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Fifth Grade Teachers' Knowledge About Reading Instruction and Its Effects on Classroom Literacy Practices and Reading Achievement

Susan M. Dirnbeck
Lindenwood University

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by

Susan M. Dirnbeck

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Dr. Vanessa Cochran, Dissertation Chair — Date: 5-6-16

Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, Committee Member — Date: 5-6-2016

Dr. Beth Ann Kania-Gosche, Committee Member — Date: 5-6-16

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Susan Marie Dirnbeck

Signature: Susan Marie Dirnbeck Date: 5/6/2016

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to discover the effectiveness of then-current teaching practices in fifth grade classrooms and to determine whether any of the strategies or practices observed yielded higher student achievement results than others. The researcher observed and recorded evidence of the use of the most effective practices, as identified by the Writing and Reading Observation Tool (WROT). Teachers' scores obtained on the WROT were compared to the percentage of students reading at a proficient level, as measured by the Scholastic Reading Assessment. If high scores on the WROT indicated the use of effective teaching practices, then the level of reading should be proficient, as measured by the SRI.

A second measure to provide evidence to support the purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the beliefs and practices of teachers pertaining to reading instruction, as measured by the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment, the NELTA. The total score on the NELTA was a measure of the degree of grade level literacy expertise a teacher mastered and included sub-scores related to exemplary teacher practices. The researcher compared results to determine if there was a relationship between teacher scores on the WROT and the NELTA and student growth in reading, using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) analysis.

While the data showed no statistically significant differences in academic achievement in the area of literacy regardless of scores on either tool used in the study, observations and qualitative data provided important information for future studies and professional development planning. Administrators and teachers can study, apply, and

observe the strategies relevant to the reading achievement of fifth grade students in order to strengthen the teachers' instructional practices.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

Reading creates independence and gives a person power; the right and responsibility of every teacher and student is to teach and learn to be someone who can independently read and express his or her own thoughts (Smith, 1994). Over two decades ago in his book, *Understanding Reading*, Smith (1994) wrote that teachers must encourage, teach, and develop independent reading comprehension in the classroom by teaching students to decode fluently, and to gain information through reading and comprehending independently. Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) noted that teachers and administrators must identify, require, and replicate effective reading strategies, because teacher evaluations and rehiring were increasingly dependent on student success outcomes.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1998) challenged educators to instruct diverse groups of students successfully in diverse and challenging climates. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 put this challenge into reality when the Reading First Initiative was developed. This required teachers who received grant money to implement the initiative to use scripted programs to teach reading, especially in schools identified as high poverty, low achieving schools (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001). However, despite directives and monitoring, a large study conducted by the Institute of Educational Sciences (2008) reported that the schools granted funding for the implementation of the mandates of NCLB had no higher reading scores than those that did not receive funding. Additionally, in a recent study of 957 students from kindergarten through second grade in 16 schools in seven school districts

in one state, it was determined that students in highly scripted programs experienced lower growth in reading achievement than those in less scripted programs (Amendum & Fitzgerald, 2013). The teacher, not the program, must be the expert in the classroom (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) reported that the NCLB Act of 2001 required teachers to teach phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension with equal emphasis; this type of instruction eliminated rigor and relevance from most school curricula. Darling-Hammond (2010) reported that the world had changed and so had the requirements for student success, so that contemporary students must graduate with the ability to be successful in a global economy. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), established by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2010, emphasized higher-level comprehension skills necessary for all students to successfully meet the competitive job requirements of the 21st century (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). In the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President of the United States, Barack Obama, initiated federal grants in a program entitled Race to the Top; schools initiated new reading program components to compete for these grants, with the goal to increase student success and raise the achievement levels of students across the nation (USDOE, 2009). The state of Missouri developed a competitive Top 10 by 20 initiative and schools across the state began changes in curriculum and instruction to reach the goal of being one of the top 10 states in regard to student achievement by the year 2020. (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2015) Teachers and administrators in districts across the state implemented higher reading standards, rewritten curriculum, realigned

assessments, and increased professional development. However, test scores on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) showed that students across the state continued to struggle with higher level thinking skills and reading comprehension; 36.3% of fourth and eighth-grade students in Missouri were proficient in reading (MODESE, 2015).

The Missouri State Standards, which at the time of this writing encompassed the CCSS, required students to be able to independently read and comprehend texts of increasing levels of difficulty in order to compete with other students across the nation and the world and obtain jobs and success in the 21st century (MODESE, 2015). Calkins et al. (2012) reported that if studied and implemented well, the CCSS could enable teachers in all states to meet the demands required for success.

Statement of the Problem

Smith (1994) stated that the ability to read was an enormous, empowering, and necessary skill, and in spite of the difficulties that many children had when learning to read, there was really nothing unusual about the task. In fact, Smith (1994) stated, if a child can see and can understand familiar language there, is no special brain development necessary for that child to learn to read. However, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2011), less than one third of students in grades four, eight, and 12 scored at proficient levels on the national reading assessment. According to the NAEP (2013) results, reading scores remained unchanged from 2011and increased by only four points over scores recorded in 1992. Furthermore, dashboard reports of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (MODESE) Missouri State Assessment Program (2014) showed only 50.7% of the fifth-grade students scored at or above proficiency on the state reading assessment in 2014, showing a decrease in

scores from 2013 when 53% of the students scored in the proficient level (MODESE, 2014). According to the Institute of Educational Sciences (2008) results of the NCLB Act of 2001 and the Reading First Initiative that supported it, did not produce the desired increases in achievement. Furthermore, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2015), Race to the Top initiatives established through the most recent revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2009), at the time of this writing, had not created desired results; students continued to struggle to reach desired levels of proficiency in reading achievement.

The U.S. Department of Education (2002) developed Reading First funding to support the NCLB Act of 2001, which was the reorganization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. According to the Institute of Educational Science (2008), this program targeted for high poverty, low achieving schools required the teachers in these schools to use a scripted basal reading program and follow it verbatim during scheduled reading instruction. However, results did not show that students who participated in the programs made higher achievement gains than those who did not. Later, research of Torgesen, Castner,Vartivarian, Myers, and Haan (2007) supported these results that showed little or no difference in the reading achievement of these students, as compared to students who were not mandated to learn to read from such scripted programs. In the researcher's experience, the district in this study also implemented more scripted instruction, beginning in 2006, with similar results, according to state reading assessment scores reported by MODESE (2014). Swanson Solis, Ciullo, and McKenna (2012) reported that although best practices for reading instruction were identified, it was important to determine if these practices were implemented in

classroom instruction. The earlier research of Smith (1994), along with other more contemporary studies reported by Amendum and Fitzgerald (2013), showed that the interactions between the teacher and the students, rather than any purchased program, worksheet, or drill, were the necessary requirements for the development of independent readers.

Like many others in the nation, the district in this study had recently developed and adapted a new teacher evaluation tool. Additionally, time was provided for district professional development for all teachers. In spite of the work and dedication of the administrators and teachers, scores in reading achievement were unstable and inconsistent, as measured by the MAP and located on the state dashboard (MODESE, 2014). Scores on the 2014 state assessment core data (MO DESE, 2014) showed 41.8% of the fifth-grade students to be proficient in communication arts. This was a slight decrease from the scores obtained in 2013, when 45% of the fifth-grade students earned proficient and advanced scores, and also a slight decrease from scores reported in 2012, which showed 43.6% of the fifth-grade students were proficient and advanced in communication arts.

In the experience of the researcher, district data indicated that students scored below grade level on state and local assessments though interventions for struggling readers, professional development, basal instruction, increased teacher autonomy, and new materials were all implemented. More than half of the students in the district in the study entered middle school as struggling readers. Educational research regarding effective literacy strategies was available to all teachers, but did not change practices (Hattie, 2009). Identifying, implementing, and monitoring the best strategies and

practices for accelerating and maintaining reading proficiency was crucial for students to be prepared and successful when they graduated (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008). Teachers, district, and school leaders needed to identify, learn, and support those practices and eliminate other established practices (Hattie, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

Stronge et al. (2011) reported that if successful strategies were identified, they should be replicated. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to discover the effectiveness of then-current teaching practices in fifth-grade classrooms and to determine whether any of the strategies or practices observed yielded higher student achievement results than other observed practices. This was accomplished by observing and recording evidence of the use of the most effective practices, as identified by the Writing and Reading Observation Tool (WROT) (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Teachers' scores obtained on the WROT were compared to the percentage of students reading at a proficient level, as measured by the Scholastic Reading Assessment. If high scores on the WROT indicated the use of established effective teaching practices, then the level of reading should be proficient, as measured by the SRI, where effective practices are observed (Swanson Solis, Ciullo, & McKenna, 2012).

A second measure to provide evidence to support the purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the beliefs and practices of teachers pertaining to reading instruction, as measured by the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment (Block & Mangieri, 2009). The total score on the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment (NELTA) was a measure of the degree of grade level literacy expertise a teacher mastered and included sub-scores related to teacher practices in the areas of

motivation, building relationships with students, selecting materials for instruction, creating learning environments, designing lessons, and re-teaching (Block & Mangieri, 2009). In Hattie's 2009 meta-analysis report spanning 30 years and millions of students, Hattie found that nine of the 13 practices with the most significant influence on student achievement were dependent on the skills and practices of the teacher. If the beliefs and practices of effective teachers could be defined and quantified, then the practices of these teachers should be shared and replicated (Marzano et al., 2001). In this study, the scores on the NELTA were compared to the practices observed in the classroom and the SRI reading achievement scores students earned, to determine if higher scores on the NELTA equated to higher scores on the WROT and the SRI.

The district studied supported the implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI). According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (2010), one of the characteristics of an RtI design was the implementation of high quality evidence-based core instruction that met the needs of most students. Through interviews, observations and self-assessments, this study captured what teachers described as best practices and strategies to yield high-quality core instruction and determined the extent and success of implementation of these practices in the classroom.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What components of best teaching strategies for teaching reading aligned with the Writing and Reading Observation Tool are apparent in classroom observations?

Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between the teacher's self-assessment, the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment profile, scores on the

Writing and Reading Observation Tool, interview responses, and student achievement in reading as determined by the Scholastic Reading Inventory? If so, what types of relationships, and to what degree are they apparent?

Research Question 3. Do scores on the second application of the WROT increase after teachers are given the results of the first WROT and the NELTA? If so, what responses to teacher interview questions and classroom observations provide evidence that receipt of the first WROT score promoted teacher reflection upon classroom teaching strategies?

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be a relationship between the number of Writing and Reading Observation Tool best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score on the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment and student growth in reading achievement, as measured by pre and post scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory

Hypothesis 2. There will be a difference in reading achievement, as measured by percent of proficiency on post-SRI scores compared to percent of proficiency on pre-SRI scores (Proficiency was defined as a score of 870-980).

Hypothesis 3. Students of teachers with higher NELTA scores will exhibit a greater growth in reading achievement throughout the study period, as measured by post-to-pre SRI score comparison than students of teachers with lower NELTA scores.

Importance of the Study

Researchers including Hernandez (2011) and Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne (2010) reported that poor readers in third grade later dropped out of high school. Furthermore, Calkins et al. (2012) reported that students who graduated without strong

reading and writing skills could not compete successfully with others for employment opportunities, and thus, had limited choices for adult employment. While research showed repeatedly that effective reading lessons include teaching, modeling, guided practice, and repeated checks for understanding, these essential aspects of teaching were implemented inconsistently and infrequently (Schmoker, 2011). Good teachers make the biggest difference in student achievement, more than any curriculum or materials used for instruction (Allington, 2002).

Unsatisfied with the low results recorded in reading and writing in public schools following the NCLB Act of 2001, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included funding in a grant initiative entitled Race to the Top, which supported educational reform in efforts to improve long-term gains for students (USDOE, 2009). Additionally, new standards were proposed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) and resulted in the writing of common standards known as the Common Cores State Standards, which were adopted by most states across the nation (USDOE, 2009). As educators began to implement these more rigorous and universal standards, it was important to evaluate what was important in teaching students to read (Calkins et al., 2012). Observation tools provide a method to record, document, and review opportunities for students to learn the skills needed for success in their lives, as well as on required state assessments (Vaughn & Briggs, 2003).

MODESE (2013) reported achievement results in reading, indicating that almost half of fifth-grade students entered middle school lacking the reading basics necessary for optimal achievement. SRI scores reported by the district in study indicated that over 50%

of the students in fifth-grade were not proficient readers. Schmoker (2011) reported that every year teachers learn new strategies, implement new programs, learn new technology, and practice and apply new initiatives, but what students learned was consistently dependent upon the skills of the teacher to which he or she was assigned. Therefore, it was important that essential and successful skills were identified, defined, and replicated across classrooms (Marzano et al, 2001).

Block and Mangieri (2003) conducted research to determine the qualities of highly effective classroom reading teachers. As a result of their research, they developed the NELTA, which they revised in 2009 (Block & Mangieri, 2009). This self-assessment helped teachers recognize and review or refine effective practices within their instruction. The assessment contained questions related to characteristics of exemplary teachers at each grade level from pre-kindergarten through secondary grades (Block & Mangieri, 2003). When teachers completed the assessment, they could compare their practices to the exemplary practices defined and described for each grade level and use the information as a tool to set personal goals for improved classroom instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2003). It was imperative that teachers recognize, learn, and repeat successful practices and share them with other teachers to enable more students to be successful (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many 2010). According to Block and Mangieri (2003), the NELTA was first developed in response to the challenge posed by the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future (1998) to "prepare a new kind of teacher- one who must think harder, longer, deeper- in order to instruct diverse learners in responsive and responsible ways"(p.9). Block and Mangieri (2009) continued their research and refined the NELTA self-assessment to provide teachers with extended and

then-current knowledge of their own practices, so they could better align their practices and learn or practice other strategies that matched the researched characteristics of exemplary teachers at each specific grade level.

This study may contribute to research by providing a qualitative, detailed description of fifth-grade teachers' perceptions about the practices that defined high quality reading instruction for fifth-grade students in a suburban setting. Through this study, teachers have access to the WROT checklist and to their NELTA scores, tools to assist them in self-reflection and professional growth. Hattie (2009) reported that when teachers could describe success, they were usually left alone with no follow up observations for evidence. This study defined best practices in reading instruction as described through participating teacher interviews and self-assessment, used observations recorded on the WROT to note the amount and type of best practices implemented in the classroom, and compared scores on the observation form and self-assessment to the percentage of students proficient in reading achievement as measured by Lexile scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) assessment. Evidence of best practices observed in the classroom was compared to the percentage of students who were proficient readers, as measured by a Lexile score obtained through the SRI assessment. This secondary data, the Lexile score, was a measure of a student's reading comprehension and served as the measure of reading achievement used in this research. Classroom levels of reading success were recorded as the percentage of proficient students in the classroom, according to the results of the SRI assessment. SRI scores were aligned to the more rigorous and higher expectations outlined in the Common Core State Standard expectations developed by the National Governors Association for Best Practices,

Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) and included in the Missouri Learning Standards, defined by MODESE (2015).

Successful implementation of the CCSS required all teachers and school districts to examine practices and curriculum and make necessary revisions (Calkins et al., 2012). This study examined practices observed in some fifth-grade classrooms in one Midwestern suburban school district and the effect of those practices on reading achievement. In the researcher's experience, results of the state assessment (MODESE, 2014), as well as the SRI assessments used at the district level indicated that the district studied struggled to maintain or significantly increase scores in English Language Arts.

Self-reflection by teachers should lead to changes in instructional practices to improve the provided instruction (Hall & Simeral, 2015). In the researcher's experience, district-wide professional development in RtI, goal setting with students, setting learning targets, work in grade level teams, and other district professional development had not resulted in expected increases in test scores. Teachers, principals, and administrators in the district in this study were discouraged by the results reported on assessments but continued efforts to meet the needs of all students and obtain measures of success. According to the guidelines of the district in this study, 90 minutes of the elementary day were devoted to Tier One reading instruction, or core reading instruction. Fifth-grade teachers could not waste a minute of instructional time; the need for consistent reading instruction was essential as students approached middle school, where the focus was content area instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2003). Students must be able to read higher levels of text with efficiency and understanding in order to be successful readers and contributors to society (Schmoker, 2011).

Definition of Terms

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): The National Governors Association for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers (2010), established the CCSS, a reform set of standards defined by Calkins et al. (2012) these standards, written to guarantee that all students would be college and career ready when they graduated from high school, were adopted by the majority of the states across the U.S. In Missouri, these standards replaced the state standards and were incorporated along with other educational standards and defined as the Missouri Learning Standards (MODESE, 2014).

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Missouri, still in existence at the time of this writing, was known as MODESE. It was the administrative division of the Missouri State Board of Education. Its function was to provide a successful public education to all Missouri students from early childhood through adult education opportunities. This was accomplished through work with legislators, community members, and government agencies. MODESE determined, regulated, and operated Missouri public school improvement initiatives (MODESE, 2015).

Evidence-based reading instruction: The United States Congress requested the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) to work with the U.S. Department of Congress to convene the National Reading Panel (NRP), in order to define evidence-based reading instruction; instruction that the teacher provided that was based on practices that had been researched and reported as effective. The panel studied research on programs, products, practices, and policies in education. The panel reviewed all available research about how children learned to read, determined and described

effective methods of reading instruction, and proposed a plan for additional research. They completed their work in April, 2000 (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHHD], 2000). Teachers who wanted to be informed of best practices must commit to studying and applying the researched practices reported in journals and textbooks that were continuously revised as the research was expanded and updated (Pressley, 2007).

International Literacy Association (ILA): This association, still in existence at the time of this writing and known for over 60 years as the International Reading Association (IRA), was an international organization that advocated for global literacy. It members included over 300,000 literacy teachers, researchers, and experts in the field of literacy education. The organization published research that could be used in practical applications by teachers and students. The organization set standards for literacy professionals and teacher education programs. Additionally, the organization advocated for legislation, funding, and policies that supported literacy, teachers, and students around the world (as cited in International Literacy Association, 2015).

Missouri Learning Standards: The Missouri Learning Standards included the CCSS, still in use at the time of this writing, with other standards related to content in subject areas, other than English Language Arts and Mathematics (MODESE, 2015).

National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment (NELTA): Developed and defined in *Exemplary Literacy Teachers* by Block and Mangieri (2003) and revised with the same title by Block and Mangieri (2009), the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment (NELTA), at the time of this writing, was a 12-question multiple-choice assessment that provided data about instructional practices. The NELTA required

teachers to answer multiple-choice questions that measured the way teachers interacted with students, chose materials for students, created learning environments, and developed lessons. A total score was reported; this score aligned to abilities and skills exhibited by expert teachers researched as most effective at each particular grade level (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Response to Intervention (RTI): Response to Intervention, still widely used by school districts at the time of this writing, was a systematic practice of providing assistance to students who were having difficulties learning to read. RtI was defined as early intervention provided for students assessed to have reading difficulties (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010).

Scholastic Reading Inventory: Scholastic, Inc. (2011) Educator's Guide defined the SRI as an electronic normative reading comprehension assessment that provided immediate data concerning students' reading ability. The SRI was still in use at the time of this writing and required students to read short passages taken from authentic literature and non-fiction selections. The results provide each student with a Lexile number. This number was part of a common scale Lexile Framework that measures text difficulty and student reading ability.

Tier One Instruction: Tier One Instruction**,** according to the National Center on Response to Intervention (2010) was the instruction the general education teacher provided all students in the classroom, regardless of the individual student's reading abilities.

Writing/Reading Observation Tool (WROT): This Writing/Reading Observation Tool sorted classroom observations into categories and was used to tally the

number of times the practice was used during reading instruction. Based on the format of a previous tool, the Instructional Content Emphasis Instrument developed by Edmunds and Briggs (as cited in Vaughn & Briggs, 2003). Brian and Diane Bryant at the Meadows Center developed a reading classroom observation tool for Preventing Educational Risk (Texas Education Agency, 2012). In the experience of the researcher, the WROT tool was recently used in another research project in the district under study. A similar variation of this tool, the Reading Observation Tool (ROT) was also used in research (Swanson et. al., 2012).

Limitations

Conclusions of the study are limited by the singular setting of the study. Reading instruction provided by teachers in 14 fifth-grade classrooms in one district were observed, recorded, and analyzed in this research. A review of previous research found several examples of other small study samples. Swanson and Vaughn (2010) completed an observation study of reading instruction for elementary students with learning disabilities. Ten teachers from four school districts participated in the study. A study by Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, and Rodriguez (2002) examined effective reading instruction in elementary schools. Each teacher was observed for three 60-minute periods during the study. Five schools participated in a study by Firmender, Rice, and Sweeny (2012) that studied reading comprehension and fluency levels across diverse classrooms. Finally, Wanzek and Kent (2012) at Florida State University limited their study of reading interventions to students with learning disabilities in upper elementary grades.

Throughout this researcher's study, 42 observations were completed in 10 schools across the district. The number of observations that could be accomplished and analyzed

was limited by length of the observations, distance between schools, and time constraints. Participation was voluntary, which eliminated practices that could have been observed in other schools and classrooms in the district. Fifth-grade teachers participated in this research, because it was the last grade in the elementary schools in the district in the research. Like many districts, reading supports were limited in the middle schools where content area instruction was the focus and teachers expected students to be able to read in order to learn the content. Hernandez (2011) and Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne (2010) reported longitudinal studies that showed that students must be proficient readers by the end of third grade to increase their abilities to graduate from high school and be successful. Therefore, teachers must know how to increase the reading abilities of struggling readers in upper elementary grades (Stronge et al., 2011). In the experience of the researcher, it was important for fifth-grade students to participate in focused and structured reading instruction, because no formal reading instruction was available in the middle schools in this research. School and district calendars, reading schedules, and necessary travel time between schools limited the parameters of this study.

While the use of the observation form used in this research was reviewed and discussed with other researchers, the results of the study were limited because a sole researcher did the observations. This was compensated by the implementation of reliability checks on a random sample of the observations scored in the research. Observations were audio recorded for follow up as needed. Following reliability checks by researchers who had previous experience using the tool in other research and additional random reliability checks by certified reading specialists, the researcher

reviewed all observations and adjusted scoring based on scores obtained by reliability checks and follow up discussions with the observers.

Summary

This research focused on fifth-grade teachers, because fifth-grade was the last year that students spend in elementary school in the study district. When students entered middle school, they entered English Language Arts classes. Reading instruction was not the focus; English teachers expect students to be able to read proficiently and were not able to consistently meet the needs of struggling readers. It was advantageous for students to enter middle school prepared to meet the reading requirements of all content classes.

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001), Allington (2002), Hattie (2009), and Lemov (2010) along with other researchers showed that exemplary classroom instruction was essential for optimal student success. It was imperative that teachers knew and practiced strategies proven to be successful; observation tools and scoring guides provided information that could be analyzed for successful practices that should be replicated (Block & Mangieri, 2003). Teachers should take on the role of guides who help students comprehend complex texts and become critical thinkers; guides who are experienced and expert leaders who know and understand reading instruction and can share their expertise, so less knowledgeable teachers learn from expert leaders (Frey & Fisher, 2013b). There is no time to waste using ineffective strategies (Schmoker, 2011). Teachers must learn and implement successful strategies correctly and consistently; these strategies must be observed, taught, replicated, and monitored (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review provides the context for this research concerning best practices in literacy instruction. Teaching a student to read is the most important skill a teacher must master, as the ability to read creates independence (Smith, 1994). A definition of reading was synthesized to support the research and provide a common understanding for the reader.

Information in this brief historical account was provided to recognize that while the United States Constitution provided for an education for citizens, decisions regarding how students acquired knowledge were largely left to states and individual districts until late in the 20th century. To the extent possible, the historical account should provide the reader with an understanding that educational policies affected literacy instruction, making it important for teachers to understand the policies and help to shape them to enable students to benefit from participation in best practices in literacy education (Shanahan, 2014). Furthermore, the reader will realize that while best practices raise the expectations for student achievement they were built on pillars defined by the NRP of 2000 (Calkins et al., 2012).

The purpose of reading was described to inform the reader of the importance of reading mastery. Reading ability is necessary for the economy of the nation and personal goal attainment (Taylor, Raphael, & Au, 2011). Reading achievement in elementary school can predict a student's economic future (Shanahan, 2014).

The elements of reading were defined and described to provide the reader with knowledge of the complexity of learning to read. Comprehension, the goal of reading, is

attainable through the acquisition of the other components of reading. Deficits in one of the components can make the task of learning to read difficult.

