic status, their level of literacy and their potential impact to support literacy learning and development for their children.

Because of the differences in parents’ background and life experiences that were addressed in this study, the teachers’ voices about parents’ engagement to support
literacy learning is divided into three emergent ideas: direct engagement, indirect engagement and disengagement. First, according to the teacher voices in this study and several other studies, I believe that if the parents’ socio-economic status is high or middle, they will have direct engagement in literacy learning improvement for their children because they have the advantage of a strong educational background. Also, they have enough time to care for their children’s learning at school because their income allows for them to work fewer hours. For example, these parents can communicate with teachers and be involved in reading accomplishments for their children, such as by mail, voicemail, as well as a variety of literacy programs or websites. This aligns with what one teacher’s voice in this study asserted, that the parents were most supportive in literacy learning for their second-grade students because the socio-economic status of her school population was the highest among the ten teachers participating. So, their children were fortunate because their parents understood how to encourage and support their literacy learning.

Second, regarding the indirect engagement by parents in literacy learning for their children, according to the teachers’ voices in this study, these types of parents want to support the literacy development, but they don’t know how or they are not qualified to support their children toward an increase in literacy skills. For example, some of these parents do not have enough education or have different backgrounds that don’t allow them to educationally care for their children. Some of them are low-income; some didn’t do well in a formal educational setting as children and youth; some of them have children who are eligible for free and reduced breakfast and lunch at schools, and others are from linguistically different backgrounds, such as Spanish speaking parents. So, these types of
parents don’t have enough time and don’t have the same language experiences that allow them to support literacy learning and development for their children at home and school, even though they love their children and want them to be successful, they don’t know how.

Third, regarding the disengagement of parents in the literacy learning for their children negatively impacted the children’s accomplishment in literacy. According to the ten teachers’ voices in this study, the parents’ socio-economic status played a strong and clear role in the ability of the parents’ engagement or disengagement in their children’s literacy learning. Thus, in light of some teacher voices, I believe that the children from low-income families are more susceptible to delays in literacy learning at school because direct or indirect engagement from parents often would be limited due to parents who are either working several low-wage jobs or are not in full-time employment. So, for parents in these kinds of socio-economic circumstances, disengagement from literacy learning and development for their children is common, but the schools should encourage these parents to become involved in literacy learning in a variety of ways. For instance, schools should encourage these parents to be volunteers at school and then they earn points to gain rewards like educational materials and computers or tablets. Also, the school should involve these parents in school activities, such as organizing trips that give parents and teachers opportunities to engage in informal talk and discuss ways in which parents can support students’ learning in literacy. Taken together, I believe that these ways will play a role in reducing the discipline issues and increasing attendance rate of students, as well as improving students’ literacy accomplishments.

I believe that in light of the teachers’ voices in this study, this kind of support
from parents can be direct and indirect engagement through the schools' and teachers’
efforts to foster and encourage their direct and indirect engagement. For instance, at the
beginning, I believed that these parents have to be feeling appreciated by schools and
teachers since they try and struggle to support their children’s achievement in literacy.
Schools can effectively communicate with the parents who want to support, but they
often don’t know how. By creating teacher-parent programs or partnerships that are
targeted to assist and facilitate all parents and all teachers to be in contact and cooperate
about students’ literacy learning development.

Often these kinds of parents don't speak fluent English or they don't have
additional time. For example, districts, schools, and teachers should assist parents to
know how they can successfully support the literacy learning for their children through
holding workshops and meetings at schools, family centers and apartment complex
recreation centers where many bilingual families live. Also, according to one teacher’s
voice in this study, schools and teachers should invite and encourage these parents to
engage in the schools’ events, such as literacy nights.

Regarding the creation of workshops for parents to help them to foster literacy
development, there were similar circumstances in my country, which is the Kingdom of
Saudi Arabia (K. S. A). Eight years ago, elementary schools’ curricula changed, so the
parents (my mother and my sister were some of them) have faced some challenges and
difficulties in dealing with the new curricula. Thus, some districts have responded to
these challenges by holding several meetings and workshops for both parents and
teachers at the same time in an effort to teach them how to address the new curricula and
to provide them with the appropriate and effective strategies to do so. Also, the teachers
and the parents have established particular groups in a WhatsApp program in their
cellphones to discuss the homework and share their experience. As a result, the parents
observed significant progress in their children's literacy skills.

