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A Study of Student Engagement Activities, Discipline Referrals, and Student Achievement in Reading First Schools

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in Reading First Schools

by

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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 at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

High quality student engagement activities are essential if students are to be successful learners. Over the years, many instructional strategies and models have been devised to encourage teachers to develop student engagement activities that result in high achievement. The Reading First Model initiative was introduced as a part of the No Child Left Behind legislation and was implemented in hundreds of schools across the United States over the last twelve years. Yet, in 2009, federal funding for Reading First was eliminated. The purpose of this study was to determine the correlation between student achievement on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) and discipline referrals for classroom disruption in classrooms that practiced the key components of the Reading First Model. Eight schools that had implemented the Reading First Model were randomly selected from various Regional Professional Development Centers in Missouri. A survey was distributed to the principals of the selected schools, and MAP data were examined. The study showed there was not a correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model. The research did suggest a high correlation between decreased discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model. Research also suggested a high correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and decreased discipline referrals for classroom disruption.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The single most important skill learned in schools in the past, present, and the future is reading; therefore, if students are unable to read the written word, then doors of opportunity and success are unavailable (Crawford & Torgesen, 2007). Over the years, various reading models have been introduced in public education trying to bridge the reading achievement gap created by poverty and other societal issues (Lee, 2006). One controversial model was introduced in 2002. The model, known as the Reading First Initiative, was introduced as a key part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

The Reading First Model is a scientifically researched plan to structure primary reading instruction into a successful learning-to-read time for students (Barbash, 2008). McCallion (2008) determined, "Reading First was drafted with the intent of incorporating scientifically based research on what works in teaching reading to improve and expand K-3 reading programs to address concerns about student reading achievement and to reach children at younger ages" (p. 1). The Reading First Model involves professional development for staff members, hiring a reading coach to assist teachers and students, introducing the five components of reading to students, and structuring a 90 minute reading block that includes work stations for students to reinforce instruction (U. S. Department of Education, 2008). A key focus of the program revolves around a three-tiered intervention system that allows extra intervention time for students struggling with the reading components (U. S. Department of Education, 2008).

In this chapter, an historical basis for the research was provided. The conceptual framework, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study were presented.

The research questions to guide the study were posed. Additionally, the definition of key terms, limitations, and assumptions were detailed.

Background of the Study

The U.S. Department of Education established the Reading First Model through Title 1, Part B, Subpart 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the NCLB (Wong-Ratcliff, Powell, Cage, & Chen, 2011). The focus of the program was to ensure that every student could read at or above grade level by fourth grade (U. S. Department of Education, 2008). According to the U. S. Department of Education (2008), "This program focuses on putting proven methods of early reading instruction in classrooms" (para. 1).

Approximately $1 billion for Reading First has been appropriated by the federal government since 2002 (Scott, 2007). The program included both formula grants and targeted assistance grants to states. The first two years, 100% of the funds were allocated to formula grants (McCallion, 2008). This meant "funds were allocated to states according to the proportion of children age 5 to 17 who resided within the state and who were from families with incomes below the poverty line" (Wong-Ratcliff et al., 2011, p. 23). By allocating the funds to school districts that served students of poverty, more resources could be attainable to districts facing the greatest need.

There were strict guidelines for distribution of the funds by the states. McCallion (2008) determined that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that received grants were to use the funds for the following purposes:

1. selecting and administering screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments;

2. selecting and implementing a learning system or program of reading instruction based on scientifically based reading research that includes the essential components of reading instruction;

3. procuring and implementing classroom instructional materials based on scientifically based reading research;

4. providing professional development for teachers of grades K-3, and special education teachers of grades K-12;

5. collecting and summarizing data to document the effectiveness of these programs; and accelerating improvement of reading instruction by identifying successful schools;

6. reporting student progress by detailed demographic characteristics; and promoting reading and library programs that provide access to stimulating reading material. (p. 2)