With knowledge of the components, it is important to define exemplary instruction (Block & Mangieri 2003, 2009). This research attempted to identify these effective practices in fifth-grade classroom instruction. While the focus of the research was reading, writing supports reading and together, reading and writing instruction were combined into several effective researched instructional practices (Calkins et al., 2012). Teachers who implemented these practice provided exemplary literacy instruction to the students they served (Block & Mangieri 2003, 2009).

Chapter two concludes with a section concerning teacher efficacy. Teachers must believe that exemplary practices make a difference in student achievement (Allington, 2002). Confidence in the ability to do a job well builds success for teaching and learning (Kanter, 2006)

Reading Defined

In his book, *Teach Like a Champion*, Lemov (2010) defined "meaningful reading as reading that is accountable, moderately expressive, and highly leveraged" (p.255). Lemov (2010) further stated that each student had the responsibility to read texts accurately, fluently, and with comprehension. In its position statement on adolescent literacy, the International Literacy Association (2012) described reading as a complex process, "As adolescents prepare to become productive citizens, they must be able to comprehend and construct information using print and non-print materials in fixed and virtual platforms across disciplines" (p. 2). Musti-Rai and Cartlidge (2007) went so far as to describe reading as a survival skill, so essential because failure to learn to read well

during elementary school limited the chances of any student's future success in education and career choices.

History of Reading Instruction

Disagreement of best practices in literacy instruction can be traced back a century previous to this writing, when educators debated whether synthetic phonics, the study of the alphabet, was the preferred method of teaching children to read or if analytical phonics, the study of words before breaking them into sounds, was the better method (Pearson, Raphael, Benson, & Madda, 2007). Following World War II, politicians and educators debated whether to use books to teach phonics in a realistic manner or to continue traditional isolated phonics instruction (Pearson et al. 2007). Parents and educators debated about materials used to teach phonics since 1957, in debates focused on the emphasis of decoding or comprehension to teach students to read (Cunningham, 2007). As recently as the 1970s, it was still thought that if students could read the words, students would automatically comprehend the text (Cooper, 1993). This belief persisted until it was determined that many students who read all words accurately could not answer questions about the text.

Phonics, the ability to decode words, though often debated, was just one component of learning to read (Cunningham, 2007)

The United States Constitution granted the responsibility for education of students to state and local government, but state policies did not dictate how reading and writing would be taught (Shanahan, 2014). Each local school district made decisions regarding curriculum, practices, and materials until the federal government gained prominence in the field of education and reading policies in 1969, when the NAEP was published and

used to consistently monitor educational progress (Shanahan, 2014). Initially, the federal government required schools to monitor educational achievement and noted progress in federally funded Title 1 programs (Shanahan, 2014). The Reading Excellence Act of 1978 provided some federal funding for research-based programs and schools were required to monitor the achievement gains of students in federally funded Title 1 programs, but the federal government did not interfere with state policies of curriculum and instruction (Shanahan, 2014).

In the 1980s, California adopted a detailed prescriptive language arts curriculum, entitled the English Language Arts, based solely on a new method of reading instruction defined as whole language (Cassidy, Valadez, & Garrett, 2010). In a whole language approach, teachers taught students to read in whole group and small group instruction using books students liked and chose to read. This curriculum framework prohibited teachers from including phonics and other reading skills in their instruction (Pearson et al., 2007). Many states adopted the policies and proponents of whole language and argued successfully against the phonics emphasis in the reading instruction at that time (Cassidy et al., 2010). However, in 1992, the whole language approach lost credibility when the NAEP was compared across states for the first time and showed that achievement of students in California, where whole language practice predominated the curriculum, was lower than most of the states in the nation (Shanahan, 2014). The whole language curriculum had a short, strong emphasis in reading instruction before phonics again predominated reading instruction (Cassidy et al., 2010).

As early as the 1990s, several research studies showed that poor readers at the end of first grade did not become proficient readers by the end of elementary school and poor readers in third grade struggled to read adequately in high school (Fletcher et al., 1994). Supported by this research was Clay's (1993) reading intervention program, Reading Recovery, based on the work of Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development gained prominence (as cited in Clay). Dorn, French, and Jones, (1998) used knowledge of the zone of proximal development to establish an apprenticeship model of reading instruction focused on the practices of instruction of reading in small groups. Research centered on differentiation in small group instruction within the classroom that provided differentiation for readers (Reutzel, 2007). When teachers assisted students' learning in this zone of proximal development, or slightly above their then-current knowledge, students learned at increasing rates (Dorn et al., 1998).

Meanwhile, the U.S. government increased influence in educational policies concerning reading instruction (Cassidy et al., 2010). In 1997, the United States Congress formed a committee, the NRP, to study the collected research concerning the effectiveness of different approaches in reading instruction. The NRP recognized and supported five components of reading necessary for successful reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (as cited in Cassidy et. al., 2010). As a result of the report by the NRP in 2000, George W. Bush signed the NCLB Act of 2001, and the federal government began to mandate components and assessment of reading instruction (Shanahan, 2014). The federal government established Reading First grants to disseminate $1.0 billion-per-year, budgeted to support the NCLB Act of 2001, so all children could learn to read at or above grade level by the

end of third grade (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). The legislation confined grantees to the use of scientifically-based reading research and strictly mandated the specific activities that could be taught. Required reading instruction was defined by the literacy pillars outlined in the report of the NRP (Shanahan, 2014). The panel reported enough research to validate teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension as the required components of reading instruction, which became known as the five pillars of reading instruction (NICHHD, 2000). Therefore, teachers taught these five pillars in equally distributed and discrete lessons (Cassidy et al., 2010). No other literacy activities, including process writing, could be included during the mandated period of reading instruction (Calkins et al. 2012). States were required to develop their own reading assessments, assess all students in grades three through 12, and report the results of the assessments to show progress in reading achievement. As a consequence, many states lowered the standards they required in order to achieve high assessment results (Shanahan, 2014). Passing high stakes assessments became the focus of reading instruction in classrooms across the nation The NRP established research questions required when any research in the area of reading education was reviewed, and because of the narrow focus of these questions, many important studies were determined to be invalid and were eliminated because they could not be defined as empirical (Cassidy et al., 2010). This action caused controversy in the field of reading education since it was written. After three years of implementation, results of the federally funded structured Reading First program showed that there was no statistically significant increase in reading comprehension; isolated instruction in each pillar did not provide successful results (Cassidy et al., 2010). Regardless of the success,

the five pillars of reading defined by the NRP and the research that validated these pillars shaped reading instruction and policies current at the time and remained important components of contemporary reading instruction (Shanahan, 2014). However, research to determine how to teach the components effectively so students could read complex text successfully continued (Cassidy et al. 2010). Since the implementation of the NCLB Act legislation, reading instruction in classrooms across the nation focused on practice to enable students to pass high stakes assessments, which rated students and schools and were reported to the public (Shanahan, 2014).

The 21st century began with an abundance of research about best practices in reading instruction reported and available for schools and teachers (Schmoker, 2011). Ford and Opitz (2002) reported exemplary teachers focused on whole group lessons that included clear learning objectives, teaching, modeling, guided practice, and checks for understanding. Consistent research proved decoding was only important when it was included in a balanced literacy curriculum (Cunningham, 2007). McIntyre (2007) found that traditional formats of instruction that focused on the teacher asking all of the questions and the students answering all of the questions was insufficient to reach the levels of achievement and independent thinking students required to be successful 21st century learners and productive citizens.

Marzano et al. (2001) described the importance of clear learning goals and segmenting lessons with practice and feedback. Pollock (2007) also studied lesson design and listed similar lesson components for successful reading instruction. Concurrently, Popham (2008) concluded the quality of the teachers' lessons was the factor that determined student success and stressed the importance of formative assessment and

guided practice. Block and Mangieri (2009) recorded and described exemplary instructional methods that produced high levels of comprehension. Contemporary educators could access abundant research about best practices to incorporate proven effective strategies to teach students to read and comprehend text (Block & Pressley, 2007). However, despite the knowledge reported by these researchers in the field of education, Schmoker (2011) reported that observed literacy lessons often lacked essential components defined repeatedly by the research.

In 2009, The National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers developed CCSS, new and elevated standards for reading and mathematics for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (Calkins et al., Lehman, 2012). The federal government did not write the standards nor require that they be adopted by all states. However, U.S. President, Obama, announced Race to the Top, a competitive educational reform plan, a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, as a monetary incentive for states to adapt the standards, maintain effective teachers and principals, and provide relevant assessment to make academic achievement gains (USDOE, 2009). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, a revision of the NCLB Act, began a new era in education; across the U.S. educators and researchers sought new ways to move the U.S. to high ranks in world standings in reading and provide high quality education for all students (Calkins et al., 2012).

In the previous century, a sufficient number of jobs that required a minimal education accommodated most high school graduates, but in more recent times the skills required for competitive employment in the U.S. in the 21st century required citizens to acquire new, higher levels of literacy, leaving students with low reading abilities with

few job opportunities (Calkins et al., 2012). The CCSS set achievement goals for reading and literacy but did not mandate how teachers should teach; curriculum, materials, methods and instructional decisions were left to districts and classroom teachers to determine (Shanahan, 2014). Students did not learn to comprehend through equal amounts of instruction in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension mandated by the NCLB Act. Rather, the new standards required teachers to teach students how to read complex text and comprehend ideas implied by the texts, as opposed to teaching isolated facts (Calkins et al., 2012). Teachers must include complex skills, critical thinking, and writing instruction in their planning, instruction, and assessment practices, teaching students to use basic reading skills to reach higher levels of comprehension and to participate in collaborative conversations about literacy with their classmates (Schmoker, 2011). Writing instruction, prohibited during the instructional block of reading defined by Reading First mandates, was at the time recognized as an essential missing component and was mandated in the standards approved by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers (Calkins et al., 2012).

In the 21st century, teaching all students to read, comprehend and respond to complex diverse texts was mandatory and required expertise by every classroom teacher to review and revise practices to enable each student to read at high levels (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). Teachers must incorporate modeled discussion and opportunities to use multiple texts across a range of complexity levels to help students read, write, develop, discuss, and defend opinions and ideas learned from reading these texts (Shanahan, 2014). All students, struggling and proficient readers, must have

opportunities during the school day to practice and struggle with reading until the goals of reading, comprehending, and responding to increasingly complex text are attained by every student (Calkins et al., 2012).

In summary, disagreements about best practices in literacy instruction among literacy experts existed and continued throughout the history of the U.S. (Pearson et al. 2007). While the United States Constitution made state and local governments responsible for the education of children, over the 50 years previous to this writing, mandated educational policies influenced the reading instruction teachers planned and provided everyday (Shanahan, 2014). Contemporary researchers and educators continued to determine how reading instruction was taught, at the time of this writing, and defined in the future (Cassidy et al. 2010). Policies and standards will continue to be determined, argued, and revised because the success of each student and the economy of the nation depended on the literate capabilities of each citizen (Shanahan, 2014)

Purpose of Reading Instruction

In their revised edition, *Apprenticeship in Literacy*, Dorn and Jones (2012) reminded educators that nearly 6.2 million students did not earn a high school diploma in 2007; one in six students who struggled as readers in third grade dropped out of high school. Students who did not graduate were relegated to low paid and limited job opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Results from the NAEP (2015) showed that less than 40% of all fourth graders in the U.S. read at proficient levels. While educators knew the importance of learning to read well, Calkins (2001) noted that students spent only a small percentage of the day actually reading; often only 10 minutes, when two and one half hours were scheduled for daily language arts instruction. Schmoker (2006)

reported in grades from kindergarten through high school English classes, craft type activities were observed and reported more than actual time spent reading, deterring students from accountable and meaningful reading and writing using text support and evidence. Conversely, students in the highest achieving classrooms spent the majority of instructional time reading, writing, and discussing texts (Allington, 2002). According to Schmoker (2006), in the 21st century, there were fewer employment opportunities for students who did not graduate and yet, only 68% of all high school students graduated and about half of those who entered college did not complete a degree, because they lacked the reading skills necessary to be successful. Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010) supported his statements in research that showed a 31 % increase in jobs in the U.S. that required a postsecondary degree.

In his more recent book, *Focus*, Schmoker (2011) stated that research repeatedly showed effective lessons included teaching, modeling, guided practice, and repeated checks for understanding, but during observations these practices were rarely observed. Allington (2002) reported that good teachers mattered the most, more than any curriculum or materials purchased by or required by a school district. Schmoker (2011) found that, although teachers supported district initiatives, teachers, as well as administrators, failed to practice or observe the most important aspects of teaching and instruction; modeling and guided practice.

Every teacher was held accountable for the reading achievement success of each student in his or her classroom; all students needed higher levels of comprehension, making it important to evaluate what was important and what was included in teaching students to read, so no instructional time was wasted (Calkins et al, 2012). The National

Center for Educational Statistics (2013) reported the achievement results on the NAEP showed that 40% to 60% of students entered middle school lacking the reading basics necessary for achievement. While there was an increase in jobs in the U.S. that required post-secondary education, only 38% of 12th grade students scored at or above proficiency on the NAEP, reported by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2013). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2013) concluded that increased literacy skills in both reading and writing must be expected and taught explicitly and continuously throughout elementary and high school years to eliminate the need for college remedial reading courses, as students in these classes are less likely to graduate and find competitive employment. To obtain and hold competitive jobs, students must participate in a relevant literacy curriculum and practice higher order critical thinking skills, learn to analyze text evidence, apply text evidence to new situations, and defend answers and points of view (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Students must enter middle school able to read higher levels of text with efficiency and understanding in order to be successful, or these students dropped out as the academic demands increase (Calkins et al, 2012). According to Dorn and Jones (2012) eliminating reading deficits before students entered fourth and fifth-grade classrooms was imperative. Student learning could not be left to chance, with success determined by the assigned teacher; every teacher must know and practice the skills necessary to teach every student how to read (Schmoker, 2011).

Elements of Reading Instruction

The NRP report described the essential components of reading instruction as five pillars: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension

(NICHHD, (2000). These components continued to be essential for all students to master integrated higher levels of text complexity (Calkins et al. 2012). Schmoker (2011) observed and reported effective and knowledgeable teachers taught and assessed these components and included higher level thinking skills through reading complex text, discussion, and writing to defend answers to questions related to what was read. When the NCLB Act was initiated with the intention of increasing reading scores across the nation, the five components were included, but the prescribed regimented instruction did not produce the intended results; instead, teachers minimized instruction to adhere to stringent routines and scripts (Pearson et al., 2007). Research in the field of literacy provided teachers and administrators with a broad understanding of reading instruction, and teachers must be able to put reported best practices into intentional relevant lessons taught in contemporary classrooms (Schmoker, 2011).

Musti-Rao and Cartledge (2007) reported that phonemic awareness instruction and phonics, two components of effective reading instruction, were effective across grade levels for students identified as struggling readers (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). The NRP reported that phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge were the best school-entry predictors of reading success for young children and recommended that phonemic awareness instruction was focused rather than broad, differentiated according to need, and only a part of a larger reading instruction model (NICHHD, 2000).

Comprehension was not attainable at any grade level, when students were unable to remember the beginning of the paragraph by the time the end was laboriously decoded; teachers must intervene (Lemov, 2010). Decoding was the essential ability to use known letter sounds to identify and pronounce the words written in the text and, although it was

a low-level, memorization skill, it must be taught so students could use it automatically in order to read and comprehend higher-level text (Pearson et al, 2007). The inability to automatically decode multisyllabic words using knowledge of morphemes or prefixes, suffixes, and roots, prevented older students from focusing on and understanding content (Cunningham, 2007). Furthermore, telling the student the words, rather than requiring the student to apply practiced phonics rules, prevented students from developing reading skills necessary for independent reading and reading accountability (Lemov, 2010).

Exemplary reading teachers knew that the main function of fluency was to improve comprehension, the goal of reading (Smith, 1994). Fluency instruction included a focus on repeated reading with feedback from teachers, parents, and peers, which increased word recognition and comprehension for students in all grade levels (Musti-Rao, & Cartledge, 2007). Pikulski and Chard (2005) synthesized definitions of fluency and concluded that fluency was "efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text and is observed in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during and makes possible, silent reading comprehension" (p. 510). Fluency was an important component of reading (Cassidy et al., 2010). Allington (2002) reinforced the importance of fluency, noting that a lack of fluency and quick word identification often contributed to poor comprehension. Allington, McCuiston, and Billen (2015) reported that at the elementary students should read with 95% accuracy, unless the teacher or more fluent reader provided individual support. Fluency practice, including reading aloud to students and modeling the importance of syntax, helped students clarify difficult text which was important when students were assigned multiple readings of difficult text during content instruction (Lemov, 2010). Teachers must show

students how to monitor and change rates of reading speed to match the difficulty of the text in order to adequately comprehend the text (Massey, 2007). Fluency practice must be balanced with opportunities for students to struggle with decoding words and must not replace discussion and responses about complex text (Schmoker, 2011).

Research conducted more than two decades previous to this writing determined that students from economically disadvantaged homes entered kindergarten with limited vocabulary, having heard as many as 30 million less words than children of higher economic families (Hart & Risley, 1995). The NRP reported that vocabulary must be taught through direct instruction and indirectly through continued exposure to books (NICHHD, 2000). Exemplary teachers included planned, systematic, vocabulary lessons in daily instruction and defined words so students spend instructional time practicing the use of the word rather than copying word definitions (Marzano et al., 2001). Defining a word provided only a limited understanding, but not enough to include that word in the vocabulary known and used by the student, therefore exemplary teachers determined when to provide direct vocabulary instruction and when students could independently define words (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2007). The CCSS, reemphasized the importance of effective vocabulary instruction to bridge the gap between students disadvantaged by poverty and those who were not, all students must meet vocabulary standards when reading grade level literary and expository text (Calkins et al. 2012).

Effective vocabulary teachers read intentionally chosen literature, provided explicit and indirect reading instruction for developing content vocabulary, and used effective assessment practices to assess word knowledge to help students become independent and efficient in acquiring new vocabulary to learn (Blachowicz & Fisher,

2007). The literacy teacher must learn and use a combination of vocabulary strategies to determine which provided the most success for the students (Cassidy et al., 2010).

"Highly effective comprehension instruction comprises the learning activities that enable students to leave a reading experience with fresh perspectives, vital information, and new ideas" (Block & Pressley, 2007, p. 220). Comprehension was a complex process that required the reader to incorporate decoding, fluency, and vocabulary acquisition, and instruction into one continuous process (Block & Pressley, 2007). Other components of literacy instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary were irrelevant without comprehension and were interconnected to assist readers to comprehend the text (Block & Pressley, 2007). Teachers must be prepared to teach a combination of interactive strategic processes to integrate reading comprehension with all components of reading instruction (Block & Pressley, 2007). Effective methods of comprehension instruction included monitored reading and writing by the student and the teacher, cooperative learning, graphic organizers, questioning, examining story structure, and summarizing (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). Comprehension happened when students understood what was read and were assessed to show this understanding through discussion, writing, providing evidence, and defending arguments based on reading (Schmoker, 2011). In support of the CCSS, Calkins et al. (2012), stated that if students were prepared adequately for college and successful competitive careers in the 21st century, teachers must be required to teach them how to integrate information, explain relationships, and support or dispute arguments across texts. Furthermore, according to Calkins et al. (2012) these expectations required higher levels of

comprehension than previous expectations set by the NCLB Act or the NRP (Calkins et al., 2012).

Effective Instruction

Allington (2002) observed and described hundreds of observations and interviews with teachers whose students became proficient readers and writers and also scored high on standardized assessments. Schmoker (2011) observed that successful teachers made sure that students spent at least 50% of the time scheduled for reading instruction actually reading and writing, as compared to other classrooms where reading and writing only occurred about 10% of the time, with the rest of the time filled with craft activities, repetitive drills, and worksheets (Schmoker, 2011). In successful reading classes, students read daily and often, learning new vocabulary through guided practice and multiple checks for understanding (Ross & Frey, 2009). Following 10 years of observing classroom instruction, Allington (2002) reported, "simply put, students need enormous quantities of successful reading to become independent, proficient readers," while this was only a part of the planning and instruction teachers must provide for readers to be successful (p. 743).

Reported state-mandated assessments to quantify learning drove reading instruction since the NCLB Act and caused teachers to change literacy instruction practices, regardless of professional beliefs about effective instructional practices in reading in order to prepare students for high stakes assessments (Harman, 2000). The International Reading Association, now the International Literacy Association (ILA), disagreed with this practice in its revised position, as in previous position statements, (ILA, 2014). According to ILA (2015) teachers narrowed the curriculum and disregarded

effective literacy instruction. During the majority of instructional time students completed and corrected versions of practice tests to prepare for the high stakes assessments (ILA, 2014). Higgins, Miller and Wegmann (2006) reported that as early as 1999, teachers taught to the test, not because of beliefs that it was the best way to teach reading and writing, but because low scores on high stakes assessments had detrimental consequences for the students, teachers, and school districts.

Effective reading instruction was characterized by the type of tasks given to students and the importance of student choice in relevant assignments, rather than excessive attention to high stakes assessment (Allington, 2002). Good readers and writers did well on standardized tests through participation in effective, complex reading and writing assignments throughout the school year (Higgens et al., 2006). Exemplary teachers provided minimal test preparation activity; rather, good instruction that led to higher achievement included longer writing assignments, reading whole books, and small group research projects (Schmoker, 2011). McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) found an over emphasis on test practice negatively affected students' comprehension of complex types of texts. Higgins et al. (2006) stated that assessment practice must not predominate reading instruction; good readers and writers did well on standardized tests through practicing effective reading and writing throughout the school year, "This goal can be accomplished through excellent instruction that prepares students to be full, literate members of our society and not just people who can pass a test" (p. 318).

In extensive research of exemplary teachers, Block and Mangieri (2009) found that exemplary teachers wrote lessons that held all students accountable and required students to think, make choices, and justify the choices using learned and practiced

strategies. In classrooms of exemplary teachers, mistakes and errors were opportunities to learn in a safe environment (Chappius, 2009).

Effective reading instruction required a knowledgeable teacher who began each literacy lesson by stating the purpose of the learning for the students, setting the objective, or learning goal prior to instruction, and practicing that learning goal until students show mastery of the objective (Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2009). In a large meta-analysis, Hattie (2009) found when teachers made the learning visible by setting the learning goal with the students, the students achieved at higher levels; deliberate planned practice provided opportunities for students to master the goals. Chappius (2009) named the presentation of the lesson objective as the first required step for effective instruction in any subject and defined the teacher as the expert in the classroom who could, "provide students with a clear and understandable vision of the learning target" (p. 17). This learning target introduction must be followed by well-planned modeling, guided instruction, guided group work, and finally, independent practice, especially in the form of writing so students can apply what the teacher modeled (Fisher et al., 2009).

Intentional observation provided the opportunity for the teacher to support student learning with timely descriptive feedback to assure mastery of the learning objectives (Pollock, 2007). Chappius (2009) noted that most teachers provided feedback to students. Expert teachers provided feedback that directly applied to achievement of the learning target, whereas ineffective teachers provided disconnected feedback, which prevented students from learning the objective (Chappius, 2009). Expert teachers did not skip essential demonstrations and guided practice, but provided planned direct instruction,

monitored practice, and determined when students could successfully transfer the practice into independent reading routines (Ross & Frey, 2009).

Materials are an important part of reading instruction; access to a varied and extensive supply of books including textbooks and literature is essential (Allington 2002). However, rooms full of literature and exposure to print and story could not replace direct instruction from an expert teacher for underperforming readers to be successful (Musti-Rao &Cartledge (2007). Expert teachers showed students how to persevere with difficult text and provide plenty of time and books for them to practice becoming independent readers and thinkers (Beers, 2003). Allington (2002) reported that while assignments and assessment practices were observed in numerous ineffective classrooms, exemplary teachers made intentional choices about the commercial and core reading materials available for instruction and provided consistent well planned and organized instruction, explicit explanations, and appropriate practice.

Students needed time and books at varying levels of difficulty to integrate the skills practiced in instruction into independent reading processes (Allington, 2002). Teachers must provide explicit demonstrations of the cognitive processes successful readers use including decoding, summarizing, paraphrasing, self-monitoring, and rereading (Beers, 2003). Smith (1994) noted the importance of a student's ability to make and clarify predictions about text when he stated, "Prediction is the core of reading" (p.18). Beers (2003) and Dorn and Jones (2012) supported the importance of making predictions to increase comprehension when reading and provided ways for teachers to effectively teach students how to use the strategy effectively. Allington (2002) reported that teachers must ask questions to assess comprehension and determine if the student

applied strategies that were demonstrated and practiced. Massey (2007) supported this, finding that students needed assigned time to talk about texts.