**What We Have to Learn from the Ten Elementary School Teachers’ Voices in this Study Regarding Some of Challenges and Difficulties**

The outcomes of this study reveal that applying best literacy learning programs
and practices must go beyond the confines of classroom activities to include curriculum
design that takes into consideration time available for its implementation, support from
all participants, creating the best environment for learning and capitalizing or benefiting
from the resources that are most helpful.

Even though it is never a target of qualitative research to generalize the findings
(Creswell, 2013), the results of this study are limited and narrow in application to the
participants studied. For instance, limitations to this study include restricted and limited
boundaries to validity. The lack of validity is the inability to generalize the results of this
study to other populations or individuals since the findings represent only the voices and
experiences of this study’s participants. At the same time, the study does provide results
that should be carefully considered by those who are concerned about enhancing the
literacy learning of children.

**Recommendation for Future Researchers**

Generally, the results of this study form a starting point for future research to
address further the key findings of this study. A main strength of this study is the
alignment and interface between the research topic, research participants, and research
methodology; this allowed for participants-centered interviewing, in which the interview
procedure was flexible enough to adjust to the individual experiences and interview style of the participants. This structured, yet individualized interview method also allowed for a great variety and range of data collection and explicit and impartial conversations with participants, especially veteran teachers, to occur during the interview process. This approach to data collection offered and provided the flexibility necessary for this qualitative study. In addition, given that little to no literature exists on the importance of veteran teachers' voices regarding literacy development for elementary school students, another strength of this research is that it is focused on a topic that has not yet been widely examined and investigated in the literature. This investigative study provides the position or stage from which to examine veteran teachers' voices to support literacy-learning development for second grade students and presents their literacy teaching experience. The depth of their understanding is clearly of great benefit, and it begins the question, "How do school districts keep benefitting from their veteran teachers instead of pressuring them to retire?"

Another strength of this research is the composition of the participant population. The participant population was comprised of effective teachers with wide range experiences and practices, and each of them had an advanced ability to discuss complex and rich facets of their experiences in teaching given their educational, experimental, and professional training.

Given the strengths of this study, it will be important to capitalize on these strengths while working to expand the research on this topic. Using a larger and more diverse sample size would allow for a quantitative or blended analysis related to the key findings of this study. For example, future researchers could use similar data tools, but
with a larger sample size. They could include different participants besides the teachers, such as principals or parents. So, it is apparent that somewhat similar experiences existed for the teachers who were interviewed for this study regarding their experiences in literacy teaching, but differences and deviations may be found with a different and larger sample. Future research would add more depth to what we understand regarding effective literacy development for students from the teachers’ perspectives.

The literature review highlighted numerous effective literacy instruction strategies and the different sources of support to improve literacy instructional strategies for second-grade students, though the participants in this study were mainly concerned with those in their immediate environment. Maintaining their children’s learning and providing opportunities for the development their achievement in literacy were issues that were present with each family. Recommendations for further research in this area would be a phenomenological study focused on learning what children’s and their parents’ voices have to contribute to our understanding effective literacy learning for second-grade students.

Future research should be done based on the gaps or other elements identified in this study and other studies that have been conducted before. For example, research should be conducted regarding teachers’ voice in this study about types of support from parents who live in poverty to improve literacy learning for their children. Also, another researcher may be able to use this study to focus on particular areas of this study, such as effective support or efficient elements to improve literacy learning for second-grades student.
In addition, future researchers could conduct this study by using additional tools, such as the observation of effective veteran teachers in their classroom environments in addition to interviewing them. Moreover, a future phase of research on effective literacy instruction development for second-grade students could incorporate and join quantitative methods in the methodology.

This study would come in handy to aid policymakers in education and organizations involved, such as schools and all other stakeholders, such as principals, veteran teachers, or others in designing and implementing the strategies that have been identified herein as well as developing an appropriate curriculum for second-grade students. Finally, it is imperative that a similar study is conducted on other grades to enable school systems to understand areas requiring adjustment as well as to help policymakers and education leaders design wholesome and nourishing curricula and strategies for building stronger teacher-student-parent relationships and nurturing classroom environments—all to enhance the literacy learning of our children.