McCallion (2008) also noted that funds could be used for other activities, such as training parents and volunteers to be reading tutors and for parental assistance in providing encouragement and support for their student's reading development.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2008), "In fiscal year 2008, the last year of funding for the program, Congress reduced the RF [Reading First] appropriation to $393 million, a cut of 61 percent" (p. x) and eliminated funding for the program in the 2009 budget. The committee referenced results from a federal evaluation of the program, which was released on May 1, 2008, as the reason for the cut. The evaluation "found that the program has had no impact on students' reading comprehension" (Klein, 2008, para. 2). Furthermore, a series of reports by the Inspector

General were referenced "that suggested conflicts of interest had occurred among officials and contractors who helped implement the program in its early years" (Klein, 2008, para. 3). A proponent of Reading First, U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spelling, asserted:

> Reading First has done so much to crack the code on how to get kids to read. It would be tragic to cut the nation's only reading program when so many policymakers and teachers know it's working to increase achievement. (as cited in Klein, 2008, para. 6)

Reading First Model

Based on early reading research, five essential components critical for student learning became the foundation of the Reading First Model. The components are: "(1) phonemic awareness; (2) phonics; (3) vocabulary development; (4) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and (5) reading comprehension strategies" (Gamse, 2008, p. 4). Students who were introduced to the five components of reading at a young age had a much better chance of mastering reading as they continued through school (Reading First's Impact, 2009).

> Trainin and Wilson (2009-2010) ascertained:

> The program has seen great success in increasing the proportion of students acquiring basic literacy skills of phonemic awareness, decoding, and oral reading fluency. The initial success has led to an increase in outcomes even for comprehension and vocabulary areas that are much harder to remediate. (p. 20)

The success of the program seems to be based on the transformation of teacher training, students' progress monitoring, and the use of explicit instruction in the classroom (Trainin & Wilson, 2009-2010).

To understand the processes involved in the Reading First Model, an in-depth review of one school's implementation of the program may provide further insight. The school district, located in a southwest region of Missouri, established reading as a top school improvement goal. During the last seven years, the district has established goals to increase the percentage of kindergarten through third grade students who performed on or above grade level, as measured by the third grade Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), to raise the reading scores.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) has served as the primary mechanism to monitor improvement (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). The first four years of the program, including the 2008-2009 school year, were initiated through the Reading First grant (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). Following the termination of the grant, the district decided to continue the Reading First Model, funding the program with local dollars (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013).

A protected, uninterrupted time period for teaching reading, known as the reading block, is a priority to the district; therefore, the district continues to protect the period of 90-120 minutes each day (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). The Reading Coach implements a three-tier intervention model allowing students in the bottom tier the extra reading instruction needed on a daily basis, while classroom teachers continue to use a 30 minute work station time for students to practice new

strategies learned during group instruction (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). The Reading Coach uses DIBELS for beginning, middle, and end-of-year assessments, and reading groups are constructed using data from this formative assessment (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). Students placed in intervention groups are tested biweekly to guide instruction during interventions (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013).

Effective student engagement in academic areas is another area directly affected by the Reading First Model. The program emphasizes high quality instruction and interactive workstation activities as a key to the success of the program. All instruction and work stations are data driven, allowing teachers to differentiate instructional strategies, tier two and three intervention lessons, and small group reinforcement activities (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). The premise is if teachers could drive instruction from data gained from formative evaluation, in this district's case, DIBELS, then students would more likely become highly engaged in learning activities (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). These learning activities not only reinforce whole group instruction, but also keep students on task because they feel successful in the tasks given.

High quality professional development is another component of the Reading First Model. In this school district, teachers and staff members involved in the process have attended rigorous professional development activities at the building, regional, state, and national levels (Reading First's Impact, 2009). Through the professional development opportunities, teachers have learned the various strategies to implement in association with the Reading First Model.

Many teachers have had to change, not only the way they taught, but also the appearance of the classroom. Monumental changes have been made in student interactions. Certain teachers were used to having students in their seats and working quietly at their desks throughout the day (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013).

There is nothing quiet about the Reading First Model. Students are encouraged to be interactive during whole group instruction and while engaged at work stations (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). Because students are active and moving around the classroom engaged in different learning activities, less classroom discipline incidents occur (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). Students learn through doing and enjoying the learning activities, and a happy student is a well-behaved student (Schussler, 2009).