Discussion focused on chosen texts about multiple topics helped students to categorize, compare, and expand their knowledge about characters, themes, and plots (Kucan, Lapp, Flood, & Fisher, 2007). Multiple discussions about a variety of texts, print and non-print helped highly diverse students have common conversations and make connections based on reading (Kucan et al., 2007). Discussion about text to improve comprehension was an attribute of effective comprehension development in reading instruction (Allington, 2002). Students needed multiple opportunities to discuss and write about what they read in order to make sense out of text (Schmoker, 2011).

Effective instruction increased comprehension when expert teachers required student self-reflection, supervised while students tracked progress toward established learning objectives and listened to students clarify new information for each other (Chappuis, 2009). Exemplary reading instructors ensured that students were accountable for what was taught (Allington, 2002). Effective teachers provided multiple opportunities for guided practice followed by opportunities for independent practice, requiring students to write about their thinking and show what they learned in order to transfer their new learning to long-term memory (Fisher et al. 2009). Allington (2002) reported that teachers must ask questions to assess comprehension and determine if the student applied strategies that were demonstrated and practiced. The research and analysis work of Block and Mangieri (2003; 2009) provided detailed descriptions of strategies exemplary teachers used to teach students how to comprehend text successfully.

Hattie (2009) reported that to increase student reading achievement teachers must use a variety of assessments, both formal and informal that require students to self-monitor, self-assess, and self-teach to meet learning targets in order to monitor and plan instruction based on student learning needs. The teacher's ability to design assessments and know when and how to use them for making choices about lessons and practice made the use of classroom assessments effective (Marzano et al. 2001). Exemplary teachers made use of assessments to provide information for students and to change instructional practices in order to ensure success for students (Chappius, 2009).

Formative and summative assessments used routinely, appropriately, and effectively to track mastery and determine re-teaching were required attributes of exemplary teachers (Allington, 2002). Additionally, exemplary teachers efficiently used observation and formative assessment to provide effective lessons to teach effective reading strategies to the whole class, small groups, and individuals (Chappius, 2009). Expert teachers did not skip essential demonstrations and guided practice, but knew the importance of direct instruction, monitored guided and group practice, and determined when it was time for students to transfer the practice into independent reading routines, which would be successful (Ross & Frey, 2009). Block and Mangieri (2009) reported research dating more than 100 years ago that documented positive self concept encouraged students to want to learn to read. Success motivated students' desire to read and learn so exemplary teachers used formative assessment to intervene to prevent failure and provide the best ways to provide reteaching and additional practice (Chappius, 2009). Exemplary teachers used complex text to reteach through assigning and monitoring

written reflections about themes and story structures, often revisiting the same text and requiring rereading for different purposes (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Chappius (2009) reported that when teachers demonstrated and incorporated self-evaluation methods to record and monitor improvement and achievement, high achieving students must work as hard as struggling students. Additionally, exemplary teachers efficiently used observation and formative assessment to provide effective lessons to teach and reteach effective reading strategies to the whole class, small groups, and individuals (Chappius, 2009).

Motivation increased with success (Stronge et al.). While all students may achieve some success, exemplary teachers provided large amounts of reading materials at all reading levels and time for students to read when the teacher could monitor, reteach, and assess the comprehension of the text so all students, those struggling and advanced, can advance their literacy skills (Block & Pressley, 2007). Success builds confidence and motivation to continue to learn (Kanter, 2006).

In a meta-analysis, Marzano et al. (2001) reported that regardless of the materials or the curriculum, the teacher determined the success of the student. The most essential factors of exemplary effective reading instruction and consequential proficient readers were hiring expert teachers and providing effective professional development (Allington, 2002). Good reading instruction, more than any other academic activity, led to students' academic success; without an expert teacher, many students read for less than an hour a day in school (Lemov, 2010). Stronge et al. (2011) concluded that students of organized teachers who planned instruction, knew and followed routines, integrated materials, had high expectations for every student, and had higher scores than students of teachers

without these characteristics. Literacy teachers must learn and consistently implement instruction and strategies documented to lead to higher levels of student achievement in reading and writing at each grade level (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Teacher Efficacy

In his book, *Teach Like a Champion*, Lemov (2010) stated:

> "If a teacher can ensure that her students can be relied on to read well, she can always, at any time and for any duration, ensure that a high-value activity, the single most important skill for the educated citizen, will take place in her classroom" (p. 253).

Block and Mangieri (2003) found actions that made teachers exemplary in one grade were not transferrable to other grade levels. Teacher efficacy or empowerment increased with knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge to provide literacy practices that were effective at each particular grade level. Teachers must spend time practicing and consistently self-reflecting, based on recently researched and reported effective and ineffective literacy strategies or students' reading skills were limited and teachers remained ineffective (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

In a meta-analysis, Hattie (2009) provided a self-reflection tool for teachers. According to Hattie (2009), successful teachers studied positive effects of learning; if an effect size for any strategy is less than 0.4, effective teachers discontinued the use of that particular strategy. Block and Mangieri (2003, 2009) conducted extensive studies of exemplary teachers to develop the NELTA, a self-assessment and professional development tool for teachers to increase self-efficacy and for educational leaders to monitor and help teachers increase exemplary instructional literacy practices. This tool

defined exemplary literacy practices and provided examples relative to teachers at a particular grade level (Block & Mangieri, 2003). The tool referenced practices of exemplary teachers from kindergarten through secondary grade levels in six defined domains: dominant teaching roles, responsibilities and talents, motivation, re-teaching, relating to students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics. Block and Pressley (2007) supported these best practices for providing comprehension instruction. Block and Mangieri (2009) revised and refined the NELTA to provide more precise and updated information for teachers to use to increase successful reading instruction. Growth and improvement of teacher quality and effectiveness required time, practice, planning, and effort, as well as recognition of strengths, weaknesses, and growth documented by the teacher's self-reflection (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

Summary

Educational policies such as those associated with NCLB Act of 2001 encouraged educators to believe that teaching was as easy as providing a highly researched scripted curriculum (Brooks, 2007). Student success required more than a packaged program (Allington, 2002). Exemplary literacy teachers must be knowledgeable, flexible planners who successfully used student data, professional knowledge, observation of their students, and careful planning to implement successful instruction (Brooks, 2007). Highly effective reading instruction was crucial for the success of students and schools; it was the most important activity in schools, because if a student could not read, all knowledge in other subjects was not attainable at an independent level (Schmoker, 2011). Lemov (2010) pointed out that every teacher, regardless of the subject area taught, was obligated to increase the reading skills of every student and stated, "Reading is the skill.

Teaching students to unlock the full meaning of the texts they read is the single most powerful outcome a teacher can foster" (p. 249).

The IRA, was recently renamed the International Literacy Association (2015) in order to better define its role for its members. In its latest position statement, the International Literacy Association (2015), reiterated the qualities of exemplary literacy teachers listed in the position statement of the IRA's position. In addition to having strong content knowledge, using strong classroom management skills, and motivational techniques, literacy teachers must understand reading and writing development, believe that all children can learn to read, and set high expectations for teaching and learning. They must know how to provide formative frequent assessment of progress and connect previous learning to other learning. They used a variety of materials, flexible grouping methods and combination of researched strategies to teach reading and provide multiple practice opportunities for each struggling reader, acting as reading coaches for students, encouraging students to self-monitor and choose strategies, rather than relying on the teacher for the answers to difficult questions (IRA, 2000). The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) supported this position statement; research supported by NCTE was studied to develop the Reading and Writing Observation tool observation tool used in this study (Texas Education Agency (2012).

Allington (2002) noted similar qualities of exemplary literacy teachers and assured teachers that developing students into readers takes time. Massey (2007) listed time for practice and reading as the two greatest gifts teachers could give their students. Brooks (2007) found that exemplary reading teachers closely monitored the needs of the students when planning reading and writing instruction and did not follow a specific

program, but used knowledge, flexibility, assessment results, and goal setting to teach students to read and comprehend texts. Chappius (2009) supported this work and stated that exemplary teachers worked with students according to their individual goals, strengths, and weaknesses to enable them to meet the learning targets or objectives set for the lesson.

The teacher's knowledge and ability to implement necessary instruction was essential for adolescent readers to be successful, because their scores on standard assessments in reading may not transfer to the skills a student demonstrated in classroom activities and other literacy assessments (Scammacca, Edmonds, Reutebuch, & Torgesen, 2007). In a two-year study, Stronge et al. (2011) found no significant relationships between teachers' years of experience, ethnicity, or pay, and student achievement. Teacher quality was the only factor that increased student scores by 30 percentile points (Stronge et al., 2011). In his mega meta-analysis, Hattie (2009) reported despite articles, reports, hours of professional development, politics, and parents, classroom practices had not changed significantly in 200 years. Through his review of thousands of studies and hundreds of meta-analyses, Hattie (2009) summarized his findings into one overarching message, "What some teachers do matters" (p. 22). Shanahan (2014) reported that research continued to conclude that reading success equated to economic success. Teachers must know and understand what strategies and actions increase reading achievement, master the skills necessary to teach the strategies effectively, modify their instruction to incorporate best practice actions, and teach them to all students (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

The district in this research had an intense focus on student achievement and professional development. Teachers were expected to provide reading instruction to ensure that every student mastered the reading and writing objectives listed in the Missouri Learning Standards, which incorporated the CCSS. The expectation was that each student would read and comprehend grade level text and be proficient on the state assessment. In the experience of this researcher, teachers in all district schools used a variety of strategies of their choice to teach these standards. At the time of this writing, more than half of the students were reading below grade level, according to MAP assessment results and district-reported SRI scores. According to SRI assessment results, less than 50% of the students left elementary education equipped to read the content level books required in secondary education. This research was an attempt to identify the strategies that resulted in student achievement, so effective strategies could be learned in active and regularly-scheduled grade level team meetings, replicated in classrooms across the district, and lead to higher levels of student achievement, enabling students at the upper elementary level to be successful and engaged learners in secondary education.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Perspective

As a result of the NCLB Act of 2001, school districts were advised or instructed to implement 90 minutes of daily, evidence-based core reading instruction for all students in elementary grades; preferably delivered as a teacher directed, uninterrupted block of time that excluded process-type writing, such as Writing Workshop (Calkins et al., 2012). Following several years of an unscripted and teacher-directed balanced literacy approach, the district in this research purchased a core reading series in 2006 and applied for a Reading First grant funded by NCLB monies, to support the implementation of reading instruction. When the grant was denied, the district chose to follow the mandates of Reading First without the government funding, purchased a core reading series, and required it to be the only source used for Tier One, or general education classroom instruction. Additionally, reading specialists in every elementary school in the researched district participated in professional development to strengthen the skills needed to assess every student in first through fifth-grades, recording and monitoring the number of correct words read per minute by each student. Extended reading instruction was provided to those who qualified according to the results of these assessments; these were labeled tiered interventions. Thus, the district in study began the implementation of an RtI model. In an RtI model, a core reading series was the main component of reading instruction, supplemented with evidence-based interventions provided for struggling readers (Swanson et al, 2012).

In the researcher's experience, the district participating in this research began providing professional development in the area of RtI in 2009, in order to strengthen the

student achievement and the interventions provided. A professional development provider with expertise in reading, RtI interventions, and problem solving was hired to work with the schools in the district to implement this RtI model over a three-year period. While some large-group professional development was provided to teach interventions, data interpretation, and problem solving, most of the professional development occurred in individual schools during problem-solving team meetings, where suggestions for successful implementation of RtI instruction were reviewed, chosen, implemented, and monitored. Most of these interventions were provided in addition to 90 minutes of core classroom reading instruction and differed from regular classroom instruction, requiring students to leave the classroom for additional reading instruction. At the same time this service was purchased, the participating district purchased an on-line benchmarking and progress-monitoring assessment tool to provide more precise and uniform information for analyzing reading difficulties and determining interventions. Following these three years of professional development, the use of on-line tools, and a core reading series, scores on the MAP and the SRI indicated that students in the district were still not reaching the expected or desired levels of adequate reading proficiency.

Purpose of the Study

Wanzek and Kent (2012), from Florida State University defined upper elementary grades as a ‘transitional period’ in reading instruction. As students neared middle school years where content instruction was increased and resources and time to help struggling readers was decreased, the implementation of effective reading instruction in upper elementary grades was essential for the future success of the students (Ogle & Lang, 2007). At the time this research occurred, teachers in the participating district followed

the curriculum loosely, used core curriculum materials randomly, and were directed to teach CCSS using instructional strategies and routines that would provide success as indicated by Lexile scores, provided by the SRI. Schools implemented a variety of methods for reading instruction. Some teachers used structured methods of guided reading; some used a variety of small group instruction, while others relied mainly on whole group instruction and the study of novels. At the time of this study, the district monitored reading growth and achievement, using curriculum based measures which measures words per minute three times annually, an online monthly reading assessment which measures progress on state reading standards, and the SRI, a reading comprehension measure that provided each student with a Lexile score that could be matched to texts and novels that were also assigned a Lexile score (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). The district required teachers to administer the SRI assessment three times per year, and teachers had the option of giving the assessment to individual students every 30 days. Additionally, all teachers received district-level training in assessment literacy strategies. Administrators expected implementation of these strategies across all subject areas; school and district leadership personnel consistently monitored teacher practices. All schools held weekly scheduled grade-level Professional Learning Communities. Teachers used this time to analyze data and plan instruction.

Teachers must show students how to read and comprehend texts; often, secondary teachers were not prepared to assist students who came to secondary education with minimal reading skills that prohibited them from comprehending the texts they were expected to read (Beers, 2003). Elementary teachers must know and practice the strategies and actions proven to increase the reading skills and achievement of students

and not waste time implementing strategies that are not helpful (Reeves, 2010). If the strategies practiced in one classroom are proven to be successful according to assessment results, these strategies and practices should be defined and replicated by other teachers in other classrooms (Hattie, 2009).

In the researcher's experience, the district in study had the resources in place to assess students, monitor progress, analyze data, and share results. This study was intended to observe, define, and quantify the literacy strategies and practices that yielded the highest success for fifth-grade students, as indicated by reading growth and achievement measured by scores on the SRI. Defining and knowing what produced success in classrooms of exemplary literacy teachers could provide all teachers with the knowledge to provide exemplary instruction to all students, increasing the opportunity for students to be successful readers in middle school.

Rationale for Use of the NELTA Self Assessment

Self-assessment provides a teacher with information to make adjustments to educational practices. In the experience of the researcher, at the end of each school year, principals reassigned teachers to different grade levels in an attempt to improve achievement results. According to Block and Mangieri (2009), when the principals required teachers to complete the NELTA self-assessment, principals could analyze the information to match teachers with the grade level most aligned with the grade level indicated by the scores on the teacher's self-assessment. This type of analysis provided an accountable and quantitative method of reassignment (Reeves, 2005). Additionally, when teachers were aware of the actions of their colleagues; the scores on the self-assessment could be used to determine teacher leaders, whose practices could be

observed and replicated by other teachers in the school who were re-assigned to another grade level or needed to change the teaching practices in a then-current grade level assignment (Reeves, 2008). When teachers identified personal strengths and colleagues' strengths, teachers could rely on one another and use the information and skills to problem solve and increase the successes of one another, the students, and the school achievement results (Fullan, 2010).

Rationale for Use of the WROT Observation Tool

A researcher hired to provide RtI professional development in the participating district recommended the WROT observation tool used in this research, had used it in previous middle school observations in the district, and recommended its use in this research. This outsourced researcher and an assistant provided training and assistance for proper use of the WROT in this research. In the experience of the researcher, the fifth-grade teachers in this research provided instruction based on their perceptions of the needs of the students in order to be successful in middle school. The CCSS incorporated into the district's literacy curriculum required fifth-grade elementary students to read and respond to a wide variety of texts at high ranges of readability and complexity (Calkins et al., 2012). The WROT included these instructional expectations (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Appendix C lists the quality instructional practices and reading strategies that could be scored on the WROT. An observation tool provided a method of comparing what teachers knew and listed as important practices to actual instructional delivery and strategies observed in the classroom (Hoffman, Maloch, & Sailors, 2011). The WROT was chosen to quantify the narrative observations scripted during literacy instruction in participating teachers' classrooms (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Teachers and district

leaders could use results of observation tools for reflection, discussion, professional development, curriculum revision, and revision of classroom practices (Hoffman et al., 2011). Instructional and content coaches employed by the district in study could use the results of an observation tool to assist teachers in improving classroom practices (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Description of Teacher Participants

In this study, the teacher participants worked in schools that represented a range of socioeconomic status and student achievement. By inviting all schools to participate, a wide range of socioeconomic status and student achievement was included in the study. All participants were fifth-grade teachers in a suburban Midwestern school district. Principals received an emailed letter to describe, detail, and request permission for the researcher to invite the fifth-grade teachers at each school to participate in the research project. The researcher obtained the principals' permission to recruit the fifth-grade teachers to participate in the research before inviting the teachers to participate. When the principals granted permission, the researcher invited all fifth-grade classroom teachers to participate in the research. Each teacher received an invitation through district mail that included a permission request form and a detailed explanation of the project. The researcher spoke to teachers who responded positively to the invitation in order to clarify understanding of the purpose and procedures of the research. Following the discussion, the teacher participants scheduled an initial interview and first observation. Fifteen teachers agreed to participate; 14 were able to continue through the entire research project.

The 14 participants represented more than half of the schools in the study district. Years of teaching in fifth-grade ranged from as few as one to seven; years of teaching ranged from five to 20. Teachers in the study reported as few as 60 minutes to as many as 120 minutes as the scheduled time for daily reading instruction. Three of the teachers participated in a semester long literacy professional development funded by the district and sponsored by a local university.

All teacher participants were participating in the district assessment literacy professional development. Some were in the first year of learning and practicing the assessment literacy strategies, while others were completing a third year of training. Two of the teachers facilitated some of this professional development and received additional training in teaching and using the assessment literacy practices. Half of the teachers in the research project benefitted from working with instructional coaches employed by the district.

Five of the teachers departmentalized; these teachers provide reading instruction for all fifth-grade students in that school. One of these five teachers taught reading in the context of the social studies curriculum and provided both reading instruction and social studies instruction for all fifth-grade students in that school. Nine of the teachers taught reading, along with all other core subjects to one class of students.

Numbers of students taught ranged from 13 to 80, where the teacher was responsible for the reading instruction of all fifth-grade students in the building. Three of the teachers were not responsible for the scores of struggling readers in fifth-grade. In these instances, the struggling readers received alternate instruction outside of the fifth-grade classroom and received grades from interventionists in the building.

Qualitative Research Questions

The researcher studied three questions throughout this research. A self - assessment, three observations, and pre and post interviews were conducted and reviewed to answer the questions.

Research Question 1. What components of best teaching strategies for teaching reading aligned with the Writing and Reading Observation Tool are apparent in classroom observations?

Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between the teacher's self-assessment, the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment profile, scores on the Writing and Reading Observation Tool, interview responses, and student achievement in reading as determined by the Scholastic Reading Inventory? If so, what types of relationships, and to what degree are they apparent?

Research Question 3. Do scores on the second application of the WROT increase after teachers are given the results of the first WROT and the NELTA? If so, what responses to teacher interview questions and classroom observations provide evidence that receipt of the first WROT score promoted teacher reflection upon classroom teaching strategies?

Null Hypotheses

The researcher developed three hypotheses to study and explain the results gathered from the research.

Null Hypothesis 1. There will be no relationship between the number of Writing and Reading Observation Tool best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score

on the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment and student growth in reading achievement, as measured by pre and post scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory

Null Hypothesis 2. There will be no difference in reading achievement, as measured by percent of proficiency on post-SRI scores compared to percent of proficiency on pre-SRI scores (Proficiency was defined as a score of 870-980).

Null Hypothesis 3. Students of teachers with higher NELTA scores will not exhibit a greater growth in reading achievement throughout the study period, as measured by post-to-pre SRI score comparison than students of teachers with lower NELTA scores.

Methodology

This research was a mixed-methods research format, following sequential routines. The research began in March of 2014. The researcher scheduled interviews at the convenience of each participant when permission from the invited district and principals at each elementary school was granted. Interviews provided qualitative descriptions of each literacy teacher's background in education, professional development participation that affected literacy instruction and beliefs about literacy instruction, schedules, practices, and concerns during reading and writing instruction, and effective classroom practices in teaching reading and writing to fifth-grade students (see Appendix A). The researcher audio recorded each teacher participant's descriptions of the best practices and concerns about his or her reading and writing instruction. These interviews provided a qualitative format to compare what teachers defined as best practices in literacy instruction to what was observed as actual instructional reading and writing practices in each classroom. Additionally, the information was used to compare what teacher participants described as best practices to what Block and Mangieri (2009)

defined as best practices and labeled on their self-assessment instrument, the NELTA.

This study incorporated the use of two qualitative tools. Following initial interviews, teachers scheduled a first observation and received a copy of the NELTA, which they completed and returned to the researcher. The NELTA developed by Block and Mangieri (2009) was used as the self-assessment tool for participants. This tool provided a score for each teacher, determined by the teachers' answers to 12 multiple choice questions about perceptions and practices in literacy instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2009). The WROT was used to tally strategies observed during classroom observations of literacy instruction.

Following the interviews, the researcher scheduled first observations of the literacy instruction of each participant. The researcher scripted the entire observation and re-read each observation multiple times, using qualitative coding to convert observations to tally scores of best instructional practices and strategies on the WROT (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each participant received scores and brief descriptions of the NELTA and WROT results, along with an invitation to ask the researcher for additional information. The researcher scheduled the second and third observations. The researcher scripted and scored each observation on the WROT. All observations occurred during March, April, and May, the last quarter of the participating district's 2013-2014 school year. In May of 2014, when all observations were completed, the researcher conducted, scripted, and audio recorded a final interview with each participant to record changes in practices and perceptions of participating teachers (see Appendix B).

The researcher had access to student scores on the SRI, a computer based assessment used to measure student growth in reading achievement, recorded as growth

in a Lexile number which measures the level of text complexity that a student could read and comprehend (Scholastic, Inc., 2008). In the researcher's experience, the district in the study required fifth-grade teachers to give this assessment to every student four times each year. Student scores from the beginning and end of the 2013-2014 school year of each participating teacher provided the quantitative data used to compare participants scores on the WROT and NELTA to student achievement data using inferential statistics. In December of 2014, the researcher used the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) analysis to determine relationships between scores on the WROT, and the NELTA and the SRI achievement scores (Bluman, 2010). Further statistical analysis included Multiple Regressions analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and *t*-stat and *p*-value analyses (Bluman, 2010).

The researcher obtained permission to use two published tools in this study. These were the NELTA (Block & Mangieri, 2009), a self-assessment for literacy teachers and the WROT (Texas Education Agency, 2012). The district in study granted permission to use existing SRI secondary data. Descriptions of these tools including information concerning the validity and reliability of each tool are described later in this chapter.

National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment (NELTA)

Following the first observation, the participating teachers completed a self-analysis assessment. This assessment was the NELTA, first developed by Block and Mangieri in 2003 and revised in 2009 by the same authors. The NELTA required teachers to answer 12 multiple-choice questions about instructional practices, interactions with students, materials selections, the learning environment, and lesson design (Block & Mangieri, 2009). The accumulated answers are scored and the number correct is the

number of choices the teacher selected that match the qualities of exemplary fifth-grade teachers as determined by the research authors of the assessment. With this information, a teacher can build new skills in the six domains the instrument measures (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

The NELTA was developed to identify qualities of expert teachers at each particular grade levels, pre-school through grade 12. More than 600 literacy directors from several English-speaking countries described the best literacy instructor in each respective district, according to four established criteria. Block and Mangieri (2009) analyzed highly effective instruction by observing these identified teachers from pre-school through high school using case study point-by-point Delphi procedures (p. 15). The 1,691 characteristics observed were put into 483 categories; inter-rater reliabilities were obtained (p. 15). Thirty-two researchers from the U.S., Australia, and, Canada cross-validated the data. In the final phase of the research, Block and Mangieri (2009) summarized the most prominent qualities identified at each grade level, compared those characteristics across grade levels, and analyzed similarities and differences between the rankings of the literacy directors in the research and their own rankings. Several indicators of teacher expertise separated one grade level teacher from another. These descriptors assessed on the NELTA were consolidated into the six categories of teacher competencies prioritized and ranked dependent upon grade levels. The six quality characteristics exhibited by all exemplary teachers were dominant teaching roles, responsibilities and talents, motivation, re-teaching, relationships with students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics. Block and Mangieri (2009) determined that exemplary fifth-grade teachers required these identified characteristics in this rank

order: lesson characteristics, classroom qualities, dominant teaching roles, responsibilities and talents, relationships, re-teaching and motivation.