**Implications of This Study for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

It is noteworthy that this study has enabled me to gain insight on how to utilize different perspectives or voices from veteran and effective teachers in a different setting from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A) elementary schools. Consequently, I also anticipate that in the future this study will be beneficial to the students who will be the future teachers of Arabic literacy in elementary schools in the K.S.A. Teaching literacy in both English and Arabic languages requires similar literacy skills, approaches, methods, strategies, and curricula. So, once future teachers know what works, they can apply and use these effective literacy instruction strategies to help children become strong readers,
and then make meaning of their development of effective literacy instruction strategies and how their future experiences can impact their professional development. Also, it is anticipated that based on these findings in this study, other teachers may be able to use the research regarding literacy instruction strategies, and seek the training and support to develop as effective teachers.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the results of this study suggest that a key message from effective and veteran teachers’ voices to other teachers, especially new teachers, is that adopting and implementing effective literacy instruction strategies, will allow them to benefit from several support resources and will create effective factors for literacy learning that will lead to improvement for their second-grade students. Addressing the support from parents can begin when school stakeholders, especially the principals and teachers understand and emphasize that the overall school and home environments greatly influence academic and behavior successes.

In regard to this study, the analysis and discussion of this study provides me with strong insight into effective and desirable practices of teaching through these ten teachers’ voices. I have learned that school leaders need to understand and perceive a learning institution as an organization that functions as a whole through the integration of its parts. As such, effective literacy instruction requires full collaboration from all concerned stakeholders—teachers, administration, parents and children.

In addition, I have learned that teamwork in school plays a significant role in enhancing progress in literacy learning for students’ achievement. Another important take-away from this study is that I have learned how to integrate effective instructional
strategies for literacy learning into practice to diagnose demographic challenges, such as those in elementary schools where much of their population lives in poverty.

The knowledge from this study's data collection, analysis, and discussion will help me in my professional practice in the future to better understand the roots of literacy learning and development and approaches to solving literacy learning problems. Moreover, it is worthwhile to hear from the teachers' perspectives and call attention to the idea that having a common vision is a probable way of overcoming issues that confront schools where the development of effective teaching practice is concerned, particularly schools that provide services for children whose families live in poverty.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Definition of Terms
Appendix A
Definition of Terms

Lexia: It is a program provides explicit, systematic, personalized learning in the six areas of reading instruction, targeting skill gaps as they emerge, and providing teachers with the data and student-specific resources they need for individual or small-group instruction.

START Early Literacy: It is an online assessment program for students in grades PK-3. This program uses a series of questions to assess a student’s early literacy. This program is designed to support teachers with individual student data quickly and accurately. It typically takes a student 10-15 minutes to complete an assessment and reports are available immediately upon completion.

LLI Test: It is a program designed to bring children up to grade-level performance in as little as 18–24 weeks. It is intense, focused small group instruction in reading and writing. It is designed for young children who struggle with reading and writing.

QRI Test: The Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), which is a test of a child’s ability to read aloud and retell what has been read. Readers are evaluated for accuracy, phrasing, retelling, and rate.

Running Records: It is a tool that helps teachers to identify patterns in student reading behaviors. These patterns allow a teacher to see the strategies a student uses to make meaning of individual words and texts as a whole.

NWEA/MAP Test: It is individualized measures of performance in reading, math and science. Tests are taken on the computer and the results help teachers, parents, and administrators improve learning for all students. Results help us make informed decisions that promote academic growth.

Smart Time: It means organize the time for literacy, math, and sciences

PVC Pipe/Whisper Phones: Devices made for children that are shaped like little telephones. They whisper in the bottom part of the “phone” and can hear themselves read, but no one else can hear them. PVC pipe is used to construct the “whisper phone.”
Appendix B

Interview Questions Protocol
Appendix B

Interview Questions

(Protocol)

Ten Elementary School Teacher Voices: How they Build Effective Literacy Learning in the Lives of their 2ND Grade Children
Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie

Co-Principal Investigator: Lynn Nations Johnson, Ph.D.

Co-Principal Investigator: Nancy Mansberger, Ed.D.

Date of Interview: __________________

Start time of session: _______________

End time of session: _______________

Interview Questions:

1. Which do you believe are the most effective reading instruction strategies and why?

2. Please, describe the support you receive from your principal, literacy coach, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your reading instruction strategies?

3. What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective reading instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?