Riepl (personal communication, May 17, 2013) also pointed out the extensive progress monitoring that Reading First requires. All students are tested using DIBELS at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. The assessment schedule allows for teachers to quickly identify students' learning gaps. Students not performing at grade level are placed in intervention groups for extra instruction and practice (H. Riepl, personal communication, May 17, 2013). Then, Riepl (personal communication, May 17, 2013) reported, student progress is monitored (DIBELS) every two weeks to insure adequate progress is being made.

Conceptual Framework

A positivist framework was used for this study. Butin (2010) maintained, "Positivism underpins our commonsense beliefs that the world and its workings can be

known through objective, neutral, and rigorous means" (p. 60). Positivism was developed in the mid-nineteenth century, and "the word itself was coined by Auguste Comte, who founded modern sociology, in an attempt to describe the potential of 'positively' guiding society through a scientific understanding of the social world" (Butin, 2010, p. 60).

The positivist research perspective allowed the focus to be placed on the strategies the Reading First Model offered that traditional classroom methods did not. The nontraditional classroom setting of the Reading First Model incorporates student engagement and movement during learning, which fosters positive student behavior. Positivism "is a belief that we can truly figure out 'what works' through the right procedures and practices, be it in the spheres of medicine, bridge building, or education" (Butin, 2010, p. 60).

This study, through the positivist approach, sought to determine the correlation between the strategies implemented as part of the Reading First Model and improved student achievement, along with a reduction in discipline referrals for classroom disruption. The framework of positivism was considered in answering the research questions posed in this study

One primary difference between a Reading First classroom and a traditional reading classroom is the focus on student engagment. Students should not just be kept "busy," they should be kept "learning." Butin (2010) surmised, "Positivism, to put it in the simplest of terms, is about finding the one best answer" (p. 60). To reveal the answer using the positivist approach, the research would focus on the student engagement variable to determine the correlation between high quality student

engagement and higher achievement. Also, the research would focus on the number of discipline referrals for classroom disruptions. Therefore, a close examination of these variables under the umbrella of the Reading First Model serves as the purpose of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the loss of Reading First federal funds and the controversy over the efficacy of the program, it was important to examine the correlation between Reading First and higher achievement scores to determine if school districts should retain the model. Of equal importance was investigating the correlation between explicit instruction and active engagement demanded by the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption. With budgets decreasing and accountability increasing, a critical examination of programs utilized by teachers is fiscally prudent.

Purpose of the Study

The Reading First Model "has spread awareness of what should be going on in the classrooms and in the teacher-training institutions. It has shown that a comprehensive solution to the nation's reading crisis is right in front of our noses" (Stern, 2007, para. 44). Since federal funding was eliminated in 2009, districts have had to make decisions about whether to continue the program and fund it locally, maintain key components of the program and do away with others, or eliminate the program all together. For the purpose of this study, the key components of the Reading First Model included scientifically-based instruction of a core reading program, high quality professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute

uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30 minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, & Nelson, 2010).

Research exists on the correlation between student engagement and student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) and between student engagement and discipline referrals for classroom disruption (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). However, there is little research on the correlation between increased student achievement and discipline referrals for disruptions in classrooms practicing the key components of the Reading First Model.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model?

2. What is the correlation between discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model?

3. What is the correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption?

Hypotheses

Null hypothesis 1. There is not a correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model.

Null hypothesis 2. There is not a correlation between discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model.

Null hypothesis 3. There is not a correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Alphabetics. Defined as "associating sounds with letter symbols" (Phonics for Free, n.d., para. 4).

Differentiated instruction. Defined by Huebner (2010) as "a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class" (p. 79).

Explicit instruction. Defined by Archer and Hughes (2011) as "a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching academic skills" (p. 1).

Fluency. Reading out loud with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel, 2001, para. 14).

Intervention. A teaching strategy involving "increased intensity of instruction through additional time in either a small group or one-to-one basis, where re-teaching, review, and supervised practice focus on the most essential learning needs of the student/s and provide instruction that is both explicit and systematic" (Crawford & Torgesen, 2007, p. 1).

Manipulative. Lewis (n.d.) found, "in the context of classroom instruction, the word manipulative refers to items that students use to support hands-on learning" (para. 1).