Block and Mangieri (2003, 2009) conducted extensive research in the areas of teacher self-assessment and student learning in order to align teacher strengths to a matched grade level according to researched characteristics of best practices, used by exemplary teachers at that grade level. Relevant to this research, they found that although it was important for fifth-grade teachers to re-teach and motivate their students, two qualities noted in exemplary fifth-grade teachers, it was of most importance that fifth-grade teachers attend to characteristics of their lessons, classroom qualities and teaching roles, responsibilities, and talents (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Contemporary researchers including, Allington (2002), Marzano et al. (2001), and Schmoker (2011), noted the importance of identifying and implementing effective classroom practices.

Although building relationships was important, it ranked third in priority of required exemplary practices for fifth-grade teachers, with carefully planned lessons even more important for the success of fifth-grade students (Block & Mangieri, 2009). In his meta-analysis, Hattie (2009) found lesson planning to have one of the highest effect sizes of all practices observed and recorded. However, quality lesson planning takes time and practice and was rarely observed in classrooms, which were observed during multiple studies across schools, districts, and regions (Schmoker, 2011).

In their research, Block and Mangieri (2009) asked fifth-grade students to compare their exemplary teachers to other teachers. Students reported that exemplary fifth-grade teachers required students to visualize, asked more questions, provided clearer explanations, and provided lessons that enabled students to apply required learning to do

something relevant and important. Exemplary fifth-grade teachers were committed to increasing their students' knowledge and character through the required reading, which was also supported by Schmoker's (2011) research reported in the book, *Focus*, as well as the more recent research of classroom reading practices reported by Ivey (2014). Exemplary fifth-grade teachers empowered their students when they were required to explain and defend answers, write in more genres, and read more books than students taught by teachers considered less exemplary (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Block and Mangieri (2003, 2009) identified qualities listed as effective but often lacking in other recorded classroom observations (Schmoker, 2011). Exemplary teachers of maturing students knew how to provide freedom and choice within structure, allowing students to mature and be successful (Ivey, 2014).

Classroom qualities ranked as the second most important characteristic of exemplary fifth-grade teachers, according to Block and Mangieri (2009). These teachers planned often to make sure that they could meet the needs of all students, while teaching the grade level content they must master; no minute of instructional time was wasted. Exemplary teachers included a study of current events to provide relevant instruction and increased student knowledge (Schmoker, 2011). Effective teachers accomplished many things in spite of regular classroom interruptions, using small group instruction and student-led group learning to enable students to read, record, and present facts from the materials they read (Dorn & Jones, 2012). Exemplary fifth-grade teachers assigned small group projects due at different times, thus allowing for small group instruction of reading comprehension strategies that would assist students in using content material to complete projects (Block & Mangieri, 2009). These teachers provided short, direct lessons and

allowed the students to be the primary speakers in the classroom (Beers, 2003). As planners, exemplary teachers used formative assessment data to form groups, role-play, and provided examples of proficient work and performance, also described in effective classroom assessment practices (Chappius, 2009).

According to the NELTA, dominant teaching roles, responsibilities and talents, were ranked third in priority skills for fifth-grade teachers' students. These teachers knew how to provide large amounts of knowledge in chunks that students could manage. Exemplary teachers mastered all content students must learn and incorporated reading instruction into all content areas. Additionally, exemplary teachers taught more than one concept in each reading session and covered a lot of information in short time periods. Exemplary teachers knew a variety of approaches and strategies to increase student interest in a variety of subject areas (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Ranked fourth in importance, exemplary fifth-grade teachers built relationships with students in spite of the students' emotional outbursts and impulsivity. This was because exemplary teachers had a sense of humor, consistently thought quickly, and usually did not need to reprimand students during instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2009). The authors also noted qualities of exemplary teachers, such as requiring students to review with a partner and providing examples of proficient work; best practices noted in the research supporting formative assessment (Chappius, 2009).

Re-teaching was the fifth quality that exemplary fifth-grade literacy teachers possessed. These teachers constantly analyzed what was important in the content and demonstrated proficiency for their students (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Exemplary fifth-grade teachers used high quality literature to increase students' desire to read and to teach

them how to analyze story structure, make predictions using a novel, and use the writing process to write reading responses. Although exemplary teachers re-taught as determined by assessments, re-teaching time was limited in order to teach all of the content fifth-grade students must learn (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Exemplary fifth-grade teachers listed the use of graphic organizers, leveled books, and student writing as tools to re-teach important skills and strategies (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011). Specific feedback was especially critical for re-teaching to be successful (Chappius, 2009).

According to the NELTA research, the last and sixth-ranked quality of exemplary fifth-grade literacy teachers was the ability to motivate students through actions, such as goal setting with students, determining how much time to spend on teaching a strategy, using new research to maintain high levels of motivation, and posing a range of higher-level questions for all students to answer (Block & Mangieri, 2009). When the developers of the NELTA interviewed students, students defined exemplary teachers as those who made class fun, active, and exciting by teaching multiple concepts simultaneously and allowing students to show learning by writing something to share with others (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

When results of the NELTA were studied, five correct responses equated to a high amount of strength in that domain at each particular grade level. Four correct responses showed a satisfactory level of strength. A score of three or less equated to an inadequate level of strength in that domain for that particular grade level teacher (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Table 1 indicates how the fifth-grade teachers in this research ranked in each of these domains.

Writing and Reading Observation Tool (WROT)

Researchers at the University of Texas developed the WROT based on the Instructional Content Emphasis tool developed by Edmund and Briggs in 2003 and used for observing elementary classroom instruction (Vaughn & Briggs, 2003). The WROT was designed to quantitatively code the qualitative observations of instructional strategies and practices observed in secondary English classes. These included explicit vocabulary instruction, direct comprehension instruction, and summarization, which were listed as essential components of elementary reading instruction on this observation tool (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Data that could be analyzed using the WROT included amount of time allocated to instructional components, student grouping, materials used during instruction, and effective instructional practices and strategies (Texas Education Agency). Because the WROT was also developed as a tool to observe teachers of students with learning disabilities, it had additional components to analyze co-teaching and teacher collaboration in classrooms where these models were practiced (Texas Education Agency). The WROT was composed of five dimensions labeled A through E, which allowed observers to code instructional practices, materials, grouping, and collaboration and assign an overall rating of enthusiasm of the teacher's delivery of instruction (Texas Education Agency). For the purpose of this research, the focus of the tool was parts A and B, used for observing and quantifying effective instructional practices in all content and effective literacy strategies.

The developers of the WROT provided content validity by reviewing the then-current literature on best practices of reading and language arts instruction and documents provided by the IRA, and NCTE (Texas Education Agency 2012). Additionally, the

developers referred to the 2009 Texas curriculum standards and state assessment (Texas Education Agency, 2012). The strategies and practices identified through the research were labeled in columns on the WROT. For purposes of reliability, detailed descriptions of each strategy or effective instructional practice were developed and defined following extensive literature review, and were provided as a common reference tool for observers to identify instructional practices and strategies included on the WROT (Texas Education Agency 2012). Using the WROT, the observer identified and recorded 15 general practices of instruction and 13 effective strategies for reading and writing instruction observed in each five-minute interval during the reading instructional block (Texas Education Agency, 2012) (see Appendix C).

Scholastic Reading Inventory

The SRI scores provided a secondary data source. This assessment included two pieces, a foundational assessment developed for students in primary grades that provided information about a student's letter sound identification, sight words, and decoding skills. In the researcher's experience, this assessment was not used in the district under study; the second part of the SRI, the Reading Comprehension Assessment, was the assessment component required across the district. This computer adaptive assessment provided the test taker and teacher with a measure of a student's reading comprehension, provided in the form of a Lexile number (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). A Lexile number was easy to measure, read, and understand, because it was defined as an equal interval measure assigned to students, as well as texts, in order to match a text to the comprehension level of a student (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). A computer-adaptive algorithm adapted the test to the level of the reader using information entered by the teacher and previous test scores,

following the first assessment (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). Additionally, a Bayesian scoring algorithm was applied that used past scores to predict the following assessment, connecting each student assessment given to the next one taken by that same student (Scholastic, Inc., 2014, p.10). More than 10 years of research was conducted to determine and develop the test items on the assessment (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). Most assessment questions were taken from published pieces of text; the comprehension of that section of text could not rely on information that was in another part of the text. At the end of the section of text, a sentence was provided with a word missing; four options were given as choices and students chose the correct answer (Scholastic, Inc, 2014). This type of item format was tested to measure reading skills that were measured on normative and criterion referenced assessments, as well as assessments given to individual students (Stenner, Smith, Horiban, & Smith, 1987). Students read literature and expository passages and answered questions to obtain the Lexile number correlated to a particular grade level, to make up the Lexile Framework. These Lexile numbers were determined by analysis of millions of words derived from texts (SRI, 2008). The Lexile numbers earned by the student increased along the framework, according to the length of the sentences and the difficulty of the words in the text the student was required to and able to successfully read. Completing the assessment provided each student with a Lexile score, a common scale for monitoring growth in reading comprehension and making decisions concerning instruction, as well as placement in reading programs or RtI groups (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). The assessment was widely used, which made it possible for a student's score to correlate to thousands of novels, texts, and passages, as well as many standardized assessments used to evaluate students across many educational systems

(Scholastic, Inc., 2014). It did not take specialized training to administer the test, although professional development was provided when the district in this research first purchased the assessment. Several reports were generated, which were adequately explained in the manuals provided for teachers (Scholastic, Inc., 2014).

Reliability of the Scholastic Reading Inventory

The SRI assessment measure was a computer adaptive test that used a Lexile score as a measure. When the information was entered into the assessment protocol, questions were generated according to the reading ability of each student; therefore, the error associated with any score was unique to the student, but fell within grade standard deviation, or 225 Lexile points, according to research by Metametrics, Inc. (cited in Scholastic, Inc., 2014, p. 90). Reliability for computer adaptive tests was not established by traditional methods. All sources of measurement error, text, item writer error, and reader error, were tested repeatedly and fell within the range of reliability necessary for the test to be used to provide a standard measure of reading comprehension (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). While measures of reliability were used to continuously study and improve the Lexile assessment, a most recent study, at the time of this writing, in 2013 employed the marginal reliability test using Winstep's item analysis program (Scholastic, Inc., 2014, p. 100). Over 300 students were given the assessment across a wide economic band, and the marginal reliability reported was 0.94, showing that the assessment was able to consistently measure students reading achievement levels (Scholastic, Inc., 2014, p. 101). Educators were chosen to write the questions and participated in extensive training to use exact protocols and procedures to develop the questions. Following the training, these writers each wrote 10 questions, received feedback about each question,

and participated in additional training based on the feedback. The questions chosen went through two stages of review before inclusion in the assessment (Scholastic, Inc., 2014).

Validity of the Scholastic Reading Inventory

The SRI incorporated the use of the Reading Comprehension Assessment that provided a Lexile number. Content validity was established, because all item test questions were written to correspond to the type of text read. Items were matched with readers who struggled, as well as those who exceeded; so, all students read appropriate and relevant texts. Research showed that as a student's Lexile score increased, so did reading ability, as measured by other reading assessments (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). Other research showed that test scores were not related to gender or demographic variables (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). The Lexile Framework was linked to many standardized reading comprehension tests, so students taking the test obtained a test score and a Lexile score; low SRI scores predicted enrollment in reading intervention programs in numerous studies (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). Correlations across all studies ranged from 0.60 to 0.93, with lower correlations shown in studies where the samples were taken from scores of students enrolled in special education programs (Scholastic, Inc., 2014, pp. 22, 127). Finally, because reading was developmental, growth in reading achievement was greater in lower grades and flattened as students gained reading skills; studies showed a similar trend in Lexile scores (Scholastic, Inc., 2014).

Lexile Scores. Scores obtained on the SRI were reported as Lexile scores. The Lexile score obtained through the SRI was developed using the Rasch one parameter item response theory model (Scholastic, Inc., 2014, p.90). The computer algorithm that provided the questions given to individual students used the Bayesian procedure to

estimate a student's reading ability (Scholastic, Inc., 2014, p.90). The Lexile score indicated the level of text a student could read with moderate comprehension, or about 75% accuracy. Growth was easy to measure, because a Lexile scale increased in equal increments, similar to a ruler (Scholastic, Inc., 2014). The same Lexile scale measured students and books, as well as other texts so students and teachers could determine which texts could be read and comprehended by the student (Scholastic, Inc., 2008). When students read books with Lexile measures slightly below their tested Lexile measure, they should experience greater success; books with higher Lexile measures were more challenging and could be frustrating (Scholastic, Inc., 2008).

According to standards set by the district in this research, a score at or above 870 was considered proficient. A score above 980 was considered advanced. For purposes of this study, all students scoring an 870 or above were considered proficient. Beginning-of-the-year SRI scores were compared to end-of-the-year SRI scores to measure increased reading achievement. The SRI scores were a secondary data source. A *z*-test for difference in proportion was used to determine whether there was a statically increased percentage of proficient and advanced students on the post-SRI, as compared to the pre-SRI scores. Each student took this assessment prior to the study and took it again following the study, according to district requirements. This assessment was not implemented for this research, but served as a required monitoring tool by the participating district.

Procedures

The following steps were taken to conduct this research:

1) Principals received a letter explaining the research. Permission to recruit fifth-grade teachers was requested.
2) Following permission from principals, fifth-grade classroom teachers were invited to participate in the project. Each participant received an invitation and an explanation of the project. The researcher spoke to those who responded to the invitation to make sure they understood the purpose of the research.
3) The researcher visited each participating classroom teacher at each school and interviewed each participant. Each teacher participant defined his or her interpretation of exemplary fifth-grade reading instruction through responding to questions for approximately 60 minutes. The researcher scripted and audio recorded for reference. This information was coded and compared to the categories on the WROT. The questions included in the interview are located in the Appendix.
4) Each teacher participant was observed during the teacher's reading instruction block, defined as Tier One instruction. Observations were tallied using the WROT descriptions and anecdotal notes.
5) The WROT checklist was used to determine whether the best practices the teacher described in interviews are noted in the WROT descriptors. The number of occurrences in each best practice was tallied and recorded in a spreadsheet. The information is included in the Appendix.
6) Secondary data, the SRI scores of the students in each participating teacher's classroom was obtained. This assessment was required by the district three times per year and was available for classroom assessment every 30 days. The SRI is

an assessment that provides a measure of student's reading comprehension in the form of a Lexile number. The percentage of students who were reading proficiently according to SRI scores in each classroom was determined.

7) The score obtained on each teacher participant's WROT checklist was compared to the percentage of students proficient according to SRI scores for each teacher participant to determine if the teachers who have used the largest number of best practices according to the WROT have a higher percentage of proficient students as measured by SRI scores, indicating higher levels of reading achievement.
8) Following the first observation, the teacher participant completed a self-assessment that reflects exemplary grade level practices in literacy instruction. This assessment is the NELTA. The results of the NELTA were scored for each teacher according to the directions provided on the assessment. The scores were descriptively compared to the percentage of students in each teacher's classroom who were proficient in reading achievement as measured by the SRI.
9) The teacher participant received the scores on the NELTA, a description of the scoring results along with the correct answers and the scores for the first WROT observation listed according to the strategies that were observed. Teachers were provided with an opportunity to study the results and ask questions or request additional information prior to scheduling a second and third observation.
10) A second and third observation using the WROT and anecdotal notes as collection tools was performed and scored; each participant received three total scores indicating the number of times WROT practices were implemented and observed during reading instruction. The fewest number of recorded intervals was 40 and

the highest number of recorded intervals was 54. In other research using the WROT, multiple observers tallied and scripted observations in order to provide important reliability and validity information. In this research, the observations were scripted, recorded, and scored by the researcher. University researchers who had used the tool and reading specialists in the district used the scripts and recordings to blind score the observations. Discussions about each observation were conducted between the researcher and the person who blind scored the assessment to reach consensus and provide bias control. The researcher reviewed each observation score for each participant following the feedback from the reviewers and using the guidelines defined by the university researchers.

11) Before analyzing each hypothesis, a Multiple Regression test was applied to the data to determine if regression output of the data using WROT and NELTA results showed any relationship to the average student growth in reading achievement as measured by the SRI. Additionally, an ANOVA, a *t*-test, and a *p*-value test were performed to provide an overall view of the data obtained in the study and to determine if regression output of the data using WROT and NELTA results showed any relationship to the average student growth in reading achievement as measured by the SRI.

12) The NELTA scores were descriptively compared to scores on the WROT to determine if teachers who obtained high scores on the WROT observation tool obtained a high score on the NELTA self-assessment tool. First, the researcher compared WROT checklists to the percentage of students proficient according to SRI scores to determine if the teachers who have used best practices as measured

by scores on the WROT observations have a higher percentage of proficient students than teachers with low scores on the WROT.

13) The PPMCC was used to determine if there was a relationship between WROT and NELTA scores for each teacher, WROT scores and student growth in reading achievement, and teacher scores on the NELTA and student growth in reading.
14) Trends in the strength of scores on the WROT compared to scores on the NELTA were analyzed to describe how they related to scores on the SRI assessment.
15) The second and third WROT observations were recorded and compared to the original observations. Differences in scores between the first and second or third observations were recorded.
16) Fourteen separate *z*-tests for difference in proportions analyses were applied, one for each teacher. Additionally, one test was applied using the average pre to posttest growth.
17) The *z*-test was used to compare sample mean values to expected population mean values in order to detect potential statistical differences. Using the *z*-test, the value of the sample mean is the observed value; the value of the population mean is the expected or hypothesized value (Bluman, 2010). The *z*-test for difference in means was used to analyze the third hypothesis.
18) Beginning of the year SRI scores were compared to end of the research SRI scores to measure increased reading achievement as measured by increased Lexile levels and recorded as advanced, proficient, basic, or below basic. T-tests for difference in proportion were performed to determine any significant growth differences in student achievement among teacher participants (Bluman, 2010).

19) Additional tests using the PPMCC Analyses were completed to compare WROT scores and NELTA scores.

20) A follow-up interview with each teacher participant was conducted and analyzed to determine any new changes in instructional practices that occurred as a result of the observations, WROT, and assessment. Coaching was offered as requested by the teachers.

The procedures the researcher followed produced the evidence shown in Table 1. The researcher averaged the scores obtained on each WROT and the total scores for each teacher to account for difference in the length of time for each literacy period. The researcher followed the directions provided with the NELTA to obtain each teacher's NELTA score (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Table 1

Participant Scores on the WROT and NELTA Compared to Average Student Growth

Teacher	WROT 1	WROT 2	WROT 3	WROT totals	NELTA	Average Student Growth
1	3.3571	4.0667	4.5625	4	7	121.9778
2	2.7143	3.5	2.9286	3.025	3	114.9333
3	4.8125	3.2778	1.9231	3.5778	2	116.7143
4	6.5714	6.2	5.3333	6	2	243.8
5	3.1818	3.9333	4.4444	3.9545	2	73.6667
6	6.2222	3.7647	2.7143	3.95	1	126.1111
7	5.0588	4.6	3.5294	4.3878	1	108.9333
8	3.5556	6.0588	5.538	4.9792	3	99.35
9	6.5714	5.6364	3.4167	5.2703	3	73.7333
10	6.8125	4.38889	5.9375	5.66	3	189.45
11	4	3.5833	1.9166	3.2683	2	140.1778
12	6	4.7368	4.2777	4.9815	3	107.3
13	2.9286	4.25	2.6429	3.225	4	112.88
14	5.0625	4.1875	4.75	4.6591	1	128

This research did not require teachers or students to change practice or routines; average student growth was determined using the beginning-of-the-year and end-of-the-year SRI scores recorded for each student. The information in Table 1 will be further discussed in the explanation of the results.

Qualitative Observations

Qualitative observations of teaching practices during reading instruction, using the WROT observation tool, were recorded three times. The researcher observed and scripted the observations; audio recordings were made for bias-control checks and reviewed during scoring. The researcher re-read the scripts to identify, record on the WROT and tally the strategies and instructional practices observed. Tallies of strategies defined as best practices on the WROT were recorded in five-minute intervals. The fewest number of recorded intervals was 40, and the highest number of recorded intervals was 54. These tallies were converted to scores by adding the tally marks obtained through each observation. Half of the first set of observations were re-scored by other researchers and reading specialists, as a method to control for bias. The percentage of inter-rater agreement for the coding of the observations on the WROT varied from 12.5% to 70%. Disagreement between raters was resolved by discussion and joint agreements. Following dialogue between observers and continued dialogue with other researchers who had used the WROT for observation of teachers, the researcher read, examined, and scored all observations a total of three times, to achieve accurate observation scores.

Teacher Participant Self-Assessment

Following the first observation, each participating teacher completed a self-analysis assessment, the NELTA. The questions teachers answered related to their

perceived implementation of six domains of teaching practices, researched as practiced by exemplary reading teachers. The results of the NELTA for each teacher were recorded and analyzed according to the directions provided. Each teacher received a score from one to 12; 12 indicated a perfect score. A PPMCC analysis was used to determine whether there was a relationship between teacher score on the NELTA and student growth in reading as measured by the student scores on the SRI. Additionally, a *z*-test for difference in means was performed to establish whether students of teachers who scored higher on the NELTA evidenced greater reading levels than students of teachers who scored lower on the NELTA.

After the teacher received the results of the NELTA and the scores of the first observation, a second and third observation using the WROT were completed. Scores were analyzed to determine if receiving the information from the self-assessment and first WROT score contributed to increased scores on the subsequent observations. The scores were descriptively compared to the percentage of students in each teacher's classroom who were proficient in reading achievement, as measured by the SRI. Also, the NELTA score was descriptively compared to scores on the WROT to determine if teachers who obtained high scores on the WROT observation tool also obtained a high score on the NELTA self-assessment tool. Trends in the strength of scores on the WROT were compared to scores on the NELTA to describe how they may relate to scores on the SRI assessment. In a final analysis, the scores on the WROT checklist were compared to the percentage of students proficient, according to SRI scores, to determine if the teachers who used best practices, according to the WROT, had a higher percentage of proficient students, as measured by SRI scores, indicating higher levels of reading achievement.

Results were studied to determine if there was a relationship between teacher score on the WROT and student growth in reading, using a PPMCC analysis.

Final Interviews

Final interviews were conducted with each teacher to determine any new changes in instructional practices or beliefs that might have occurred, or were considered, as a result of the observations and self-assessment. Other questions determined grade-level and subject-area teaching changes, teacher participant's knowledge of the reading achievement of the students, and predictions of reading ability in middle school. Responses were coded and described to determine qualitative differences measured during the research. Due to the timing of the research, teachers were given an opportunity to reflect on the observations and speak to changes that might be incorporated in the following school year. The researcher offered additional information about the tools used in the research, and follow-up coaching.

Summary

At the time of the research, success in the participating district's schools was measured by school members, community members, and members of boards of education in a quantitative format. Test scores equated to success, regardless of implemented literacy practices. Therefore, the SRI was analyzed three-times-per-year for pre- and post-data, and scores on this assessment equated to reading achievement for grades three through 11.

If teachers were going to equip students with 21st century skills, so they could be successful after graduation, teachers must be able to read well at high levels, enabling students to analyze, evaluate, and respond to what is read and assessed (Wagner, 2008).

However, national assessment results, as well as results of reading assessments given in the participating district showed that more than half of the students in middle school were unequipped to read and understand complex texts. A consumer in today's society, at the time of this writing, must read texts that measure at least an 1100 Lexile; the number increased as the salary increased (Scholastic, Inc., 2008, p. 10). Teachers must be able to assess the student's measure of reading success, analyze deficiencies, and provide the necessary instruction to accelerate reading growth and prevent failure in the content instruction necessary to master in secondary education (Calkins et al., 2012). When teachers know the set of practices that improves the educational achievement of their students, they can learn and replicate those practices and ignore or eliminate the practices that are not grade level appropriate, while providing feedback to one another, based on observations using appropriate tools and examples (Fullan, 2010). Exemplary practices have been defined and must be learned, practiced, observed and replicated in order for students to receive necessary instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Chapter Four: Results

This study attempted to observe and define the literacy strategies that contributed to successful reading achievement in fifth-grade classrooms in one school district. During the last quarter of the school year, between March and May, the researcher provided a self-assessment about literacy practices to participating teachers, analyzed the results, observed each teacher participant three times during literacy instruction, and interviewed the teachers before and after the study. In the experience of the researcher, the district focused professional development and grade-level planning on increasing reading achievement and reported reading achievement scores to all stake holders. If exemplary reading practices and strategies could be identified and shown to increase reading achievement, then those particular strategies could be defined for school leaders and teachers; fifth-grade teachers could replicate exemplary practices and eliminate ineffective practices and strategies (Schmoker, 2011). The researcher defined reading achievement as increased Lexile scores obtained through completion of the SRI, measured from the beginning and the end-of-the-year scores. Scores on the SRI defined academic success in terms of reading Lexile scores.