Note: The researcher anticipates that additional sub-questions will emerge during the interview to encourage each interviewee to elaborate on each of their answers to the three main questions.
Appendix C

Informed Consent—Teacher Participants
Appendix C
Informed Consent—Teacher Participants
Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Co-Principal Investigator: Lynn Nation Johnson, Ph.D
Co-Principal Investigator: Nancy B. Mansberger, Ed.D.
Student Investigator: Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie
Title of Study: Ten Elementary School Teacher Voices: How they Build Effective Literacy Learning in the Lives of their 2\textsuperscript{ND} Grade Children

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled “Ten Elementary School Teacher Voices: How They Build Effective Literacy Learning in The Lives of Their 2\textsuperscript{ND} Grade Children.” This project will serve as Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie’s dissertation research project for the requirements of the Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will review the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
Most of the recommendations from research on the use of new strategies lack the teacher’s “voice” or the understanding of the teacher’s personal attributes and contextual perspective Minimal research attention has been directed towards research that directly interviews teachers about their understanding and thinking about effective reading instruction strategies and why they decide to use them in urban elementary schools. Through in-depth qualitative inquiry using a direct interview method for interviewing you in your role as a second grade teacher, we will attempt to learn about and to uncover the various experiences, opinions, and perceptions you have regarding your effective approaches to teaching reading, embracing new strategies as well as the influence or support they get from their peers, literacy coaches, principals, or parents related to their literacy teaching.

Who can participate in this study?
You can participate in this study if it interests you. Generally speaking, the participants in this study will be 10 second grade teachers who have been identified as effective and successful literacy teachers in their respective urban settings.

Where will this study take place?
This study will take place in the Midwest in urban locations with ten-second grade teachers in non-school sites, such as a university campus, a cafe, a park, or the teacher’s home. Each teacher will determine a non-school location that is convenient to him/her.
What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
All interviews will be tape-recorded and are expected to vary in length from one to two hours. The interviews will be informal and open-ended, and be carried out in a conversational style. Also, during the interview, I will take notes. Teachers will be reminded that breaks are allowed if they feel the need to do so. They will also be informed that to protect their identity, they need to provide a pseudonym and I will create them when doing analysis. Each participant will be provided with consent and told that they can withdraw from the study at any point.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
Participation in this study includes giving the researchers your permission to be participate in one interview and a possible follow-up interview if we need to clarify anything from the first interview. All interviews will be tape-recorded and are expected to vary in length from one to two hours. The interviews will be informal and open-ended, and be carried out in a conversational style. Also, during the interview, the researcher will take notes. You will be reminded that breaks are allowed if you feel the need to do so. You will also be informed that to protect their identity, you need to provide a pseudonym and the researchers will use your pseudonym when doing the data analysis.

What information is being measured during the study?
This is a study focused on what already exists in your literacy teaching life. The researchers are working to examine the patterns that exist across your experiences and those of nine other participating second grade teachers’ descriptions of their literacy teaching.

Most often, the perspective of the teacher is not included in literacy research. This study is about understanding your perspective as a second grade teacher who teaches literacy daily to your children.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no costs, other than your time, for participation in this study. Little to know risk exists in this study. For you, the risk and/or discomfort will be due to having to answer questions outside of their comfort levels. You will be supported and protected through the assurance that the interviews will be completely confidential.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
Through this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect about your literacy practices, your reasoning for your practices and what your sources of support are as you make daily literacy instruction choices. Through the direct interview process and the associated reflection about the interview, you the will potentially gain increased insights related to your own teaching practice. The researcher will also share the results of the study with you when the study is completed.
Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no costs other than your time, for participation in this study.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participation in this study. No one will be paid to participate.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie (graduate student investigator), Lynn Nations Johnson, Ph.D. (co-principal investigator and Nancy Mansberger (co-principal investigator) and other members of the dissertation defense committee will have access to the surveys. No other individuals will have access to these documents. Interviews of teachers will be conducted using pseudonyms; no real names will be used in the study. This is being done to protect your confidentiality.

Data will be collected using an audio recorder during the interview, and then the recording will be transcribed and analyzed. Once the data is transcribed and analyzed, both the record and the transcripts will be placed in a locked file cabinet in the WMU office of Lynn Nation Johnson (co-primary investigator). After 3 years’ time, the data will be shredded. Participating teachers will only be referred to by pseudonym in the data; therefore their participation will be kept confidential. No teacher names will appear anywhere in the data.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.
If necessary the investigator can also decide to stop participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the co-principal investigator, Lynn Nations Johnson at lynn.nations.johnson@wmich.edu. You may also contact the co-principal investigator, Dr. Nancy B. Mansberger at 269-387-4307 (office) or nancy.mansberger@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

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I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