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). Schwab (2001) defined the MAP as "a series of assessments for communication arts, mathematics and science at grades 3-8" (para. 1).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB was "signed into law by President Bush on Jan. 8, 2002 [and] was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the central federal law in pre-collegiate education" (NCLB, 2004, para. 1).

National Reading Panel (NRP). Created in 1997, the panel "was asked by Congress to assess the status of research-based knowledge about reading, including various approaches to teaching children to read" (National Reading Panel, 2001, para. 1).

Phonemic awareness. In reading, "phonemes are the smallest units making up spoken language… Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate these phonemes in spoken words" (National Reading Panel, 2001, para. 10).

Phonics. In reading, phonics is "learning how letters correspond to sounds and how to use this knowledge in reading and spelling" (National Reading Panel, 2001, para. 12).

Student engagement. Krause and Coates (2008) defined student engagement as "the extent to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked with high-quality learning outcomes" (p. 493).

Limitations

The following limitations were identified in this study:

1. The size of the sample.

2. The instrument was created by the researcher.

3. Implementation and fidelity to the Reading First Model. Not all teachers incorporate student engagement activities in the same manner.

4. Student achievement data, since not all districts may have incorporated the Reading First Model consistently.

5. Student scores from grade three were used because this is the first year students in Missouri take the MAP and the last grade level to implement the Reading First Model.

6. Mean NCE scores data were collected from the MODESE through the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS) Portal.

7. The information obtained through the survey may not reflect other stakeholders' opinions.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made as part of the collection and study of the data:

1. Students are treated equally within the same classroom.

2. Teachers followed the Reading First approved curriculum

3. Teachers implemented the Reading First Model according to Reading First guidelines.

4. Respondents completed the survey honestly and without bias.

Summary

The Reading First Model involves professional development for staff members, hiring of a reading coach to assist teachers and students, introducing the five components of reading to students, and structuring a 90 minute reading block that includes work

stations for students to reinforce their instruction. For the purpose of this study, the key components of the Reading First Model included scientifically-based instruction of a core reading program, high quality professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30 minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, & Nelson, 2010). A key focus of the model revolves around a three-tiered intervention system that allows extra intervention time for students who struggle with the reading components.

In Chapter One, the background information included an historical basis for the research. The conceptual framework, positivism, was explained. The positivist perspective focuses on truth and finding the answer to the key question, "What is the right answer?" (Butin, 2010, p. 60). The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions were also introduced.

In Chapter Two, a literature review of supporting and opposing evidence surrounding the Reading First Model was discussed. In Chapter Three, the methodology used in this quantitative study was described. An overview of the problem and purpose of the study was presented, and the null hypothses were introduced. Descriptions of the population and sample were provided, as well as the instrumentation and analysis process.

Chapter Four included a review of the study design, sample, and demographic data. Also presented were an analysis of the mean NCE scores and discipline data for classroom disruptions gathered from the same sample of Missouri school districts. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMC) was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between the two variables (Bluman, 2010).

The numerical data were represented by use of figures and tables in an easy to understand format. The survey questions relating to the principals' perspectives on student engagement activities in the Reading First classroom were summarized and detailed. A summary of the study and findings, the conclusions drawn from the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study were contained in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The ability to read and comprehend what has been read is a direct path to student

success in both academics and in life (Reading First's Impact, 2009). Positive student

behavior can improve student achievement, and therefore, provide students with success

in life. One of the key ways to ensure students behave in a positive manner is to keep

them actively engaged. Students who are not kept actively engaged are generally the

students who become discipline problems and ultimately may drop out of school (Center

for Mental Health in Schools, 2010).

Many times, discipline issues develop because the student struggles with reading.

Students with low reading levels begin falling behind in school, because if they are

unable to read, they are unable to comprehend the subject matter within the text and

materials presented by educators. Most educational information requires a student to be

able to read; it is no wonder many become frustrated and bored when they are asked to

comprehend material well above their reading level. These are students who become

classroom disruptions and are sent to the principal's office with discipline issues

(Huebner, 2010). Due to concerns of poor reading abilities and discipline issues,

stakeholders, at different levels, become involved in an effort to increase literacy and

decrease discipline.