Analysis of Data

Interviews, NELTA self-assessment scores, and scripted and tallied observations of literacy instruction measured by the WROT compromised the tools for this research. The researcher examined information gathered from these sources qualitatively to answer three research questions. Interview responses, observation notes and results of the self-assessment were categorized and coded to provide qualitative analysis about the reading instruction of the teacher participants.

The WROT and NELTA scores were compared to the teacher participants' student achievement scores to provide data for the quantitative analysis of the research. The researcher used inferential statistics, including a Multiple Regressions test, PPMCC analysis, a *t*-test, a *z*-test for difference in means, and a *p-value* analysis to support or reject the null hypotheses in this research. Fourteen fifth-grade teachers from one suburban school district volunteered to participate in the study.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1. What components of best teaching strategies for teaching reading aligned with the Writing and Reading Observation Tool are apparent in classroom observations?

The WROT included 28 observable indicators of exemplary literacy instruction, listed in Appendix C. Descriptions provided in the directions for observers using the WROT were studied and referenced, to determine whether the teaching quality was observed. These descriptors were studied prior to the observations and referred to during analysis of the observations. Table 2 lists the indicators observed and the frequency of the indicators observed across the three observation periods. The indicators are listed in order of the number of occurrences recorded across all participants and observations.

Four quality indicators were eliminated from the table. Writing instruction was rarely observed during most literacy instruction, therefore, the quality indicators of prewriting, sentence combining, writing process, and word processing were eliminated from the list. Writing was sometimes observed as an extension of a previously assigned writing project. Teachers assisted with some individual writing conferences; however, this was atypical. In two different instances, students were using the computers to

complete a report; however, word processing was not a typical part of the reading instruction block.

Table 2

Frequency of Quality Indicators of the WROT Recorded Across Observations

Quality Indicator	Number of Times the Indicator was Observed
Checks for Understanding	443
Practice Opportunities	348
Monitoring Progress	250
Feedback	248
Peer Assisted Instruction	190
Extended Discussion of Text Meaning and Interpretation	162
Use of Strategies	151
Instructional Transitions	144
Scaffolds	110
Fluency	92
Explicit Whole Group Instruction: Judicious Review	90
Opportunities to Respond	73
Use of Graphic Organizers	66
Explicit Whole Group Instruction: Priming Background Knowledge	60
Questioning Strategies	51
Specific Product Goals	50
Explicit Vocabulary Instruction	41
Direct and Explicit Comprehension Instruction	39
Summarization	33
Process Writing Approach	33
Explicit Whole Group Instruction: Teacher Directed Modeling	32
Collaborative Writing	14
Sequence or Range of Examples	13
Inquiry Activities	6

The researcher tallied quality indicators across 631 five-minute intervals. Four quality indicators were observed in more than 200 intervals across the observations. According to the results of the observations, the quality indicator teacher participants practiced most was providing checks for understanding. The WROT defined checks for

understanding as a time when the teacher was consistently watching and listening to student responses to know if they were mastering the objectives taught (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Interviews indicated that all teachers participated in one-to-four years of district level professional development focused on using strategies of formative assessment. One of the strategies in this professional development included frequently checking for understanding (Chappuis, 2009). The WROT results showed that teachers were applying this strategy.

The second most-frequently-occurring quality indicator observed was providing practice opportunities for students. This quality indicator was tallied when the teacher provided opportunities for practice to reach the objective, including guided practice, peer practice, and independent practice. Fischer et al. (2009) stated that objectives must be presented and modeled explicitly by the teacher, practiced in groups with the teacher then monitored by the teacher, and finally, practiced independently.

Monitoring progress was the quality indicator with the third highest number of occurrences. According to the WROT descriptors, this quality indicator was tallied when a permanent product was produced for the teacher to note progress toward learning objectives (Texas Education Agency, 2012). According to the observation survey, teachers were applying the assessment practices learned in district professional development sessions by providing students with opportunities for formative assessment (Chappuis, 2009).

The quality indicator ranking fourth in highest number of occurrences was feedback given to students. This feedback needed to be immediate and specific to the objective for both correct and incorrect responses (Texas Education Agency, 2012). This

specific feedback ranked tenth in order in a meta-analysis of practices reported as most effective in student achievement by Hattie (2009). It was the third of seven strategies supported in formative processes of assessment for learning studied in professional development that spanned four years in the district participating in the research (Chappuis, 2009). Marzano et al. (2001) noted the necessity of specific and corrective feedback as an instructional practice that produced success. In their research of exemplary literacy teachers, Block and Mangieri (2009) noted feedback as one of the most effective ways teachers could build relationships with students; an essential ingredient of lesson design and a necessary part of re-teaching. The WROT described feedback as immediate and corrective descriptive comments provided to the student to produce a correct response (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Procedural feedback was not counted according to this definition. Non-specific responses did not meet the definition required for feedback. However, feedback ranked in the top four indicators in this study. It was apparent that teachers had a working knowledge of effective feedback and used it during literacy instruction.

The researcher tallied whole group instruction, defined by Block and Mangieri (2009) as the time for providing explicit and direct teacher instruction, infrequently in this research. The opportunity for the teacher to demonstrate the lesson for the whole class and provide necessary models was observed in 32 of the intervals. According to Chappius (2009), students must have a clear understanding of the objectives. Exemplary teachers provided direct instruction and models of completed objectives as an essential first step in instruction (Fisher et al., 2009). Important skills and strategies were best learned through a gradual-release model, in which the teacher was responsible for

modeling and describing the skill or strategy practiced in a manner replicable for students (Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2007). Table 3 shows the total number of behavior interruptions for each teacher participant.

Table 3

Behavior Disruptions Corrected by Participants during Observations

Teacher	Intervals in which behaviors were corrected	Total Number of Intervals Observed	Average Number of corrections per 5 minute intervals	Total WROT Score
1*	20	45	.444	4
2	26	40	.65	3.025
3	42	47	.894	3.5778
4	14	52	.269	6
5	40	44	.909	3.9545
6	11	40	.275	3.95
7	9	49	.184	4.3878
8	4	48	.083	4.9792
9	12	37	.324	5.2703
10	12	50	.24	5.66
11	18	41	.439	3.2683
12	21	54	.388	4.9815
13*	18	40	.45	3.225
14	24	44	.545	4.6591

Note. *indicates high score on the NELTA. Teacher 1 score =7 Teacher 13 score =4

Observations indicated that, in some instances, strategies might have been neglected due to the high number of behavior corrections that occurred during the reading period. While the primary use of the observation tool was not for recording disruptive

behavior, correcting behaviors prevented teachers from providing quality instruction and decreased time to teach effective strategies (Sprick, Knight, Reinke, Skyles, & Barnes, 2010). Behavior disruptions by students disengaged in the learning activities interfered with learning opportunities (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). Behaviors corrected by the teachers were tallied across all three observations, using the classroom scripts taken during observations**.** Behavior corrections were tallied in the same manner as WROT observations. If a behavior correction was made in a five-minute interval, a tally was put in the box. Multiple behavior corrections within the same time block were not recorded.

Information in Table 3 indicates that the teacher with the highest score had a low number of behavior incidences with a total of 0.26 while the person with the lowest score had a higher number of behavior incidents with 0.65 behavior average number of incidents per five minute intervals.

Summary of Research Question 1

The teacher participants in this study relied on a few of the strategies and practices listed on the WROT, rather than the wide array that are represented. This could account for low scores on the WROT. The researcher analyzed 631 five-minute intervals. In 443 of these observed intervals, teachers provided checks for understanding. This was the greatest strength among this group of participants, followed by 348 opportunities provided for students to practice the skills taught. Monitoring progress through written assignments or projects that could be permanent was observed 250 times, followed by feedback that was noted 248 times. All teachers in this study received consistent district-wide professional development that incorporated these practices into

classroom instruction; it was evident that teachers relied on these practices and practiced them consistently in lessons.

Peer-assisted instruction was also frequently practiced in the classroom; it was observed in 190 segments. Meta-analysis of research showed that peer tutoring was effective for students of varying abilities, because it increased self-regulation and benefits the student who was providing the instruction, as well as the student being tutored (Hattie, 2009). Peer tutoring was a researched best practice in RtI protocols, as well as culturally responsive educational practices. Both were required, studied, and implemented district-wide for more than three years previous to this study. Observations showed that teachers were attempting to implement research-based practices taught and required by the district in study.

Extended discussion of text was observed in 190 intervals. In the researcher's experience, data indicated that instruction based on scripted basal programs was not producing desired results, and many teachers in the district implemented dialogic instruction, requiring students to read more literature, write about what they read, discuss it, and debate the essential questions or themes with their classmates (Schmoker, 2011). This number was not higher, because often the activity did not match the explicit descriptors researched by the authors (TexasEducation Agency./University of Texas System, 2012).

Explicit whole group instruction was observed in less than 100 incidents, lowering opportunities for teachers to provide consistent modeling required to access complex text (Frey & Fisher, 2013a). Writing instruction was not observed during reading instruction, so the four quality indicators of writing instruction listed on the

WROT were not included in this observation. Of the 24 remaining quality indicators, 15 were observed in less than 100 segments and eight were observed in less than 50 segments. Overall, teachers relied on only a few of the listed quality indicators to provide reading instruction.

While teachers asked multiple questions across all observations, the use of questioning strategies, using a series of higher and lower cognitive questions to get students to respond, was observed infrequently. This appeared to be a difficult strategy to implement, unless a range of questions was planned ahead of time, when the lesson was designed (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Sequencing, or providing a range of examples, also required specific planning in the lesson design (Schmoker, 2011). Teacher directed modeling was infrequent, even though interview responses indicated that teachers knew the importance of modeling. Teachers recognized read-aloud opportunities as modeling. However, the WROT defined modeling as demonstration of explicit problem solving strategies to answer questions related to texts. Charts in the room indicated that teachers provided explicit models; however, during the observations, modeling was infrequent. Reading aloud, a widely practiced skill, was not scored as explicit modeling or fluency practice according to the WROT descriptors. Additionally, students spent a large amount of time completing projects or reading independently. This eliminated time for the use of effective practices. Written responses were common; however, students working together to plan, draft, revise, and edit the responses was uncommon. Teachers viewed this as process writing, which was not a part of most literacy instruction observed and often not taught by the teacher who provided the reading instruction. Last on the list of observed quality indicators was the use of inquiry activities. This required the student to

participate in activities, such as examining objects or pictures, pantomiming or acting out dialogues or scenarios from texts to analyze concrete information and develop written responses. Some teachers in the observations involved the students in crafts related to texts and literature, and students constantly wrote summary answers to questions. Revising this activity to match the quality indicator on the WROT is one example of providing exemplary instruction that would assist students in comprehending and responding to complex texts that are difficult to understand, especially when combined with strategies the teachers seemed to practice regularly, such as monitoring progress and providing feedback (Schmoker, 2011).

Teachers spent a large amount of time correcting behaviors. Table 3 indicates that the teacher with the highest score had a low number of behavior incidences, with a total of 0.26, while the person with the lowest score had a higher number of behavior incidents, with 0.65 as the average number of behavior incidents per five-minute intervals. It is important that teachers excel at behavior management skills with all students following directions all of the time, to enable them to have maximum learning time (Lemov, 2010).

Research Question 2

Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between the teacher's self-assessment, the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment profile, scores on the Writing and Reading Observation Tool, interview responses, and student achievement in reading, as determined by the Scholastic Reading Inventory? If so, what types of relationships, and to what degree are they apparent?

The participants' NELTA answers and scores are listed in Table 4. The domains assessed on the assessment were lesson design, classroom qualities, perceptions of dominant teaching roles and responsibilities, building relationships with students, re-teaching, and motivation (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Teachers responded to two multiple-choice question stems for each domain. Each numbered answer correlates to an exemplary practice at a particular grade level. For example, on questions in the Lesson Design category, Teacher 1 chose one answer that corresponded to exemplary practice of fifth-grade teachers (5) and one answer that corresponded to practices of exemplary teachers in secondary grades (S). The table lists the domains in the order of importance for teachers, with regard to exemplary instructors of fifth-grade students. According to the research of Block and Mangieri (2009), the domains were all essential across grade levels, but varied in importance according to the grade level of the students. The teachers in the study answered questions on Form B, which was designed for teachers responsible for grades three through secondary levels (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

According to the developers of the NELTA assessment:

- Responses higher than 5 shows a strong level of strength in providing that particular strategy at the fifth-grade level when compared to exemplary teachers at the 5th grade level
- five correct responses indicate a high amount of strength in that domain
- four correct responses indicate a satisfactory level of strength
- three or fewer correct responses indicate a low level of strength in that domain, Block and Mangieri (2009).

Table 4

Participant Scores on the NELTA

Teacher	Lesson Design		Classroom Qualities		Dominant teaching roles, and talents		Relationships		Re-teaching		Motivation		Score
1	5	S	5	S	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	S	7/High
2	S	S	S	5	4	S	3	4	5	3	5	S	3/Low
3	4	S	3	3	3	5	S	S	5	4	S	S	2/Low
4	3	S	3	5	3	S	S	S	5	S	S	S	2/Low
5	4	S	S	S	S	5	5	S	S	3	4	3	2/Low
6	S	5	3	S	4	4	S	S	4	S	S	S	1/Low
7	3	S	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	S	1/Low
8	3	5	5	S	S	4	5	4	4	4	S	3	3/Low
9	3	5	3	3	4	3	5	4	3	S	5	S	3/Low
10	S	4	S	3	S	5	3	S	3	4	5	5	3/Low
11	4	3	3	3	S	4	5	S	5	4	S	3	2/Low
12	S	S	3	3	3	3	5	4	4	4	5	5	3/Low
13	3	4	S	5	5	S	3	4	5	4	5	S	4/High
14	4	S	3	5	3	3	4	4	S	4	S	4	1/Low

Note: S indicates the chosen answer matched secondary grades best

Of the teachers in this research, one answered seven responses correctly aligned to the exemplary descriptions on the NELTA. One teacher answered four questions correctly aligned, five teachers answered three responses correctly aligned, four teachers chose two correctly aligned responses, and three teachers made one correctly aligned choice. For purposes of this research, a score of a 4 was ranked high. Therefore, according to the NELTA, of the 14 teachers observed, 12 maintain beliefs and practices

that correlated to exemplary teachers in other grade levels and would benefit from studying and implementing the strategies and beliefs practiced by the exemplary fifth-grade teachers described in the NELTA research (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

The researcher reviewed, categorized, and coded interview responses and observations to determine correspondence between the interviews, self-assessment, and observations of reading instruction. A total of 168 responses were tallied across 14 teacher participants; 36 of those corresponded to answers aligned with the practices of exemplary fifth-grade literacy teachers, as defined by the authors of the NELTA (Block & Mangieri, 2009). The researcher matched statements made in the interviews to descriptors of each question provided by the developers of the NELTA to determine if teachers might have a greater understanding of the quality but misinterpreted the question. Additionally, the researcher reviewed all scripts of observations to the same NELTA descriptors to identify additional knowledge of exemplary practices.

NELTA Responses: Qualities of Exemplary Fifth Grade Teachers

Block and Mangieri (2009) found that all exemplary literacy teachers in their research implemented well-designed lessons, provided explicit and precise re-teaching interventions, created positive teacher-student relationships, motivated students in ways that increased reading achievement, and had well-organized classrooms equipped with a wide variety of materials and texts for students of all abilities. While all of these domains were important, Block and Mangieri completed extended studies to determine that these six domains ranked differently in order of importance, according to specific grade levels. Block and Mangieri (2003) completed their first study and developed a self-assessment for teachers of pre-school through fifth-grade students. In the revised edition (Block &

Mangieri, 2009), the NELTA was differentiated into Form A for pre-school through second-grade teachers and Form B for third-grade through secondary teachers. The researched and reported practices of exemplary teachers remained the same across grade levels and editions (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Block and Mangieri (2003, 2009) found that what exemplary teachers did made a difference in student reading achievement. Abundant research supported this, as suggested by meta-analysis reports of Marzano et al. (2001) and Hattie (2009).

Lesson Design. Block and Mangieri (2009) determined that lesson planning was the most important thing teachers must do to meet the needs of fifth-grade students. This was supported in consistent research dating from 1976 with the lesson design of Hunter; quality instruction based on quality lesson design was the key factor of student achievement, rather than the type of program or curriculum provided for that teacher (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2009). Pollock (2007) outlined the planning required by the teacher. The teacher needed to identify the objectives, know how the objectives would be mastered by each student, plan which learning strategies to include in the lesson, plan how students interacted with one another to optimize learning, plan how students would summarize learning, and plan and provide formative assessment in order to plan for future lessons. If the teacher did not design the lessons, the students would use the time according to their own design (Pollock, 2007).

The two NELTA prompts that corresponded to lesson planning and characteristics exhibited by teachers who excel in lesson design were: “Which one of the following four characteristics would be seen most often in the literacy lessons that you teach?” (Block &

Mangieri, 2009, p. 32) and “When you ask students to listen to children or young adult literature, you would most likely follow that activity by?” (p. 33).

According to Block and Mangieri (2009), correct choices for these prompts indicated that quality lesson design for fifth-grade students included characteristics that empowered students to become learners and inquirers. Teachers who chose the correct stems consistently:

- provide repeated opportunities for students to choose and justify answers to comprehension questions;
- require students to choose from a variety of metacognitive strategies in order to comprehend what they have read or researched;
- require students to read more and think abstractly;
- plan specific higher level and abstract questioning and exact required answers daily;
- plan questions that build students comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading;
- include planned questions that are relevant to the students at all ability levels;
- expect students to teach one another by planning time for them to explain their thinking to peers and other adults;
- require opportunities to write and summarize in all genres;
- delineate places in the book where students need to stop, think and write; and
- provide models of excellence for students so the finished student product is one that the student can be proud of when completed. (Block & Mangieri, 2009, pp. 32, 33,236-239)

Block and Mangieri (2009) observed that if the bulleted characteristics were included in lesson design, students gained knowledge, developed character, and were empowered to achieve academic success. Four participants in this study chose an answer that correlated to lesson design for fifth-grade students, recognized as the most important quality demonstrated by exemplary fifth-grade teachers, according to the research of Block and Mangieri (2009). None of these four chose both answers correctly, as defined by Block and Mangieri.

The researcher coded the interview responses that indicated teachers might know the importance and characteristics of lesson planning that increased the students' ability to comprehend texts and think on their own, even if they did not choose the correct NELTA response. Using key words in descriptors that defined teachers who exceled in lesson design provided by Block and Mangieri (2009), the researcher noted words in the interviews and observation scripts that were synonymous to those in the NELTA descriptors. Table 5 shows which descriptors each teacher mentioned, although all scores on the NELTA were low. The NELTA score of each teacher is recorded in the last row.

Coding shows that five of the teachers spoke about or demonstrated more than half of the descriptors, even though two of those teachers did not answer either NELTA question related to lesson design correctly. None of the teachers answered both of the lesson design questions correctly, regardless of the knowledge indicated by coding.

Table 5.

Responses and Observations that Indicate Teacher's Knowledge of the Importance of Lesson Design

Indicators that the Teacher Understands the Importance of Lesson Design	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Provides repeated opportunities for students to choose and justify answers to comprehension questions	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Requires students to choose from a variety of metacognitive strategies to comprehend what they have read	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X
Requires students to read more and think abstractly		X	X	X		X	X	X				X	X	X
Plans specific higher level and abstract questioning and exact required answers daily														
Plans questions that build students comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading	X			X					X	X				
Plans questions that are relevant to students at all ability levels	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X		
Expects students to explain their thinking to peers and other adults	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Requires opportunities to write and summarize in all genres	X			X			X	X	X	X				X
Delineates places in the book where students need to stop, think and write	X		X	X	X	X		X						
Provides models of excellence for students so the finished product gives the student pride	X	X		X				X	X	X		X	X	X
Total	8	6	5	9	4	5	5	8	5	7	2	5	4	5
NELTA Score	1/2	0	0	0	0	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	0	0	0	0	0
WROT Increase	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Summary of Lesson Design. Block and Mangieri (2009) listed this domain as the most important for fifth-grade teachers. An abundance of research supported the importance of this characteristic Schmoker (2011). The teachers and the districts might benefit from a review of lesson design and planning, especially as it related to specific grade levels (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Pollock (2007) outlined the planning required by the teacher. The teacher needed to identify the objectives, know how the objectives would be mastered by each student, plan which learning strategies to include in the lesson, plan how students interacted with one another to optimize learning, plan how students would summarize learning, and plan and provide formative assessment in order to plan for future lessons. If the teacher did not design the lessons, the students will use the time according to their own design (Pollock, 2007).

Classroom Quality. According to Block and Mangieri (2009), the second most important skill demonstrated by exemplary fifth-grade teachers was being able to intentionally plan classroom quality, including the types, quality, and quantity of specific materials used in the classroom. Ivey (2014) found that the teacher must provide options that intrigued students and choices for their opportunities to learn. During classroom instructional time students needed to read, discuss, and write about many and varied kinds of literature and non-fiction text (Schmoker, 2011).

The two NELTA prompts associated with exemplary literacy instruction in the area of classroom quality were: “When you reflect on the way that you have organized your classroom for literacy instruction, it would best be described in the following way?” (Block & Mangieri, 2009, p. 32) and “Which of the following is among the most distinguishing features of your classroom?” (p. 32)

Correct answers indicate that the following qualities were noticeable in classrooms of exemplary fifth-grade teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009):

- all materials are ready prior to the beginning of class;
- preparation time before class prepares the teacher for changes that occur during instruction;
- class begins and ends on time;
- consistent routines are followed;
- whole group instruction is infrequent, replaced by at least eight types of flexible groupings including teacher led groups, student led groups and independent work;
- observers notice students participate in projects at varying stages of completion;
- instruction is planned and includes content from other academic studies;
- books of many topics and reading levels are available; and
- students initiate conversations about literature and are expected to use the strategies that have been taught. (Block & Mangieri, 2009, pp. 32, 199-201)

Seven of the participants answered one of the two questions about classroom quality correctly. None of the participants answered both questions correctly. Table 6 shows which descriptors each teacher mentioned in interviews or observations, although all scores on the NELTA were low. The NELTA score showed that none of the teachers answered both of the lesson design questions correctly, regardless of the knowledge indicated by coding.

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Table 6

Responses and Observations that Indicate Teachers Know the Importance of Classroom Quality

Indicators that the Teacher Understands Classroom Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
All materials are ready prior to the beginning of class	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Preparation time before class prepares teacher for changes during instruction	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Class begins and ends on time	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Consistent routines are followed	X		X	X			X		X	X	X	X		
Less whole group instruction: at least eight types of flexible groups including teacher led and student led groups and independent work	X	X		X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Observers notice students participate in projects at varying stages of completion					X	X	X						X	X
Instruction is planned and includes content from other academic studies			X	X			X		X	X		X	X	
Books of many topics and reading levels are available		X				X	X	X		X	X			
Students initiate conversations about literature and are expected to use the strategies that have been taught	X	X		X			X	X						
Total	6	6	5	7	2	5	8	6	4	6	6	5	6	5
NELTA Score	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	0	0	0	1/2	0	0	0	0	1/2	1/2
WROT Increase	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Coding showed that one teacher's responses matched all eight of the descriptors related to classroom quality. This teacher demonstrated knowledge of the characteristics importance in fifth-grade classroom quality despite low scores on the NELTA. The specific scores were included in analysis of the interviews, and results of WROT indicated teachers may display some of these qualities, even if they did not choose the correct answers on the NELTA. Most teachers felt they were prepared and ready for class and were conscientious of starting and ending on time. Six teachers started promptly during two observations. Five of the teachers started and ended on time during each observation. The person with the highest number of coded incidences did not answer either of the questions correctly and did not increase WROT scores.

Summary of Classroom Quality. One of the characteristics of highly effective teachers in the area of classroom quality was minimal use of whole-group instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2009). However, this was not supported in other research, and district practices that promoted whole-group grade level instruction to increase time spent learning grade level material in lessons taught by the teacher (Schmoker, 2011). It was important to use whole-group instruction for the purpose of introducing objectives and modeling proficiency for all students, as these objectives were required learning goals for all students (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). While observations indicated that all teachers spent some time in whole-group instruction, coding showed teachers understood the importance of flexible small groups.