________________________________________  ____________________________
Participant’s signature                          Date
Appendix D

Letter of Invitation to Principals
Appendix D

Letter of Invitation to Principals

Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Date ___________________________________

Dear Elementary School Principal,

I am conducting a study focused on getting the teacher’s perspective about effective literacy practices. In most of the research that has been done on effective literacy practices, the voice of the teacher is missing. This study is designed to bring the voices of ten teachers into the literacy research—their effective literacy practices, how they choose the practices they use and what the sources of support, learning and encouragement are for them in their daily literacy planning and teaching. These are the three main questions the interview will revolve around:

1. Which do you believe are the most effective reading instruction strategies and why?

2. Please, describe the support you receive from your principal, literacy coach, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your reading instruction strategies?

3. What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective reading instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?

I am asking each principal to consider who their most effective second grade teachers are where literacy practices are concerned. If you are interested to invite teachers in your school to participate, I will need you to prepare a short letter of support for this
research that I will forward to WMU’s Human Subject’s Review Board, so they know that you are aware of this research and support the study being conducted in your school.

Once each principal has identified who the teachers are that they believe would be best suited to participate in this study, I am asking the principals to invite those teachers to meet with me individually to learn more about the study and to decide if they want to participate. An Invitation to Participate letter will be provided for you to share with each prospective second grade teacher that explains the study and their role as participants.

If a teacher decides to participate, I will obtain their contact information and arrange for an introductory meeting. At the meeting I will share the study focus with them, as well as the consent document information. Each teacher will need to sign a consent form and then set a date and time for an interview at a time convenient to them AND at a time that does not intrude on the school day. In some cases a shorter follow-up interview may be needed to clarify some of what a teacher shared in the first interview.

When the study is complete, I will share the results with each principal and the participating second grade teachers.

I hope to hear from you soon. I would very much like to have an opportunity to interview one or more teachers at your school.

Thank you for your consideration,

Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie, Graduate Student Investigator

[To Be Printed on Departmental Letterhead]

Date _______________________________
Appendix E

Letter of Invitation to Second Grade Teachers
Appendix E

Letter of Invitation to Second Grade Teachers

Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Date ____________________________

Dear Second Grade Teacher,

I am conducting a study focused on getting the teacher’s perspective about effective literacy practices. In most of the research that has been done on effective literacy practices, the voice of the teacher is missing. This study is designed to bring the voices of ten teachers into the literacy research—their effective literacy practices, how they choose the practices they use and what the sources of support, learning and encouragement are for them in their daily literacy planning and teaching. These are the three main questions the interview will revolve around:

1. Which do you believe are the most effective reading instruction strategies and why?

2. Please, describe the support you receive from your principal, literacy coach, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your reading instruction strategies?

3. What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective reading instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?

I am asking each principal to identify who the second teachers are that they believe would be best suited to participate in this study, I am asking the principals to invite those teachers to meet with me individually to learn more about the study and to decide if they want to participate.
If a teacher is interested to participate, I will obtain their contact information from the principal the person who recommends the teacher to me and arrange for an introductory meeting. At the meeting I will share the study focus with the teacher, address questions and concerns, and will also share the Informed Consent document. Each teacher will need to sign a consent form and then set a date and time for an interview at a time convenient to him/her. AND at a time that does not intrude on the school day is not during the school day. The interview location will also be a place that is convenient for each teacher, but interviews will NOT be conducted in the school setting. In some cases a shorter follow-up interview may be need to clarify some of what a teacher shared in the first interview.

When the study is complete, I will share the results with each principal and the participating second grade teachers.

I hope to hear from you soon. I would very much like to have an opportunity to interview you, if you have interest.

Thank you for your consideration,

Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie, Graduate Student Investigator
Appendix F

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date: April 24, 2017

To: Lynn Nations Johnson, Principal Investigator
   Nancy Munsberger, Co-Principal Investigator
   Merfat Ayesh Alsabae, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 17-02-23

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project titled “Effective Literacy Strategies: The Perspective of Ten Urban Elementary Teachers” requested in your memo received April 17, 2017 (to recruit teachers outside of the school setting; to conduct interviews during non-school hours at a location outside of the school setting; and to conduct all communications with teachers through personal e-mails and phones, rather than using school e-mails and phones; to remove the recruitment letter to send to principals; to revise the recruitment letter sent to 2nd grade teachers; and to revise the consent document to reflect these changes.) have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: February 21, 2018