Ramirez (2000) presented a brief historical summary of the federal government's

involvement in literacy: "In 1997, Congress approved the creation of a National Reading

Panel (NRP) to initiate a national, comprehensive, research-based effort on alternative

instructional approaches to reading instruction and to guide the development of public

policy on literacy instruction" (p. 9). This panel held public hearings and discussions and

evaluated research in order to narrow the focus for more intensive study (Ramirez, 2000).

The topics for study included alphabetics, fluency, and comprehension (Ramirez, 2000).

In April 2000, the National Reading Panel published the *Report of the National Reading*

Panel: Report of the Subgroups (National Reading Panel, 2001). From this report,

Reading First legislation was formulated within Title I of NCLB. NCLB required student

literacy to be assessed in grades three through eight, annually. Additionally, schools are

held accountable to show adequate yearly progress (AYP) and to eliminate the

achievement gap by 2014 (Collins Block, Parris, Reed, Whitely, & Cleveland, 2009).

Over $1 billion a year funded districts' Reading First Models all over the United

States. Most districts received three-year grants, and some were granted one or two-year

extensions. As money ran out for the grants, districts evaluated the program and set

priorities that allowed the program to continue, allowed for a modified version of the

program, or dropped the program all together and tried a new approach (Reading First's

Impact, 2009).

The Reading First Model

The Reading First Model focuses on keeping students reading on grade level by

intense reading instruction, regular benchmark testing, and instructor-provided daily

interventions for those students not reading at grade level. Manzo (2005) found the

following:

> The program forged under the No Child Left Behind Act is expected to pump $6
>
> billion into reading programs over six years. Already, more than 4,700 schools
>
> have received grants, though a small number of schools have been dropped from
>
> the program for failing to fulfill its implementation or accountability

requirements. Hard data on the program's effectiveness are still a year or more away, but many state officials say they have received widespread reports from schools and districts of improved morale, more effective instruction, and, in a few cases, higher test scores. (p. 1)

The program is intended to be a 90 minute block; however, many schools find the block growing larger with more cross-curricular activities taking place. Science and social studies lessons are reinforced through reading activities, and vocabulary words are introduced (Richardson, 2009). Much of the stress teachers experienced by trying to get all four core subjects into each school day has been relieved since "publishing companies have recognized the need for nonfiction texts and now offer a variety of leveled texts appropriate for guided reading" (Richardson, 2009, p. 185). Most social studies and science texts are written above assigned reading grade levels, and the reading becomes very frustrating to students (Richardson, 2009). By introducing the concepts during reading time, the teacher ties the subjects together, and the student is then able to connect with the subject when it is re-addressed (Richardson, 2009).

The Reading First Model is a multi-tiered support system for young students who are just beginning to learn to read:

The idea is that all students would receive basic classroom instruction that's based on data from assessments and teaching practices improved with training programs and coaching from experts. In the case of elementary reading, this level of instruction would include the 90 minute block of reading time students get every day, during which they work on skills like phonics and fluency. (Behlmann, 2008, para. 3)

For most students, a 90 minute block is all that is required; however, there are those students who require additional intervention time. Approximately 15% receive supplemental intervention that might include small-group instruction and more intensive progress monitoring, and another 5% might need even more support (Behlmann, 2008). These students receive the most individualized instruction (Behlmann, 2008). However, "no reading program by itself has ever been shown to be truly successful – not with all children and all teachers" (Wren, 2002, p. 2). Individual districts must determine which strategies provide the desired results.

Students learn to read in kindergarten through third grade, and in fourth grade students begin the process of reading to learn (Glenberg, Willford, Gibson, Goldberg, & Xiaojin, 2011). It is essential that reading comprehension continues to develop as students find it necessary to gain information in all academic subjects. Benefits of reading strategies developed in early years allow students to smoothly transition those strategies across the curriculum (Glenberg et al., 2011).