While teachers expected students to discuss literature, discussions of strategies focused on strategies to answer written questions and vocabulary questions, but were not applied to classroom discussions. The qualitative data indicated that teachers might

benefit from additional ways to engage students in starting conversations. Teachers spoke about the use of question stems. Additionally, strategies to remove the prompts and encourage students to initiate conversations could be studied in grade-level teams and with an instructional coach (Du Four et al., 2004). NELTA descriptors indicated that teachers should include multiple relevant projects occurring at the same time. This could be challenging and require teachers to change the format of their instruction (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Six teachers answered one of the two NELTA questions correctly in the category of classroom quality. Teachers might collaboratively study and refine practices of classroom quality, using this relative strength to improve the domain (Fullan, 2008).

Dominant Teaching Roles and Responsibilities. Block and Mangieri (2009) ranked the third important skill of exemplary fifth-grade teachers as knowing and applying their dominant teaching roles and responsibilities. According to the research of Block and Mangieri (2009) this was the ability to adapt materials, lessons, and curriculum to fit the needs of the students.

NELTA assessment stems that indicated that a fifth-grade teacher understood the dominant role and responsibilities necessary to excel as a teacher of young adolescents were: “When adults enter your classroom during whole class lessons, they would routinely see you doing:” (Block & Mangieri, 2009, p. 29) and “If you had to describe the role you most often perform for your students, that role would be as a:” (p. 29).

Block and Mangieri (2009) listed the following characteristics as those that defined exemplary adaptors and indicated that teachers understand their most important teaching roles and responsibilities:

- teach large chunks of knowledge in a fun manner;

- vary the amount of time spent teaching concepts according to results of formative assessment;
- teach two or more subjects in one literacy period;
- make learning fun and relevant through stories and examples;
- divide large amounts of information into teachable sections that students can practice and understand;
- learn and try new strategies and use new materials to maintain interest and increase learning; and
- include high level thinking questions and provide time for students of all abilities to answer and discuss (Block & Mangieri, 2009, pp. 29, 68-69).

Table 7 shows that some teachers' responses and actions demonstrated an understanding of their teaching roles and responsibilities of adapting materials to differentiate, even if participants chose incorrect responses on the NELTA. The NELTA row indicates which participants in the study answered either of the NELTA questions correctly. One teacher answered both of the questions in this category correctly. Coding showed that this teacher also discussed all of the qualities listed in the interview and practiced some of them in the classroom.

Table 7

Responses and Observations that Indicate Participants Know and Practice Dominant Roles and Responsibilities

Indicators that the Teacher Knows and Practices Dominant Roles and Responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Teaches large chunks of knowledge in a fun way	X			X		X		X	X				X	X
Varies amount of time spent teaching concepts according to formative assessments	X			X		X		X				X	X	
Teaches two or more subjects in one period	X		X	X			X		X	X		X	X	
Makes learning fun and relevant through stories and examples	X			X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Divides large amounts of information into sections students can practice and understand	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Learns and tries new strategies and uses new materials	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Includes high level thinking questions and provides time for students of all abilities to answer and discuss	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Makes the curriculum relevant	X	X		X		X		X	X		X		X	X
Makes sure all students succeed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total	9	5	4	9	2	8	5	8	8	5	5	6	8	7
NELTA Score	2/2	0	½	0	1/2	0	0	0	0	1/2	0	0	1/2	0
WROT Increase	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Another teacher participant indicated all descriptors in the interview or observation, but did not answer either of the questions correctly. Although the chart indicates that this teacher's WROT scores did not increase across observations, the teacher earned the highest WROT scores, and this teacher's students showed the highest level of reading achievement, demonstrating implementation of exemplary reading instruction. Four of the teacher participants indicated an understanding of eight of the nine descriptors.

The exemplary teacher differentiates through asking different questions asked about the same topic or novel (Texas Education Agency 2012). Frequent, specific, and intentional questions directed to particular students provided differentiation within the topic studied (Lemov, 2010). Specific and immediate corrective feedback provides an opportunity for exemplary teachers to adapt the lessons and curriculum to the needs of individual students (Chappuis, 2009). Intentional repeated reading and planned discussions were important responsibilities of the teacher, whose goal was that all students read and understand complex texts and participate in a rigorous curriculum, in order to increase reading achievement without being excluded from reading grade-level texts (Frey & Fisher, 2013a).

Summary of Dominant Roles and Responsibilities. In the experience of the researcher, the district in study supported the use of new strategies and instructional routines. Their ability to be adaptors was evident in the amount of descriptors noticed in the interviews. While some teachers may benefit from increasing their skills at adapting, focusing on lesson design and planning, the lowest scoring domain on the NELTA may yield higher student achievement (Block & Mangieri, 2009; Schmoker, 2011).

Building Relationships. Building relationships with students, an essential requirement according to all participants, ranked fourth in importance of skills exemplary fifth-grade teachers practiced (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Humor and patience allowed teachers to manage the diverse needs, skills, and maturity levels of fifth-grade students, The most effective way to relate to students was to provide each student with differentiated, immediate, and specific feedback about the work they were doing (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

The two NELTA stems participants answered to demonstrate their understanding of building effective relationships were: "Your students respect you. You relate to them exceptionally well. Which of the following actions is most important to you in building and maintaining this rapport?" (Block & Mangieri, 2009, p. 31) and "Your students would say you most value their:" (p. 31)

Block and Mangieri (2009) included the following descriptors that provided evidence of a fifth-grade teacher's effectiveness in building positive relationships with students:

- display a sense of humor;
- demonstrate the ability to think like the students are thinking;
- show empathy;
- recognize a talent in each student;
- hold individual conversations with students;
- analyze data so each student gets differentiated instruction;
- provide immediate and specific feedback about the student's work;
- require students to talk to each other about what they just learned;

- provide exemplary examples of answers to students;
- summarize the important ideas at the end of the class;
- value students' thoughts and connections related to what is being read and discussed; and
- value students' mistakes and show students that mistakes are opportunities for learning. (pp. 31, 164-166)

Table 8 shows that some teachers' responses and actions demonstrated their ability to develop relationships with students, even though the correct responses on the NELTA were not chosen. The NELTA row shows which participants in the study answered either of the questions correctly.

The ability to relate to students would help teachers reach their fullest potential, but was ineffective without well-planned lessons (Schmoker, 2011). In the experience of the researcher, in the participants' district, ongoing professional development provided teachers with the background knowledge of the importance of determining objectives, providing specific consistent feedback, and the importance of providing models of correct responses to the work required (Chappuis, 2009). Effective lesson design allowed opportunities for teachers to provide effective and specific feedback as they modeled and provided guided practice opportunities for students (Fisheret al., 2009).

Table 8

Responses and Observations that Indicate Teachers Build Relationships with Students

Indicators that Teachers Build Relationships with Students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Displays a sense of humor	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Displays empathy and think like the students are thinking	X		X	X			X	X	X				X	X
Recognizes a talent in each student	X		X	X	X	X		X				X	X	X
Holds individual conversations with students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Analyzes data to provide each student with individual instruction	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	
Provides immediate and specific feedback		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Requires students to talk to one another about what they learned	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provides exemplary examples				X			X	X		X	X		X	X
Summarizes at the end of class or when a learning target was met				X										
Values students thoughts and connections	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shows that mistakes are opportunities for learning	X	X	X	X				X						
Total	8	6	9	11	4	5	8	9	7	7	7	5	9	7
NELTA Score	2/2	0	0	0	1/2	0	0	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	0	0
WROT Increase	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Specific skills in the descriptors in Table 9 were also scripted on the WROT observation form. Specifically, the researcher tallied conversations that developed relationships, number of corrections, specific and immediate feedback related to reading and writing assignments, and summarizing at the end of the lesson. The results are listed in Table 9. Those entries marked as NA indicate continued instruction beyond the length of the observation so it was not possible to observe the summarization of the lesson.

Table 9

Numbers of Incidences Related to Relationship Building Noted During Classroom Observations

Participant	Started and Ended on Time	Conversations that Develop Relationships	Number of Corrections	Specific and Immediate Feedback	Summarization of the Learning for the Day
1	2/3	21/44	21/44	14/44	0/3
2	2/3	18/40	26/40	15/40	0/3
3	2/3	26/48	41/48	23/48	1/3
4	3/3	29/53	15/53	19/53	NA
5	1/3	24/46	31/46	18/46	0/3
6	1/3	15/41	11/41	12/41	0/3
7	3/3	23/51	10/51	20/51	0/3
8	2/3	25/48	4/48	19/48	0/3
9	1/3	7/37	15/37	12/37	1/3
10	3/3	25/50	13/50	25/50	NA
11	3/3	14/40	18/40	16/40	0/3
12	2/3	18/54	24/54	28/54	0/3
13	3/3	14/40	21/40	14/40	1/3
14	2/3	14/46	23/46	13/46	0/3

Note: NA indicates that the instruction continued beyond the scheduled length of the observation the teacher summarize the lesson

Participants in this research did not routinely summarize the learning at the end of the lesson; only three teachers summarized the lesson once out of three observations. Furthermore, five participants stopped to correct behavior in more than half of the observation intervals, while relationship-building conversations occurred across less than half of the intervals for nine of the 14 participants. Five teachers began and ended lessons on time across all three observations; 11 of the participants began and ended on time in at least two of the observations. While all teachers spoke about knowledge of providing effective feedback and attended district professional development related to providing effective feedback, feedback that was directly related to the objectives was provided inconsistently. Providing immediate, corrective feedback was fourth in the list of most frequently practiced quality indicators on the WROT. Teacher interviews revealed that most teachers knew the importance of feedback. Two teachers provided effective feedback in half of the observation intervals. Other feedback did not qualify as effective in assisting students to master objectives. A review of the quality of feedback most beneficial to achievement and building relationships would be beneficial. Teachers could benefit from observations and instructional feedback provided by school leaders and instructional coaches (Marshall, 2009).

Summary of Building Relationships. Results of the NELTA showed that five teachers answered one of the two questions related to building effective relationships with students correctly and one of the teachers answered both questions correctly. Interviews demonstrated that teachers valued student conversations and encouraged student interaction. Building relationships was recognized as a quality of exemplary literacy teachers, but ranked fifth in importance for fifth-grade teachers. The teachers in

the study earned the second highest NELTA score in this area, showing relationship building to be a relative strength. Review of the necessity of summarizing lessons would benefit all but one of the teachers and was also a quality of effective lesson planning (Schmoker, 2011; Pollack, 2008).

Re-teaching. In priority order, the ability to apply effective re-teaching skills was listed as the fifth essential quality of exemplary fifth-grade teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Teachers must be adept at using and analyzing multiple forms of formative assessment routinely, and changing instruction accordingly (Chappuis, 2009). Exemplary fifth-grade literacy teachers incorporated literature and the writing process to teach and re-teach students to read, understand, and discuss their thinking (Schmoker, 2011). Re-teaching must include collaborative conversations among students, incorporate ways to get students to engage in discussion and provide ways for students to show learning in authentic ways (Frey & Fisher, 2013b).

> The NELTA questions teachers responded to on the self-assessment were:
>
> You have just completed what you thought was the best reading lesson that you have ever taught, but as you survey the room, you realize your students have not learned. Their eyes are the blankest you have ever seen! What in the world are you going to do that day or tomorrow to reach them? (Block & Mangieri, 2009, p.30)

The NELTA prompt that corresponded to the ability to apply effective re-teaching skills was: “If a student asks you a question about a reading skill that you taught yesterday, most often you would” (Block & Mangieri, 2009, p. 31).

Block and Mangieri (2009) listed descriptors that define the skills required for teachers to effectively analyze student work, re-teach, and eliminate confusions:

- analyze the components of the lesson, plan, and teach another layer of meaning from the lesson;
- provide extended reading and writing practice;
- use real literature;
- teach the writing process;
- use debate and higher level questioning;
- teach students to self-assess and explain their own confusions;
- provide several opportunities to reread and discuss layers of text meaning;
- teach books in new ways;
- keep updated lists of the standards that have been taught, who has mastered them and which still need to be taught;
- reteach using novels, writing samples, and graphic organizers; and
- provide additional practice for students who need it. (pp. 30, 31, 137-139)

Table 10 shows that some teachers' responses and actions demonstrated their ability to develop relationships with students, even though the correct responses on the NELTA were not chosen. The NELTA row shows which participants in the study answered either of the questions correctly.

Table 10

Responses and Observations that Indicate Teachers Understand How to Re-teach

Indicators that Teachers Understand how to Re-teach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Analyzes the components of the lesson, plans, and teaches another layer of meaning from the lesson	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
Provides extended reading and writing practice	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Uses authentic literature	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Teaches the writing process			X		X					X			X	X
Uses debate and higher level questioning	X			X		X		X	X			X		X
Teaches students to self-assess and explain their confusions			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provides many opportunities to reread and discuss layers of text meaning	X			X		X	X	X				X		
Teaches books in new ways	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Keeps updated lists of standards taught, who mastered them, and which still need to be taught													X	
Re-teaches using novels, writing samples, and graphic organizers	X	X		X			X		X	X		X		
Provides additional practice for students who need it	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Total	8	3	5	9	5	7	7	8	5	8	5	8	7	7
NELTA Score	0	1/2	1/2	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/2	0	1/2	0
WROT Increase	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Teachers in this study required students to self-assess their growth in reading achievement and provided extended reading and writing practice. Several indicated that they included debate in their instruction, though no formal debate was observed. Providing specific structure to debates would provide a process with a set of steps to follow, as well as a specific discussion protocol to extend the meaning and interpretation of texts, both recognized as quality literacy practices on the WROT (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Although teachers may have a system of record keeping, one teacher discussed the use of a checklist of standards and consistent record keeping to differentiate re-teaching for students to meet those standards. Ten teachers discussed rewriting lesson plans; some stated they wrote lesson plans every night and changed them every day.

Summary of Re-teaching. According to NELTA results, re-teaching was not a strength of the teachers in this research. Five teachers answered one of the two questions related to re-teaching correctly. WROT observations listed checks for understanding and practice opportunities as the two quality indicators practiced most frequently. The WROT indicated that teachers constantly watched and listened to student responses and provided a variety of opportunities for students to practice the skills (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Teachers indicated the use of graphic organizers. Infrequent use of graphic organizers was tallied on the WROT, though one teacher used them consistently for re-teaching. Coding results indicated that half of the teachers used graphic organizers and found them effective for practicing reading skills. Specific re-teaching tools were available to teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Instructional coaches and school leaders could support the use of these tools to strengthen the teachers' re-teaching skills (Marshall, 2009).

Motivation. Block and Mangieri (2009) listed the sixth and final quality in the priority descriptors of exemplary fifth-grade teachers as motivation. The results of the NELTA determined this quality as the greatest strength of the teacher participants in this study. According to the research of Block and Mangieri (2009), while motivation was an important quality exhibited by exemplary teachers, it was not the highest priority for any grade level in the research, kindergarten through secondary grades, and a much higher priority for third-grade teachers than for fifth-grade teachers. Hattie (2009) found praise and rewards were not motivating and had negative effects on student motivation, in contrast to specific feedback about the task Choice in literature, compelling literature available to discuss, and time for student-led discussion were all components of student motivation and success (Ivey, 2014).

Block and Mangieri (2009) listed two response stems on the NELTA for teachers to show their understanding of the usefulness of effective motivation and the actions they take to motivate fifth-grade students. The response stems were: “When you know that the class is becoming unmotivated to read, you would first” (Block & Mangieri, 2009, p. 30) and “When you walk into the classroom and see a child who is not motivated to read, you would first” (p. 30).

Teachers who show exemplary skills in their abilities to motivate fifth-grade students in their literary achievements:

- introduce new informational materials to increase involvement in the subject being studied read and set goals with each student and require tracking those goals

- require students to produce something for the classroom, school, peer or community based on what was read
- know and vary how much time they spend teaching individual skills and concepts depending on the content;
- increase the volume, time, and genre required for independent reading;
- read with and set goals, require self-monitoring, and celebrate progress with each student and require each student to chart progress;
- use a variety of materials during instruction;
- incorporate social interaction including work with partners;
- show a personal love of literature;
- teach cross curricular high interest lessons;
- develop critical thinking and self-efficacy in the units they develop; and
- bring new ideas and new learning, energy, cross curricular knowledge, and excitement to the classroom, knowing what standards are most important for students to understand and making it possible to teach large chunks of information at a time. (Block & Mangieri, 2009, pp. 30, 103-107)

Table 11 shows that some teachers' responses and actions demonstrated their ability to motivate students effectively. The NELTA row shows which participants in the study answered either of the questions correctly.

Table 11

Interview Responses and WROT Observations that Indicate Teachers Motivate Students Effectively

Indicators that Teachers Motivate Students Effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Introduces new informational materials to increase involvement in the subject being studied	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Requires students to produce something for classroom, school, peer, or community based on what was read	X			X		X		X					X	X
Knows and vary how much time they spend teaching individual skills and concepts depending on the content				X										
Increases the volume, time, and genres required for independent reading		X											X	
Reads with, set goals, require self-monitoring, and celebrate progress with each student	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Uses a variety of materials during instruction	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Incorporates social interaction and work with partners	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shows a personal love of literature	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Includes real world cross curricular stories and encourage students to relate their lives to the curriculum	X			X			X	X		X		X		
Develops critical thinking of content and self-efficacy in units of study	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Includes new ideas, learning, energy, cross curricular knowledge, and excitement, knows what standards are important in order to teach large parts of info. at one time	X			X			X							X
Total	9	6	3	10	3	6	8	8	5	7	5	6	8	8
NELTA Score	1/2	½	0	0	0	0	1/2	0	1/2	2/2	0	2/2	1/2	0
WROT Increase	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Characteristics of a teacher who motivates students include the excitement that a teacher brings to the classroom as well as the lessons and the texts shared with students (Block & Mangieri, 2009). The WROT included an opportunity for the observer to rate the overall enthusiasm in the classroom during the observation. Table 12 shows the scores for the participating teachers.

Table 12

Global Ratings of Participants' Enthusiasm during Reading Instruction

Participant	Observation		
	1	2	3
1	10	9	8
2	7	6	6
3	8	10	6
4	10	10	10
5	5	5	7
6	10	10	8
7	10	10	10
8	10	10	10
9	10	8	9
10	10	8	9
11	10	7	6
12	10	7	7
13	9	10	10
14	10	8	7

Note: Scores are based on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being the least enthusiasm.

Teachers observed showed interest in the students and the objectives they were teaching. Based on a scale of 1 to 10, low numbers occurred when behavior disruptions frequently interrupted classroom instruction or when students were left to work independently for extended periods of time. Considering that the observations were completed during the fourth quarter of the school year, teachers maintained a high level of enthusiasm during literacy instruction.

Summary of Motivation. Teacher participants remained enthusiastic in their instruction despite the end of the year. The low numbers indicated that behavior disruptions affected teacher motivation (Lemov, 2010). Although motivation was listed as the least important characteristic of exemplary fifth-grade teachers, the teachers in the study chose more correct answers in this category than in any other category on the NELTA. Nine correct responses were chosen; more than twice the number chosen correctly for lesson design, the highest priority for fifth-grade teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Hattie (2009) found praise and rewards were not motivating and had negative effects on student motivation, in contrast to specific feedback about the task. Choice in literature, compelling literature available to discuss, and time for student-led discussion were all components of student motivation and success (Ivey, 2014). When students were motivated to learn, the teacher must be able to design and sequence a lesson to provide optimal learning or the motivation will not be effective in increasing student achievement. Student motivation was observed in increased reading achievement scores (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Lesson design, while ranked the most important characteristic of exemplary fifth-grade teachers, was the category with the least correct responses chosen by the participants in the study, with only four correct responses chosen

across all teachers' responses. Intentional and systematic planned instruction, including setting a purpose, modeling thinking, providing guided questions, monitoring related group tasks to provide appropriate feedback and well planned independent assignments to apply learning, were essential for fifth-grade learners to become successful readers (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). In a meta-anlysis of instructional practices, lesson design had one of the highest effect sizes, in relation to student success (Hattie, 2009). However, when observations in the study were analyzed, the essential parts of lesson design were only partially observed.

Summary of Research Question 2

The second research question examined the relationship between the NELTA profiles, scores on the WROT, interview responses, and achievement measured by SRI scores. Of the 14 participants, two scored at the higher end of the NELTA analysis and 12 obtained a low score, indicating a need to review best practices for teaching reading to fifth-grade students. While overall WROT scores were also low, interview questions indicated that teachers knew and used best practices in literacy instruction. However, when proficiency was analyzed, less than 50% of the students were proficient on post-SRI scores in the classrooms of the two participants that scored high on the NELTA.

Seven of the participants who scored low on the NELTA showed student achievement growth of 50% or more on the post-SRI; students in one classroom showed 95% growth in achievement between pre- and post-SRI scores. While this participant scored low on the NELTA, WROT scores were the highest, indicating that more quality indicators were observed in this classroom, where 95 % of the students showed growth in reading achievement; larger growth than in any other classroom. Many of the interview

questions aligned to best practices noted on the NELTA, but did not appear to have a significant impact on student achievement.

The study analysis compared the WROT checklists to the percentage of students proficient, according to SRI scores, to determine if the teachers who used best practice according to the WROT had a higher percentage of proficient students, as measured by SRI scores, indicating higher levels of reading achievement. The teacher with the highest level of student growth also had the highest WROT observation score. However, this teacher had one of the lower NELTA scores. The teacher with the highest NELTA score scored in the middle of all participants on the WROT. This teacher was sixth when student growth was ranked from highest to lowest. The other participant with higher scores on the NELTA ranked low on the WROT and ranked ninth in average student growth. The teacher participant with the least student growth had a score in the lower half of the WROT scores and scored a 2 on the NELTA, also in the lower half of the rankings.

While all teachers felt that motivating students was important, the data indicated that less than 50% of the students of eight of the participants were proficient in reading at the end of the year, according to SRI scores. The participant with the highest scores on the WROT also had the highest percentage of students, 95%, who were proficient readers at the end of the year, according to SRI scores. Final results showed 73% of the students of Participant 9 were proficient and 68% of the students of Participant 11 were proficient in post-reading scores. While Participant 9 had the third highest score on the WROT, Participant 11 had one of the lower scores. Both of these participants had low NELTA scores.

Lesson design, while ranked the most important characteristic of exemplary fifth-grade teachers, was the category with the least correct responses chosen by the participants in the study, with only four correct responses chosen across all teachers' responses. Observations in the study were analyzed; the essential parts of lesson design were only partially observed. Intentional and systematic planned instruction including setting a purpose, modeling thinking, providing guided questions, monitoring related group tasks to provide appropriate feedback, and well planned independent assignments to apply learning were essential for fifth-grade learners to become successful readers (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). In a meta-anlysis of instructional practices, lesson design had one of the highest effect sizes in relation to student success (Hattie, 2009).

Teachers reported surprise when NELTA choices reflected exemplary practices of secondary teachers rather than fifth-grade teachers, and wondered if the mismatch could account for the lack of progress of some of the students. However, according to interview responses, teachers took no immediate actions to modify individual practices.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3. Do scores on the second application of the WROT increase after teachers are given the results of the first WROT and the NELTA? If so, what responses to teacher interview questions and classroom observations provide evidence that receipt of the first WROT score promoted teacher reflection upon classroom teaching strategies?

All scores on the WROT were averaged to account for differences in numbers of intervals observed. The researcher determined each participant's score by dividing the total number of incidences by the total number of intervals for each teacher in order to

obtain comparable scores across participants. Prior to the second and third observation, the researcher provided each teacher with his or her score from the first WROT and his or her NELTA score, a brief explanation of the results, and the opportunity to request additional information. Table 13 displays the results.

Table 13

Participant Averaged Scores on the WROT

Teacher	WROT 1	WROT 2	WROT 3	Did scores increase on observation 2 or 3
1	3.3571	4.0667	4.5625	Yes
2	2.7143	3.5	2.9286	Yes
3	4.8125	3.2778	1.9231	No
4	6.5714	6.2	5.3333	No
5	3.1818	3.9333	4.4444	Yes
6	6.2222	3.7647	2.7143	No
7	5.0588	4.6	3.5294	No
8	3.5556	6.0588	5.538	Yes
9	6.5714	5.6364	3.4167	No
10	6.8125	4.38889	5.9375	No
11	4	3.5833	1.9166	No
12	6	4.7368	4.2777	No
13	2.9286	4.25	2.6429	No
14	5.0625	4.1875	4.75	No

Summary of Research Question 3

Research Question 3 analyzed teachers' attention to scores and changes in practices after the first WROT scores were provided to all recipients. Participant 4 achieved the highest average student growth. This teacher reported reflecting on the first WROT scores. While the scores of this participant remained higher than the others, the scores of this participant decreased in the second and third observations. Five of the participants increased the scores on the second WROT. Nine teachers obtained lower scores on the second two observations than they did on the first two. However, all teachers reported that they either did not read the results or reviewed them, but did not change practices following the review. Three of those five participants scored lower on the third observation; increase was consistent for two of the participants. Of these two participants, reading achievement was recorded at 50%, while the achievement for the students of the other participant was recorded at 33%. These results might have occurred as teachers provided time to complete projects and participate in activities, such as research and reports left to complete at the end of the year. These activities provided less opportunity to use the strategies listed on the WROT and more unstructured time for students. One teacher reported that teaching through the last minute of the school year was important. This teacher also reported reflecting on the first WROT scores. While the scores of this participant remained higher than the others, the scores of this participant decreased in the second and third observations. In the final interview, some teacher participants reported they had read and reflected on the results, all reported that they would review the results over the summer, but did not change their instructional plan or format since it was the end of the school year.

Final interviews indicated that teachers scanned the scores and results, but subsequent scores and interviews indicated that receipt of the scores did not change practices. Awareness of the need for reflection was heightened and discussed as something to do in preparation for the following school year. Self-reflection was one step necessary for building the capacity of teachers to increase their skills and knowledge of exemplary literacy practices (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

Quantitative Results

Before analyzing each hypothesis, a multiple regression was applied to the data to determine if analysis of WROT and NELTA data showed any relationship to the average student growth in reading achievement, as measured by the SRI. Results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Multiple Regression Test Results

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.5144
R Square	0.2646
Adjusted R Square	-0.1949
Standard Error	48.2453
Observations	14

The results of this test indicated that neither the WROT nor the NELTA showed any relationship to the average student growth in reading achievement, as measured by the SRI, at a 0.05 level of significance. The *r*-value (0.514) compared to the *r*-critical value (0.532) did not allow rejection of the null hypothesis. There is no relationship

between WROT best practices or the NELTA and student growth in reading achievement.

Additionally, an ANOVA, a *t*-test for difference, and *p*-value test were performed to provide an overall view of the data obtained in the study and to determine if analysis of the data using WROT and NELTA results showed any relationship to or difference between the average student growth in reading achievement, as measured by the SRI.

Analysis of Variance. The ANOVA used an *F* test to compare all means at the same time rather than comparing two at a time while ignoring the rest, thus eliminating the risk of obtaining significant differences by chance (Bluman, 2010). The ANOVA compared *F*-test values to *F*-critical values to determine potential differences in variance (Bluman, 2010). The test was performed to determine differences in means between the amounts of growth in reading achievement for each participating teacher. Results are reported in Table 15.

Table 15

Analysis of Variance Summary Table

	ANOVA				
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	5	6702.1543	1340.4308	0.5758	0.7184
Residual	8	18620.9135	2327.6141		
Total	13	25323.0679			

Note: Alpha is 0.05

The results of the ANOVA *F*-test values to *F*-critical values were compared, at an alpha level of 0.05, to determine differences in means. Comparison of the *F*-test value (0.5758) to the *F*-critical value (0.7184) did not allow for rejection of the null hypothesis. There is no difference in student growth when comparing the 14 samples representing

student growth. Students of teachers with higher NELTA scores did not exhibit a greater growth in reading achievement throughout the study period, as measured by post-to-pre-SRI score comparison, than students of teachers with lower NELTA scores

T-Stat and P-Value. A *t*-test was used to test for differences between two means that were drawn from independent samples, and the samples were taken from approximately normal distributed populations. The *p*-value test provided further evidence that the null hypothesis is not rejected (Bluman, 2010). The *p*-value test compared the *p*-value to the alpha level of 0.05 (Bluman, 2010). The results are shown in Table 16. In each evaluation, the *t*-test value was less than 1.96 (*t*-test = 0.656, 0.477, 0.0596, 0.423, -0.1845, 0.0698) and the *p*-value was greater than the alpha of 0.05 (*p*-value = 0.529, 0.645, 0.953, 0.682, 0.858, 0.945).

Table 16

T-Test Value and P-Value Table of Evidence

	Coefficients	Standard Error	*t*-stat	*p*-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	50.93	77.58	0.65	0.52	-127.97	229.84
WROT 1	19.36	40.54	0.47	0.64	-74.12	112.86
WROT 2	2.64	44.25	0.05	0.95	-99.41	104.69
WROT 3	17.15	40.45	0.42	0.68	-76.13	110.44
WROT totals	-22.39	121.37	-0.18	0.85	-302.29	257.49
NELTA	0.68	9.75	0.06	0.94	-21.80	23.16

Overall, the null hypotheses were not rejected, as there appeared to be no correlation between WROT scores of each teacher participant, NELTA scores of each teacher participant, and student achievement as measured by the SRI assessment. There was no relationship between the WROT and student growth in reading achievement, as

measured by the SRI, nor the NELTA and student growth in reading achievement. This lack of relationship held constant when each WROT score was tested, as well as when the totals of all three observations were tested.

Null Hypothesis 1. There will be no relationship between the number of Writing and Reading Observation Tool best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score on the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment and student growth in reading achievement, as measured by pre and post scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory.

Although no relationship seemed apparent according to initial analysis, further data analysis using the PPMCC analysis was performed to determine if there was any evidence to support a statistical relationship for any individual instances.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. First, the WROT checklists were compared to the percentage of students proficient, according to SRI scores, to determine whether the teachers who used best practices, as measured by scores on the WROT observations, had a higher percentage of proficient students than teachers with low scores on the WROT. The results did not support rejecting the null hypothesis. The PPMCC was used to determine if there was a relationship between WROT and NELTA scores for each teacher, WROT scores and student growth in reading achievement, and teacher scores on the NELTA and student growth in reading. Results are shown in Table 17. In each instance, there were no results to support rejecting the null hypothesis, that there will be no relationship between the number of WROT best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score on the NELTA, and the percentage of students proficient according to pre to post SRI scores used to measure student growth in reading achievement. Each *r*-value was compared to the *r*-critical value to result in the decision to

not reject the null hypothesis (*r*-value = -0.3685, 0.0335, 0.1710, -0.0957, 0.4428, 0.2426, 0.3523, 0.4542, -0.0811).

Table 17

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	PPMCC	Significant ?	
WROT 1	NELTA	-0.3685	no	inverse
WROT 2	NELTA	0.0335	no	
WROT 3	NELTA	0.1710	no	
WROT totals	NELTA	-0.0957	no	inverse
WROT 1	Average Student Growth	0.4428	no	
WROT 2	Average Student Growth	0.2426	no	
WROT 3	Average Student Growth	0.3523	no	
WROT totals	Average Student Growth	0.4542	no	
NELTA	Average Student Growth	-0.0811	no	inverse

Note: Critical value = 0. 497

Summary of Null Hypothesis 1

Table 18 shows the relationships found as a result of the tests applied to Null Hypothesis 1.

When scores on the WROT tool, and the NELTA self-assessment were compared to student achievement scores, the Null Hypothesis 1 was not rejected. There was no relationship noted between the number of WROT best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score on the NELTA, and the percentage of students proficient according to pre-to post-SRI scores, used to measure student growth in reading achievement.

Table 18

Table of Evidence

- There was no relationship between scores on WROT 1 and NELTA scores. (*r*-value = -0.368)
- There was no relationship between scores on WROT 2 and NELTA scores. (*r*-value = 0.033)
- There was no relationship between scores on WROT 3 and NELTA scores. (*r*-value = 0.171)
- There was no relationship between WROT score totals and NELTA scores. (*r*-value = -0.095)
- There was no relationship between scores on WROT 1 and student growth in reading achievement. (*r*-value = 0.442)
- There was no relationship between scores on WROT 2 and student growth in reading achievement. (*r*-value = 0.242)
- There was no relationship between scores on WROT 3 and student growth in reading achievement. (*r*-value = 0.352)
- There was no relationship between student growth in reading achievement and NELTA scores. (*r*-value = -0.081)

Null Hypothesis 2. There will be no difference in reading achievement, as measured by percent of proficiency on post-SRI scores compared to percent of proficiency on pre-SRI scores (Proficiency was defined as a score of 870-980).

Additionally, t-tests for difference in proportions was applied using the average pre-to post-test growth. Results are shown in Table 19.

Table 19

T-Tests for Differences in Proportions of Students Proficient on the SRI

Teacher	% Proficient pre	% Proficient post	t-test value	Significant Yes/No
1	33.3	48.9	0.839	No
2	20.0	46.7	1.498	No
3	14.3	35.7	1.308	No
4	40.0	95.0	3.107	Yes
5	6.6	13.3	0.592	No
6	33.0	51.1	0.97	No
7	33.0	55.6	1.204	No
8	35.0	55.0	1.064	No
9	53.3	73.3	1.098	No
10	15.0	40.0	1.481	No
11	44.4	68.9	1.308	No
12	10.0	25.0	1.044	No
13	12.0	48.0	2.078	Yes
14	30.0	45.0	0.82	No
Average	27.1	50.1	1.25	

Note: Critical value = 1.96.

According to the results determined by the *t*-test for difference in proportion analysis, there was a significant growth in comparison of pre- and post-percentage of students proficient and above for teacher # 4 (*t*-test value = 3.107; *t*-critical value = 1.96) and teacher # 13 (t-test value = 2.078; *t*-critical value = 1.96). While teacher # 13 scored on the high end of the NELTA self-assessment, teacher # 4 scored on the low end of the assessment. However, teacher # 4 scored high on the WROT tool, while teacher # 13 scored on the low end. Furthermore, there was no significant growth in comparison of pre- and post-percentage of students proficient and above for teachers who scored low on

the NELTA, when compared to teachers # 4 and # 13, the latter who scored high on the NELTA. Therefore, the null hypothesis, there will be no difference in proportion, was not rejected.

Teachers # 4 and # 13 showed the most growth in reading achievement from the beginning to the end of the school year. Teacher # 4 scored low on the NELTA and teacher # 13 scored high on the NELTA. It may be important to note that while teacher # 4 provided reading instruction for all students in the class, teacher # 13 provided reading instruction for students who did not qualify for alternate reading services. When examining the tools used in the study, while teacher # 4 received a low score on the self-assessment, this participant received the highest WROT observation score of all participants, indicating a higher use of strategies and best practices applied during reading instruction.

Summary of Null Hypothesis 2

In spite of significant growth noted in the student achievement scores of teachers # 4 and # 13, there was no significant growth in comparison of pre- and post-percentage of students proficient and above for teachers who scored low on the NELTA, when compared to teachers # 4 and # 13, the latter who scored high on the NELTA so the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Null Hypothesis 3. Students of teachers with higher NELTA scores will not exhibit a greater growth in reading achievement throughout the study period, as measured by post-to-pre SRI score comparison than students of teachers with lower NELTA scores.

***Z*-test for differences in means**. The *z*-test for difference in means was used to compare sample mean values to expected population mean values, in order to detect

potential statistical differences. Using the *z*-test, the value of the sample mean was the observed value; the value of the population mean was the expected, or hypothesized, value (Bluman, 2010). The *z*-test for difference in means was used to analyze Null Hypothesis 3.

The researcher broke Null Hypothesis 3 into two parts to provide greater study opportunity and test any possible relationships. First, a *z*-test for difference in means between scores of teachers with high NELTA scores and scores of teachers with low NELTA scores was performed to establish whether students of teachers who score higher on the NELTA evidenced greater reading achievement levels than students of teachers with lower scores on the NELTA, when the averages were tested. Additionally, a *z*-test for difference in proportions was applied to further analyze the hypothesis. Results are shown in Tables 20 and 21.

Table 20

Comparison of Student Achievement Growth to Participants with High NELTA Scores

Teacher Participants with High NELTA Scores			
Teacher	% of students proficient on the pre SRI assessment	% of students proficient on the post SRI assessment	% of student growth on the SRI pre to post assessment
1	33.33	48.89	15.56
13	12	48	36
	22.665	48.445	25.78

There was no significant difference in growth using percent of proficient students on the pre-test versus the post-test, when comparing scores of students of teachers scoring high on the NELTA to those of teachers scoring low on the NELTA. Using a critical value of 1.96, there was no significant difference in percent growth of proficient students

when comparing students of teachers scoring high on the NELTA to students of teachers scoring low on the NELTA (*z*-test = -0.102).

Table 21

Comparison of Student Achievement Growth to Participants with Low NELTA Scores

Teacher Participants with Low NELTA Scores			
Teacher	% of students proficient on the pre SRI assessment	% of students proficient on the post SRI assessment	% of student growth on the SRI pre to post assessment
2	20	46.67	26.67
3	14.3	35.7	21.42
4	40	95	55
5	6.6	13.33	6.73
6	33	51.11	18.11
7	33	55.56	22.56
8	35	55	20
9	53.33	73.33	20
10	15	40	25
11	44.44	68.89	24.45
12	10	25	15
14	30	45	15
	27.8883	50.3833	22.495

-0.102	Comparison of average growth of % of proficient students
0.0512	Comparison of % of proficient students, post.
0.154	Comparison of % of proficient students, pre.

There was no significant difference in percent of proficient students on the pre-test when comparing students of teachers scoring high on the NELTA to students of teachers scoring low on the NELTA (*z*-test = 0.154). Finally, there was no significant difference in percent of proficient student on the post-test when comparing students of teachers scoring high on the NELTA to students of teachers scoring low on the NELTA (*z*-test = 0.0512).

Summary of Null Hypothesis 3

The average growth for students of teachers with the higher NELTA scores was

not higher than the average for students of teachers with the lower NELTA scores. Additionally, the *z*-test value of 0.325 did not exceed the critical value of 1.96. Therefore, there was no significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis. In order to test all possibilities, scores were calculated individually and averaged. Still, no significant evidence was found to reject the null hypothesis. There were no significant differences observed when scores were calculated individually or when they were averaged. Therefore, there was no evidence to support rejecting the null hypothesis.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Three hypotheses were tested using multiple measures to attempt to provide some evidence to reject one or more of the hypotheses tested. However, scores on neither of the tools in this research seemed to have an effect on student achievement, as measured by the SRI. While the *z*-test results showed a statistical difference in pre- and post-reading achievement scores of the students of teachers # 4 and # 13, no statistical differences indicated that higher scores on the WROT nor the NELTA contributed to these higher reading achievement scores.

Quantitative results were analyzed to determine potential significant differences between achievement of students of participants with high or low WROT scores and NELTA scores. The results of the NELTA for each teacher were recorded and analyzed according to the directions provided. Each teacher received a score from one to 12; 12 indicated a perfect score. A PPMCC analysis was used to determine whether there was a relationship between teacher score on the NELTA and student growth in reading, as measured by the student scores on the SRI. Additionally, a *z*-test for difference in means was performed to establish whether students of teachers who scored higher on the

NELTA would evidence greater reading levels than students of teachers who scored lower on the NELTA.

The researcher completed a second and third observation using the WROT. Scores were analyzed to determine if receiving the information from the self-assessment and first WROT increased the scores on the subsequent observations. The scores were also compared to the percentage of students in each teacher's classroom who were proficient in reading achievement, as measured by the SRI. In addition, the NELTA score was compared to scores on the WROT to determine if teachers who obtained high scores on the WROT observation tool also obtained a high score on the NELTA self-assessment tool. Trends in the strength of scores on the WROT were compared to scores on the NELTA to describe how they may relate to scores on the SRI assessment.

Results of several tests were analyzed in order to completely assess each hypothesis and eliminate all possibilities to reject the null. Although minor differences were detected, no differences were established as statistically significant. Therefore, none of the three null hypotheses were rejected.

Additional tests using the PPMCC Analyses were completed to compare WROT scores and NELTA scores. Results are shown in Table 22. The Null Hypothesis was: There will be no relationships between WROT scores and NELTA scores. There was a significant relationship between WROT total scores and WROT 1 (r-value = 0.0750), WROT total scores and WROT 2 scores (r-value = 0.073), and WROT total scores and WROT 3 scores (r-value = 0.0779). This was expected as the WROT tool did not change from one assessment to the other. There was also a significant relationship between the scores on the second and third WROT (r-value = 0.614). This relationship could indicate

that teachers were aware of the need to use additional strategies during instruction. Also, there were moderate non-significant relationships between WROT 1 and average student growth (*r*-value = 0.433) and between WROT total scores and average student growth (*r*-value = 0.433).

Table 22

Comparison of WROT Observations and NELTA Scores

		Ave Student Growth	WROT1	WROT2	WROT3	WROT Total	NELTA Score
Pearson Correlation	Ave Student Growth	1.000	.443	.243	.352	.454	-.081
	WROT1	.443	1.000	.382	.264	.750	-.368
	WROT2	.243	.382	1.000	.614	.793	.034
	WROT3	.352	.264	.614	1.000	.779	.171
	WROT Total	.454	.750	.793	.779	1.000	-.096
	NELTA Score	-.081	-.368	.034	.171	-.096	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Ave Student Growth	.	.056	.202	.108	.051	.391
	WROT1	.056	.	.089	.181	.001	.097
	WROT2	.202	.089	.	.010	.000	.455
	WROT3	.108	.181	.010	.	.001	.279
	WROT Total	.051	.001	.000	.001	.	.372
	NELTA Score	.391	.097	.455	.279	.372	.
N	Ave Student Growth	14	14	14	14	14	14
	WROT1	14	14	14	14	14	14
	WROT2	14	14	14	14	14	14
	WROT3	14	14	14	14	14	14
	WROT Total	14	14	14	14	14	14
	NELTA Score	14	14	14	14	14	14

These additional PPMCC Analyses were completed to provide in-depth information. These relationships indicated that it could be important to further

investigate the use of the WROT tool and its secondary effects on student reading achievement.

Summary

Interview data indicated that teacher participants knew many effective instructional practices. NELTA scores were low; teachers did not choose answers that corresponded to fifth-grade exemplary responses though interviews and observations, however they indicated knowledge of some of these instructional practices. According to the research of Block and Mangieri (2009), the most important skill exemplary literacy teachers of fifth-grade teachers possessed was the ability to design and implement highly effective lesson plans. Teacher participants in this study had the fewest correct responses in this domain. WROT results showed that teacher participants focused on a few indicators of quality reading instruction. During observed instructional periods; nine quality indicators were tallied more than 100 times when scores of all teachers were totaled. NELTA scores were low across all participants. Quantitative data did not reject the three null hypotheses tested in this study. Therefore, higher scores on WROT or NELTA assessments did not lead to significantly higher student achievement. When student achievement results for each teacher were analyzed, no significant differences in post-to-pre student achievement scores were found. Additional research to identify the most effective instructional practices to increase the reading achievement of fifth-grade students was indicated. Continued self-reflection, collaborative study, and implementation of research-based exemplary skills is essential to increase teacher effectiveness in literacy instruction and enable them to provide early adolescents with the literacy skills they need to be successful (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

Chapter Five: Conclusions

This study examined the potential relationship between fifth-grade teachers' literacy instruction and reading achievement, based on the results of the SRI. Literacy practices, or reading instruction, were measured through the use of the NELTA, a 12-question multiple choice assessment, and the WROT, a tool for recording tallies of observations of best instructional practices, made by the researcher during participants' literacy instruction. The SRI, a multiple choice test of reading comprehension, was the district-required standard tool used to measure the growth of reading comprehension of students in grades three through 11 across the district.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What components of best teaching strategies for teaching reading aligned with the Writing and Reading Observation Tool are apparent in classroom observations?

Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between the teacher's self-assessment, the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment profile, scores on the Writing and Reading Observation Tool, interview responses, and student achievement in reading as determined by the Scholastic Reading Inventory? If so, what types of relationships, and to what degree are they apparent?

Research Question 3. Do scores on the second application of the WROT increase after teachers are given the results of the first WROT and the NELTA? If so, what responses to teacher interview questions and classroom observations provide evidence that receipt of the first WROT score promoted teacher reflection upon classroom teaching strategies?

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be a relationship between the number of Writing and Reading Observation Tool best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score on the National Exemplary Literacy Teacher Assessment and student growth in reading achievement, as measured by pre and post scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory

Hypothesis 2. There will be a difference in reading achievement, as measured by percent of proficiency on post-SRI scores compared to percent of proficiency on pre-SRI scores (Proficiency was defined as a score of 870-980).

Hypothesis 3. Students of teachers with higher NELTA scores will exhibit a greater growth in reading achievement throughout the study period, as measured by post-to-pre SRI score comparison, than students of teachers with lower NELTA scores.

The first question examined observed components of best teaching strategies aligned with the WROT, an observation tool designed to tally best practices observed. There were several instructional practices, or quality indicators, listed on the WROT that were not observed in classroom practices. The four most frequently observed instructional practices were checks for understanding, practice opportunities, monitoring progress, and providing effective feedback. Tallying these teaching strategies according to the definitions provided by the creators of the WROT, each of these practices were observed over 200 times across all interventions. According to interviews with the participants, these teaching strategies were the focus of ongoing district professional development that all participants participated in for at least one year. Some of the teaching strategies listed on the WROT were not within the repertoire of practices known to the teachers. While they may have been referenced in interviews, the practices were

not fully implemented according to the definitions on the WROT. For example, in interviews teachers said they frequently asked higher level thinking questions. However, according to the WROT questioning strategy, teachers needed to ask a series of questions from low level to high level to engage students in extended responses; this was observed a total of 51 times. Teachers frequently engaged students in discussions about novels and provided many opportunities to build comprehension through peer interaction; however, explicit comprehension instruction with explicit modeling was observed infrequently in 39 segments.

The second research question examined the relationship between the teachers' NELTA profiles, scores on the WROT, interview responses, and student achievement in reading, as determined by the student scores on the SRI. Interview responses indicated that teachers had a high level of knowledge about providing exemplary fifth-grade instruction, and running script notes during observations indicated that teachers incorporated many of the practices described on the NELTA. However, only one teacher scored in the high range according to the NELTA scoring guide, and one teacher scored in the medial range, though this participant was labeled as high for purposes of analysis. Teachers who scored higher on the NELTA did not score high on the WROT. Teachers tended to score high on parts of the WROT; however, many teaching practices on the WROT were observed infrequently. The participant with the highest WROT score also had students who made the most growth in reading achievement, as measured by SRI. Furthermore, the students of the participant with the second highest score on the WROT ranked second in achievement gains. However, this pattern did not continue throughout the rest of the WROT score rankings.

The final research question examined increases in scores on the WROT after teachers received the scores from the first WROT. Although some teachers showed increased scores, teachers reported they did not change practices after reviewing the first scores, as they were not going to change practices or incorporate other practices at the end of the school year. Several participants stated they recognized the tool to be useful for reflective purposes. Some reported the results were interesting, but they were not changing their practices. One teacher noticed the lack of vocabulary instruction, but reported that it would be investigated over the summer and included in the following year's lessons. Teachers noted choices that indicated they exhibited exemplary practices of secondary teachers and commented that this may be why some students struggled. However, these teachers did not indicate they would change their practices, but would consider and reflect on the tool when they began to plan for the following year. It is of interest to note that one participant noted the scores were reflective of third and fourth grade practices, and this participant was going to teach fourth grade the following school year. Although the NELTA was not used to determine this grade level change, it was a purpose of the assessment, as recommended by the authors (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

The researcher tested three hypotheses and conducted several statistical tests to check all possibilities of significance with respect to relationships and differences; none of the null hypotheses were rejected. There was no relationship between the number of WROT best practice occurrences in the classroom, teacher score on the NELTA, and student growth in reading achievement, as measured by post-to-pre score on the SRI. There was no difference in reading achievement, as measured by comparison of percent of proficiency on post-SRI scores to percent of proficiency on pre-SRI scores. Finally,

students of teachers with higher NELTA scores did not exhibit a greater growth in reading achievement throughout the study period, as measured by post-to-pre SRI score comparison, than students of teachers with lower NELTA scores. The teacher with the highest amount of growth received one of the lower scores on the NELTA, scoring one point for classroom quality and one point for re-teaching, but did receive the highest WROT score. This teacher's students made significant growth on the SRI from pre-to-post scores.

Discussion of NELTA Results Analysis

Block and Mangieri (2009) listed lesson design expertise as the most important quality of exemplary fifth-grade teachers. Quality lesson design was observed in the lessons teachers defined and modeled through the practices they monitored, the feedback they provided, and the independent activities they assigned and assessed (Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2011). A review of the research of effective literacy practices in schools revealed that effective lesson design, not adherence to a program or script, was the element of success. Lesson design was achieved through an instructional framework in which teachers worked together with a common vision of reading success and collectively analyzed the lessons they wrote and delivered (Taylor et al., 2011).