It is virtually impossible for students to become successful if they do not have the necessary skills. The most basic of those skills, and one of the most important, is the ability to read. Wren (2002) insisted, "the demand and need for literacy has increased markedly. Literacy now is a prerequisite for success. In the future, the ability to read will be an increasingly indispensable skill given the growing technology and information explosion" (p. 2). For this reason, it is imperative educators work even more diligently to ensure students can read at grade level by the end of each school year. Many agree, "Reading First is not a perfect program, but it has increased teacher expertise in effective reading instruction. All children benefit when teachers have the knowledge, resources,

and support they need to make every child a reader" ("Reading First should," 2007, p. 6).

It is vital students be reached immediately upon entering school in order to ensure success in all the components of reading. Gamse (2008) contended, "the Reading First legislation requires programs and instruction to be based on scientific research in reading, and aims to ensure that all children can read above grade level by the end of third grade, thereby significantly reducing the number of students who experience difficulties in later years" (p. 1). Educators involved with the grant received numerous hours of professional development preparing teachers for the implicit instruction of the "five essential components of reading instruction: (1) phonemic awareness; (2) phonics; (3) vocabulary development; (4) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and (5) reading comprehension strategies" (Gamse, 2008, p. 4). Once students gain effective use of these components, reading becomes a skill, not a frustration.

Phonemic awareness refers to an individual's ability to realize words are made up of individual sounds, and those sounds can be assembled in different ways to create words (Reading First's Impact, 2009). Phonemic awareness is used in the early stages of reading development, primarily in kindergarten and first grade. An example of a phonemic awareness activity would be teaching children to recognize rhyming words.

Phonics instruction helps students not only learn but understand relationships between the letters of written language and sounds of the spoken word. Students are able to recognize and predict realationships between sounds and letters, which improves the skill of decoding unfamiliar words (Reading First's Impact, 2009). Research shows students who participated in Reading First could decode words better than students who did not participate in Reading First (Reading First's Impact, 2009).

Vocabulary development refers to both oral and reading vocabulary. New word acquisition and the ability to utilize those words in reading and conversation is the ultimate goal. The two must work together in order for the student vocabulary to develop fully (Reading First's Impact, 2009).

Reading fluency is a student's ability to read accurately and smoothly. This is tested by speed and accuracy while reading aloud. The less the student has to focus on each individual word, the more he or she can focus on the meaning of the passages (Reading First's Impact, 2009).

The final component of reading instuction is comprehension. It does not matter how fast a student can read if he or she gets nothing out of the text. Comprehension refers to the understanding of the text being read (Reading First's Impact, 2009). All these components of reading instruction must work cohesively if a student is to become a successful and lifelong reader. The Reading First Model focuses on training teachers to use these five areas of reading instruction, allowing them to prepare useful engagement activities for students to practice during reading time. These same components are used during small group interventions and incorporated into reading work stations (Wong-Ratcliff et al., 2011).

Criticisms of Reading First

Although the Reading First Program is the only component of the NCLB law to be considered effective during the Bush White House years, that administration did little to protect it from personnel and budget cuts (Barbash, 2008). There was also fallout from allegations:

Complaints from three vendors who felt unfairly shut out of the program led to an

investigation and a series of reports by the Department of Education's Office of

the Inspector General citing supposed lapses by Reading First staff and *potential*

conflicts of interest among contractors and panelists reviewing programs.

(Barbash, 2008, p. 49)

Barbash (2008) clarified the scandal: "The law's framers and program leadership sought

to attack a complex pedagogical problem that the federal government was never designed

to solve: illiteracy caused by faulty teaching" (p. 53).

There were also accusations of data misinterpretation. Shannon (2007) argued,

"they identify a few schools serving minority and low income populations that

demonstrate marked improvements and suggest that they are models for all programs"

(p. 6). Shannon (2007) reviewed four studies: the Education Trust's *Primary Progress,*

Secondary Challenge (Hall & Kennedy, March 2006); the Civil Rights Project's *Tracking*

the Gaps (Lee, June 2006); Berliner's (2006) "Our Impoverished View of Education

Reform;" and the U.S. Department of Education's *Inspector General Report on the*

Reading First Initiative (September, 2006). Shannon (2007) concluded, "True to the

complexities of the law and its implementation, these reports do not end in agreement

about its reauthorization" (p. 6). Much can be debated about the effectiveness or

ineffectiveness of the Reading First Model. Like so many educational programs,

individual districts must find the program that allows their students to be successful.