Participants in this study chose fewer correct answers to questions about lesson design than any of the other categories on the NELTA. None of the participants answered both questions related to lesson design correctly. Furthermore, WROT criteria related to explicit instruction were observed less than checks for understanding and monitoring progress across all observations of all participants.

According to the NELTA results, 55 of the responses out of the total of 168 opportunities correlated to exemplary secondary teaching practices rather than instructional practices of exemplary fifth-grade teachers. Perhaps these were chosen by participants due to district emphasis on rigor and the need for a more complete understanding of how to include rigor in lesson delivery. More responses correlated to secondary exemplary answers than any other grade level option ranging from grade three through secondary choices. Conversely, third grade responses, the second highest number chosen, could be due to a large number of students' inability to read on grade level. Teachers reverted to strategies usually observed in lower grade levels when they assisted struggling readers. The observations occurred immediately before and after the required state assessments; it was evident that participants reviewed concepts students struggled with according to assessment predictors used across the district during hours of instructional time.

According to the assessment criteria, only one teacher scored in the high range on the NELTA self-assessment tool. Another scored in the satisfactory range and was grouped with the teacher in the high range for purposes of analysis. Neither of these teachers answered all of the questions correctly; one teacher made seven correct choices and the other made four correct choices. Observations and analyses of the interviews showed these teachers spent time developing relationships with students. Teacher # 1 answered both questions related to building relationships with students correctly and demonstrated relationship-building conversations with students in 44 observed segments, while teacher # 13 did not answer either question correctly and demonstrated relationship building conversations with students during 14 of the 40 observed segments. While

relationship building and student motivation were recognized as important exemplary qualities for fifth-grade teachers, and these respondents felt that these characteristics were extremely important for teachers of fifth-grade students, lesson design was defined by the NELTA as more important than either of these characteristics (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Teacher # 1 answered one NELTA question related to lesson design correctly while Teacher # 13 did not answer either correctly. It is of interest to note that one of these two participants did not teach students designated as reading below grade level. Students defined as Tier 3 students in an RtI model all participated in reading instruction provided outside of classroom instruction. Further research may include wider use of the NELTA and compare student achievement of a larger number of teachers who received high scores on the NELTA to teachers who did not. Additionally, if the self-assessment was given at the beginning of the year and analyzed during subsequent professional learning communities, opportunities to act on the results, change practice, and analyze results could increase the benefits and use of the NELTA (Taylor et al. 2011).

Discussion of WROT Results Analysis

This study was completed at the end of the school year, following state assessments. While teaching continued following the completion of these high stakes assessments, students participated in projects reserved for the end of the school year. Some teachers reported providing more time for students to work independently at the end of the year as opposed to the direct instruction and monitoring they provided previously in the school year. This provision of independence would cause the teachers to score lower on the observation survey, as fewer strategies could be observed and recorded.

There were several factors that may have influenced the scores on the WROT observation tool. At the end of the year, students were often given more freedom, as teachers thought this was an important way for them to be prepared for middle school. Other students were given extended time to complete projects. The district put an emphasis on project-based learning; teachers waited until the end of the year to incorporate project-based learning. During project work, teachers observed or answered individual questions, but no direct teaching could be observed. Therefore, lower scores were tallied on the WROT.

WROT analysis concluded that teachers spent little time providing direct and explicit instruction. Studies of effective lesson design showed that explicit modeling was important at the introduction of any new strategy or learning objective. Specific formats of lesson design based on a gradual release model were developed for teachers to effectively plan and provide exemplary instruction (Fisher et al. 2011). While teachers engaged students in long periods of classroom discussion, most often the students were reading a class novel or listening to the teacher read the novel. This would not be described as whole-group explicit modeling.

Behavior disruptions interfered with learning opportunities. The researcher noted behavior interruptions in several classrooms; four of the participants corrected behaviors in at least half of the observed segments. Five of the participants corrected behaviors in more than one-third of the observed segments. Students achieve when they can learn in a safe environment that promotes learning and behaviors are corrected without disrupting the class (Sprick et al. 2010). Classroom qualities, re-teaching, motivation, and establishing relationships might all be affected by the behaviors exhibited in the

classroom and the teachers' responses to the behaviors. This research occurred in the last quarter of the school year. Discipline could cause burnout for teachers and disruptions in learning; discipline that is positive, habitual, and never optional is practiced consistently and maintained by exemplary teachers (Lemov, 2010).

There were periods of observation void of instruction. Teachers gave students time to work on assignments and read independently. While teachers indicated the need for independent practice to prepare for middle school, valuable instructional time may have been necessary to increase the students' reading achievement, as measured by SRI scores. Students need to read complex text in order to be successful. These texts were hard to understand without rigorous and scaffolded instruction; optimum learning may require more teacher directed time with explicit modeling prior to guided practice (Frey & Fisher, 2013a). While there were over 300 practice opportunities provided to the students, most were independent practice. Additionally, there were 190 opportunities to work with peers, a highly researched strategy used by exemplary teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). However, the explicit teacher modeling and direct instruction that should precede the practice was observed 39 times for teaching comprehension and 41 times for vocabulary instruction.

The researcher asked if teachers changed any practices when they reviewed the provided scores and description of the scores following the first observation and self-assessment. Most answered they had not paid much attention, but planned to review it over the summer. Although several reported the results were interesting, it did not seem pertinent to them to change strategies or practices with only a few weeks of the school year remaining. One teacher did report learning that the expectations set might have been

too high based on the NELTA assessment. Another made the same observation, but commented that the students may be struggling due to the fact that the expectations set were high, but the skills of the students were low. One teacher who scored on the lower end of the NELTA assessment noticed the chosen answers matched practices of exemplary teachers in lower grade levels. This teacher agreed this may be due to the fact that many of the students in the class read below grade level, while the responses that paralleled exemplary fifth-grade teacher practices described in the NELTA were based on the fact that the students were reading on grade level. One participant reported that, based on the WROT feedback, more vocabulary instruction would be added to her instruction. Although teachers may not have made immediate changes, most indicated that the results they obtained caused them to reflect on their practices and what they might do differently in the future.

Implications for Teachers who Provide Reading Instruction to Adolescent Students

The results of this study imply three big ideas for literacy teachers of adolescent students. First, while higher scores on the NELTA did not show statistical significant differences in student achievement, teachers in the study frequently chose answers that corresponded to exemplary literacy practices of other grade level teachers. A review of the practices of exemplary fifth-grade teachers may be beneficial and provide new insights for teachers to help struggling readers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Second, while scores on the WROT did not show significant differences in student achievement, there were some significant differences noted between the first and subsequent use of the tool. Analyzing and defining quality literacy practices and strategies may provide higher levels of implementation and higher student achievement scores (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Third, teachers would benefit from the study and application of lesson design and quality, the most important indicator of fifth-grade students' literacy achievement (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Successful reading reform requires collaborative teams and work environments that provide a safe but challenging place for teachers to study, implement, and review results of action research centered on increasing the achievement of early adolescent readers (Taylor et al. 2011).

NELTA Implications

In the experience of this researcher, school districts, including the district in this study, provided opportunity for summer workshops prior to the start of the next school year. Additionally, districts and schools provided workshops included in the school calendar and begin prior to the first day of school. Teachers could participate in the NELTA self-assessment prior to the beginning of the school year and use the grade level results to review their own grade teaching practices (Hall & Simeral, 2015). Principals could review results to gain a better understanding of the teachers and use evidence to consider alternate placements (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Teams of grade level teachers could examine the best practices outlined in the book, discuss differences in their answers, and compare the answers to the answers provided by the authors (Du Four et al., 2004). Grade level teams could use results and the priorities listed by Block and Mangieri (2009) to commit to two or three priorities and return to intermittent district level professional development to report progress and plan next steps (Fullan, 2008).

Teachers in the research discussed the importance of building relationships and motivating students. While these were important qualities of literacy teachers, they were found to be less important than lesson design (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Study of the

exemplary qualities of fifth-grade literacy teachers would show that motivation and relationships with students increased through lessons that included student interaction and specific immediate feedback about their work (Chappius, 2009; Block & Mangieri, 2009).

The district in study invested professional development money and hours to train teacher leaders to coach their colleagues. Using the methods and protocols practiced in this training, instructional and content coaches could provide teachers with routine observations and scheduled opportunities to self-reflect, in order to notice success and make changes to enhance their chosen priorities (Costa & Garmston, 2002). School and district leaders must participate, support the study groups, and monitor implementation of specific effective literacy practices found to be most beneficial to fifth-grade teachers (Fullan, 2008).

WROT Implications

The WROT was originally developed for use in secondary classrooms (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Fifth-grade teachers had a responsibility to make sure the students were prepared for the literacy demands of middle school. The IRA and the NCTE supported the 13 practices specific to literacy instruction and the 15 exemplary general instructional practices listed on the WROT (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Results of the WROT observations showed the teachers relied on a few exemplary practices, but neglected several that could enhance the achievement of the students. The low total scores averaged in the research results indicated teachers would benefit from review of best practices in literacy and instruction. Curriculum experts in the district could provide this professional development and conduct focus groups of fifth-grade

teachers to introduce unfamiliar practices, increase understanding of known practices, and reinforce the steps of implementation (Texas Education Agency, 2012). A step-by-step checklist of each practice could provide teachers with a tool for self-reflection and analysis (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Grade level teams could discuss the self-assessment protocols, share successes and difficulties, and analyze student achievement to document results (DuFour et al., 2004).

While ineffective practices could be eliminated, it would be important for teachers to realize the practices are interwoven; one effective practice should not replace another effective practice, but instruction should include an intentional delivery model, a variety of exemplary strategies, planned formative assessments, and differentiation required for all students to meet the lesson objectives (Pollock, 2007). Learning and implementing effective instructional literacy practices and strategies requires study, transparency among teachers, the ability to work together to critique practices, and monitoring student achievement (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). School leaders should have working knowledge of effective literacy instruction and would be instrumental in providing a safe but accountable environment for implementing the practices (Marshall, 2009). Focused and systematic professional development for teachers, coaches, and school leaders would be necessary for the effective literacy practices and strategies to be implemented successfully (Koepf, 2008).

Lesson Design and Lesson Study

One of the most significant contributors to student success is lesson design (Schmoker, 2011). While students might need to work independently in middle school, fifth-grade teachers must be diligent to the immediate literacy needs of the students and

use time wisely to assess and address those needs (Kamil et al. 2008). Specific formats have been developed for teachers to effectively plan and provide exemplary instruction (Fisher et al. 2011). Teachers in the research spoke about lesson design in interviews, but most answered NELTA questions related to lesson design incorrectly. Four teachers answered one of the two questions related to lesson design correctly; the others did not answer either of the two questions correctly. WROT analysis indicated that most teachers in the study were not explicit in their application of lessons.

In the experience of this researcher, teachers have scheduled time to collaborate. Grade level teachers struggle to collaborate in schools in this research where one grade level teacher provided the reading or writing instruction for all fifth-grade students and the others taught the remaining required content classes. However, though the content is different, all content must be presented in a format that provides the highest amount of student learning regardless of the subject (Pollack, 2007). Review of lesson design and discussion of its components in grade level meetings may increase the strength of lesson implementation and coordinate teacher efforts (Taylor et al. 2011). Exemplary literacy strategies and instruction should be included in all content classes (Schmoker, 2011).

Additionally, the teachers in this research articulated concern for the students' success in middle school. In the experience of the researcher, no formal interactions provided the teachers with examples of middle school curriculum content or instruction. Interviews indicated that teachers relied on assumptions about what was required for student success in middle school. In a lesson study format, teachers could observe a fifth-grade lesson or a middle school lesson, critique it according to the learning target, lesson plan, and expected outcomes of the lesson, revise and implement the lesson, and repeat

the cycle (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). Cross grade level planning coordinated and monitored by district leaders could enable teachers to prepare students for middle school by providing instruction to increase the knowledge base of the literacy standards required for success in middle school (Marshall, 2009).

Students cannot be left to practice ineptly or inaccurately (Chappius, 2009). Modeling expectations for mastering objectives is critical to student success (Fisher et al. 2011). Teachers could benefit from study groups to learn to balance basic necessary reading skills with higher-level complex thinking skills and metacognition (Taylor et al, 2011). In the experience of this researcher, the district supported professional development and had an administrative knowledge base to determine the outside resources necessary to begin this process and develop experts within the district. With guidance of knowledgeable leaders and instructional content coaches, teachers are able to improve their literacy practices (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

Teacher Efficacy

"Teaching is one of the most cognitively complex professions" (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p.187). Teachers have the responsibility to provide literacy instruction to assist students to reach levels of achievement that used to be attained by only a select number of students (Darling-Hammond, 1996). A teacher's feelings of efficacy are determined by an ability to increase student achievement through providing exemplary instruction (Stronge et al., 2011). The three big ideas implicated by this research require study, perseverance, and guided self-reflection (Hall & Simeral, 2015). Instructional and literacy coaches can help to direct a teacher's self-reflection and provide tools to learn and change literacy practices (Costa & Garmston, 2002). When teachers change

instructional practices based on knowledge of recent research, teacher efficacy increases with student success (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). The practices of exemplary literacy teachers were different from those of less effective teachers; learning implement proven exemplary literacy practices will increase students' success and the teacher's self-efficacy (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Recommendations for Future Study

While the purpose of this research was observation, instructional coaches supported all schools in the district where the research was conducted. If the research were repeated, coaching following the self-assessment and follow-up coaching based on observation scores might have changed the results, as the tools used provided actionable feedback information.

According to the NELTA, lesson design was the highest factor that distinguished exemplary fifth-grade teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Further research could include the review and analysis of a teacher's lesson design compared to WROT observation scores and reading achievement. The district in which this research was conducted incorporated professional learning communities in every school. These professional learning communities examined data and determined new strategies to improve student learning. Future studies could examine the amount of time that lesson design and study was incorporated into the professional learning communities and compare these findings to WROT scores and achievement data.

Review of other studies that used the WROT showed more than one observer used the tool simultaneously in the classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2012). They compared and discussed observations to establish inter-rater reliability. One observer in

the classroom completed this research. In order to establish reliability, three volunteers familiar with the strategies and the scoring process read scripts and listened to the audio recordings as necessary (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Seven of the first rounds of observations were checked in this manner. The volunteers used the WROT to score the script. The researcher and the volunteers compared notes, discussed differences and came to agreement in each instance where a score differed. Using feedback from each of these readers, the researcher reread each script three times and scored them according to conversations based on the observation scores shared by the readers (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Results showed that WROT scores reviewed by more than one observer were closer to being statistically positive. It would be important to use the WROT in future studies, engaging more observers and scorers in the classroom for each observation.

The WROT includes descriptors for 28 quality indicators and strategies supported by research to be best practices for increasing the reading achievement of adolescent readers (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Four of these descriptors were writing process descriptors and were eliminated from analysis in this study, as process writing was not included in the reading block of the observed participants. In future studies, participants might read and study the descriptors, review them together in Professional Learning Communities, choose the ones that describe then-current practices and those that require new learning, focus on a few of the descriptors, and then be observed using the WROT at various points of instruction across the year, with follow up feedback and support included.

Finally, individual teachers who volunteered participated in this research. Future research could include the leadership team and grade-level teams working together to learn and implement the quality indicators and strategies that were infrequent during classroom observations using the WROT. Subsequent observation could show the increase of the implementation of quality indicators following collegial review and study. Teachers working together to improve practices were shown to be effective in other research studies, current at the time of this writing (Taylor et al. 2011).

Summary

Fourteen teachers participated in this research; 11 planned to return to teaching fifth grade the following school year. The results of this research study indicated that additional skills and strategies need to be taught, observed, and analyzed to determine which strategies, when implemented, lead to higher reading achievement for students. Additionally, low scores on observation tools indicate the need to study researched practices and implement them with increased regularity and consistency. While this research did not provide conclusive statistical evidence to determine which quality indicators or strategies were the best evidence-based practices for fifth-grade reading instruction, additional research is indicated. New initiatives are started each year and teachers spend hours learning new strategies and instructional routines. Time must be spent wisely to provide the highest levels of success for teachers and their students (Schmoker, 2011). Once students enter middle school, direct reading instruction was replaced by a myriad of content area instruction that requires students to read and understand texts of great complexity (Ogle & Lang, 2007). Fifth-grade students exhibited similar needs as those of older struggling readers, but still participated in

reading classes with teachers who must be able to identify reading deficiencies and intervene by incorporating research based reading strategies that aligned to the diagnosed needs of each student. (Kamil et al. 2008).

With the high learning demands placed on both teachers and students, it is essential for teachers to know and practice the strategies that work and stop using strategies that are ineffective. Systematic study of best teaching practices was common for about 40 years and repeatedly showed that teachers made a difference, and even in schools that were unsuccessful, exemplary teachers could have successful results, as indicated by student achievement scores (Marzano et al, 2001). Research current at the time of this writing indicated that shared leadership and collaborative teams of colleagues working together cause changes that promote reading achievement; there must be an urgency to continue to define and practice successful reading practices (Taylor et al. 2011).

According to the results, several of the quality indicators and strategies listed on the WROT were observed infrequently, indicating that most teachers relied on a few strategies throughout literacy instruction. If the strategies listed and defined on the WROT were learned and implemented, teachers would be able to teach strategies and provide interventions proven to be effective and eliminate strategies and practices that were ineffective. Participants in this study reported there was not enough time to reflect on the results of the self-assessments or WROT observations.

No null hypotheses were rejected. Interview responses indicated that participants knew the qualities of exemplary teachers, but scores on the NELTA and WROT were low across all participants, indicating that best practices were not consistently incorporated in

daily instruction. In spite of any differences in scores, there were no significant differences in student achievement, according to any comparison testing. Low WROT scores indicated that much time was spent in independent practice without the necessary modeling and guided practice that should precede it in order to produce high student results (Fisher et al. 2011). The low NELTA scores indicated a need to consistently review, study, and practice the skills proven to be most effective for grade level literacy achievement (Block & Mangieri, 2009). Statements in the interviews indicated teachers knew effective practices and spent time learning, practicing and improving their skills. However, many NELTA choices indicated that the best practices they followed were aligned to practices of secondary teachers. This might indicate the need to adjust common classroom practices. Research suggests that lesson design, fundamental to student achievement, was improved when teachers worked in learning communities to observe and critique parts of one another's lessons through the use of short video clips and common rubrics (Taylor et al. 2011). Teachers need to increase their awareness of the practices they are implementing and increase the opportunities to provide explicit and guided instruction within the 90-minute block of reading instruction (Fisher et al. 2011). While motivation and engagement may increase learning there was little research evidence that showed motivation and engagement increased reading achievement, while there was strong evidence to show that explicit comprehension instruction, explicit vocabulary instruction, and planned discussion of text and text meaning did increase reading comprehension (Kamil et al. 2008). The literacy instruction teachers deliver will provide students with the opportunity or lack of opportunity to read and understand the

texts they might encounter to be successful in school and productive careers (Frey & Fisher, 2013a).

Teachers want to provide the best for their students. Teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators must continue to examine the research, review individual lesson design and instructional practices, and hone the skills necessary to provide exemplary literacy instruction for each student. Productive citizens in the 21st century must have higher literacy skills than in previous generations and teachers must know and use evidence-based practices systematically to support the needs of adolescent readers (Kamil et al. 2008). It is important for teachers and teacher leaders to review and update skills and knowledge based on then-current research (Taylor et al. 2011). Tools, such as the NELTA and WROT should be further investigated in collaboration with school leadership teams to serve as useful indicators of quality teaching and provide direction for imbedded and ongoing professional development. Reading ability is required for students to be productive citizens and successful individuals; every student must be taught to read and comprehend text to his or her highest potential; every teacher must study recent research to meet this demand and change and refine practices until high levels of reading achievement are attained for all students (Hall & Simeral, 2015). Teachers cannot be complacent in planning and delivering reading instruction. (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Teachers and administrators must deliver, require, record, and replicate reading practices that increase achievement for all students to be successful in secondary education and for the rest of their lives. (DuFour et al., 2010). Tools for recording instructional literacy practices must continue to be implemented, refined, and developed for teachers to have accurate knowledge of their practices and clear

descriptions of practices that produce the highest level of success for all students (Kamil et al. 2008).

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Appendix A

Initial Interview Questions

1. How long have you taught fifth grade?
2. Are you provided with 90 minutes of uninterrupted time for reading instruction? If not, please describe the amount of time you spend teaching reading every day.
3. In the past five years, what classes or professional development have you attended to further your understanding and skills of teaching reading?
4. Have you participated in the Assessment Literacy cohorts provided by the district? If yes, are you a member of cohort A or B?
5. If you have participated in either of these cohorts, has it changed your practices in reading instruction?
6. Did you attend the UMSL ELA cohort offered in the district in the spring semester of 2013?
7. If yes, were any of those lessons incorporated into your practices? Which worked? Where did you struggle?
8. Have you been able to take advantage of the coaching opportunities in the district? If so, please describe how that coach has assisted your teaching practices.
9. In your own words, could you best describe what best practices in reading instruction looks like in a 90-minute block?
10. When you attempt a new strategy and it does not work, what do you do?
11. Describe a strategy you tried that was successful and one that was not successful?

12. When you implemented a new strategy, how do you establish the criteria that define success or lack of it?
13. Could you define a typical day of instruction in your 90-minute block of reading? Please think about and account for all 90-minutes. How does this instruction differ day to day through the course of a week or a month?
14. How much planning do you need to do to successfully implement a week of reading instruction?
15. How do you determine what to teach each day /each week?
16. How much of your lesson plans reflect use of the core reading book?
17. What types of assessment do you give your students and how often?

    Formative

    Summative
18. What types of RtI practices do you participate in?
19. How much does RtI influence your planning and instruction?
20. Is there anything else you would like to include or describe that pertains to your perceptions or practices in the area of reading instruction?

Appendix B

Final Research Interview Questions

1. What grade will you teach next year?
2. Will you departmentalize? If yes, what subjects will you teach?
3. Do you have any plans to do anything differently next year while teaching reading? If yes, please describe what it will be.
4. What main things will you continue to do while teaching reading?
5. I sent your self-assessments and first observation scores back for you to be able to use for self-reflection. Did any of your reflections lead you to think about changing any of your practices or beliefs about 5th grade reading instruction? Please share any thoughts you might have had when I sent you the results.
6. Have any of your beliefs about 5th grade learning changed since the beginning of my observations?
7. Since the beginning of the year, have you changed your opinions about best practices for teaching reading to 5th grade students? Since the beginning of the last quarter?
8. What percentage of your students do you feel will be confident readers in 6th grade?
9. If there is anything you would like to share that concerns any of the observations I made or any of the scores I sent or anything about 5th grade instruction you wanted to share with me but forgot, please let me know and I will add it to my notes

Appendix C

Practices Identified on the Writing and Reading Observation Tool (WROT)

	General Practices of Instruction	Quality Indicators of Exemplary Reading and Writing Instruction
1	Explicit instruction: priming background knowledge	Explicit vocabulary instruction
2	Explicit Instruction: teacher directed modeling	Direct and explicit comprehension instruction
3	Explicit Instruction: Judicious review	Extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation
4	Practice opportunities	Fluency
5	Feedback	Writing strategies
6	Instructional transitions	Summarization
7	Scaffolds	Collaborative writing
8	Checks for understanding	Specific product goals
9	Monitoring progress	Word processing
10	Sequence or range of examples	Sentence combining
11	Opportunities to respond	Prewriting
12	Questioning strategies	Inquiry activities
13	Peer assisted instruction	Process writing
14	Use of strategies	
15	Use of graphic organizers	

Note: (*Texas Education Agency/University of Texas System, 2012).*

Vitae

Susan M. Dirnbeck earned her Bachelor of Arts in Special Education from Northeast Missouri State University (Truman State University) in Missouri. She earned her Master of Arts in Special Education from University of Missouri in Columbia. Following years of teaching Special Education classes, Susan received her certification in Early Childhood Education and Special Reading. She earned a Master of Arts Degree in Administration from Lindenwood University and her anticipated graduation date from Lindenwood University's Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership with emphasis in Elementary Education is May 2016.

Following teaching experiences in special education and kindergarten classes, Susan served as a reading specialist in a suburban school district. She has served as the literacy curriculum coordinator in that district and currently serves as a District Elementary English Language Arts Coach, providing instruction, modeling, and professional development for students, teachers, and administrators in the district.