Hall and Kennedy (2006) found gains in reading were minimal overall and

primarily at the elementary level. A concern was noted that in many states low income

and minority students were not showing as much success. However, Hall and Kennedy

(2006) concluded there was cause to be optimistic since there are schools leading the way in meeting the challenges of improving curriculum and instruction. With these findings, the Education Trust supported the reauthorization of Reading First due to the changes in the way funds were allocated and teacher assignments (as cited in Shannon, 2007).

Lee (2006) examined the same data but found different results. Lee chose to use trend analysis to project rates of achievement and then compared the projected line to the actual rates of change from the data (as cited in Shannon, 2007). Shannon (2007) felt, "this put the basic assumptions of NCLB to the test – does accountability alone produce greater achievement gains for all students and accelerate those gains for low income and minority students?" (p. 7). Lee (2006) reported the following four conclusions: (1) NCLB did not have a significant impact on reading achievement; (2) NCLB was not closing racial gaps, although more minority students were reaching proficiency; (3) NCLB had not succeeded in the first generation states; and (4) NCLB state data are misleading, especially for impoverished and minority students.

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) began its investigation after several textbook venders complained that officials were disrupting the free market for textbooks under NCLB. The duty of the Inspector General is to monitor government agencies and their practices (McCallion, 2008). In September of 2006, a series of reports were issued by OIG (McCallion, 2008). The first was on the grant application process. Audit reports focused on the Education Department's (ED) administration of the program, the RMC Research Corporation's Reading First contracts, and on several states' program administration (McCallion, 2008).

The reports were highly critical of the implementation of the program by the ED, and in effect, corroborated many of the concerns that had been filed with the OIG (McCallion, 2008). The report did not interpret findings; instead, the report described problems and recommended the problems be rectified, according to law (Shannon, 2007). Shannon (2007) concluded stacking the panel undermined the backbone of NCLB and Reading First. Second, Shannon (2007) reported the conflict of interest among panel members clearly demonstrated the role business played in NCLB: "Commercial publishers hire experts to represent their programs in order to increase their market share. When those panel members make decisions about which materials can be used, it distorts the market" (p. 9).

Due to the controversy surrounding the program and its administration and implementation, Reading First funding was cut from $1 billion in FY2007 to $393 million in FY2008 (McCallion, 2008). The Bush Administration requested the funding be reinstated to $1 billion for FY 2009 (McCallion, 2008). In a congressional report, McCallion (2008) presented several criticisms of the program. Complaints ranged from a perception of "overprescriptiveness" in the administration of the program, a perception that the ED had insufficient transparency regarding specific requirements of the states, and the aforementioned allegations of conflicts of interest between program consultants and commercial reading and assessment companies (McCallion, 2008).

McCallion (2008) believed the primary implementation issues stressed the fact there were no standards set nationally. McCallion (2008) contended, "state assessment measures and cut-off scores for determining reading proficiency vary from state to state, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions on Reading First's performance from

these data" (p. 4). McCallion (2008) also cited concerns with the ED's use of

Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) in regard to Reading First. One of the

primary concerns was no differentiation between SBRR intervention programs that had

or had not been evaluated for effectiveness. An argument was also made by Robert

Slavin, Chairman of The Success for All Foundation, that ED had limited the definition

of SBRR in its implementation of the Reading First Program (McCallion, 2008). Slavin

(as cited in McCallion, 2008) stated in his letter to the ED that the ED had essentially

narrowed the definition of SBRR to the five "essential components" of reading identified

by the National Reading Panel. Research on effectiveness had been disregarded. Since

Reading First was associated with and managed by the ED, districts and states were also

changing their definition of SBRR. Allington (2006) maintained:

> With all the ruckus about using scientific research to inform our efforts to close
>
> the achievement gap, one would think someone would have designed at least one
>
> experiment documenting the effectiveness of the Three Tier model before state
>
> and federal education agencies began recommending—or mandating—the
>
> model's use. (p. 20)

Without such evidence to support its effectiveness, it seemed premature to recommend

this intervention model. Farstrup (2006) stated:

> The ever-expanding alphabet soup of state and federal reading programs in the
>
> United States during the past several years leads me to wonder if there are too
>
> many short-order cooks (policy makers) out there and not enough of a role for
>
> talented chefs (teachers). (p. 22)

One of the primary objectives of both NCLB and Reading First is that all students improve reading skills. It is essential the achievement gap between learners from different demographics be closed and that all students achieve to the best of their abilities. However, one of the main arguments against SBRR is it has become a code for imposing a narrowly focused and scripted method to instruct reading. It is unfortunate when educators are coerced into teaching in a "one-size-fits-all" system (Farstrup, 2006). Despite all criticism, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) indicated that the professional development, assessments, and reading instruction provided by Reading First had effected student achievement in a positive way (McCallion, 2008).

Trainin and Wilson (2009-2010) deduced that Reading First, despite early improvements in state reading assessments of 10-15% over the first and second years, had limitations, and although The Reading First Model has sustained initial gains, no significant new gains have been noted. In Nebraska, Trainin and Wilson (2009-2010) found school success in reaching goals seemed to be related to two factors: student attendance and longevity of the program. Trainin and Wilson (2009-2010) concluded, "school reform that is meaningful takes more than three, four, or even five years. Future efforts must be based on sustained efforts that research has shown to be effective in an average of seven years" (Trainin & Wilson, 2009-2010, p. 20).

Classroom Management

Equally important in an environment conducive to learning is effective classroom management. Classroom disruptions can easily turn a perfect learning environment into chaos. There are multiple reasons students act out and disrupt the learning process. Hawkins and Miller (1992) realized, "problems such as violence, vandalism, bullying,

and similar behaviours create an unsafe learning environment, undermine instruction, and pose a threat to the school population. Furthermore, early onset of discipline problems in school children predicts later maladjustment" (p. 64). Thus, children who demonstrate antisocial behavior at young ages are more likely than their nonaggressive classmates to exhibit antisocial behaviors as adults (Luiselli, 2005). The primary behaviors in which students are sent to the office and sometimes suspended are defiance, insubordination, and disobedience (Shah, 2012).

There is no single solution to discipline problems within a classroom; however, Goodwin and Miller (2012) suggested attacking the problem at three different levels. The first level is a schoolwide approach. Goodwin (as cited in Goodwin & Miller, 2012) suggested schools needed to have the "ability to create and reinforce cultures of high expectations for student learning and behavior" (p. 82). The administrator sets the tone for the building by creating an "Oasis of Safety" (Goodwin & Miller, 2012, p. 82).

The second level requires teachers to "establish a positive classroom culture" (Goodwin & Miller, 2012, p. 82). Allen (as cited in Goodwin & Miller, 2012) suggested, "For example, if teachers believe that students need to be controlled rather than guided, they're more likely to implement discipline strategies that rely primarily on punishment or coercion" (p. 83). Goodwin and Miller (2012) offered a more balanced approach; reward good behaviors and provide adequate consequences for inappropriate behaviors.

Walker (2009) stated the obvious, "The best teachers don't simply teach content, they teach people" (p. 122). Teachers must establish a classroom environment that allows them to instruct and students to learn. Schussler (2009) suggested "that teachers create an environment conducive to intellectual engagement" (p. 114). An ideal

environment for one student may not be an ideal learning environment for another. Some students find academic success in a structured or traditional environment, while other students crave a more nontraditional, activity-centered classroom setting (Schussler, 2009). Hands-on activities allow students to utilize visual, auditory, and tactile skills (Schussler, 2009). Teachers can create learning environments that foster student engagement by making students perceive the following: " (a) that there are opportunities for them to succeed, (b) that flexible avenues exist through which learning can occur, and (c) that they are respected as learners because teachers convey the belief that students are capable of learning" (Schussler, 2009, p. 114).

Perhaps the best way to prevent unacceptable classroom behavior is to incorporate preventative strategies within the classroom. Oliver, Wehby, and Reschly (2011) determined, "Effective classroom management is also related to prevention efforts. The progression and malleability of maladaptive behaviors is affected by classroom management practices of teachers in the early grades" (p. A-1). Teachers who are able to create positive learning environments through high student engagement activities prevent negative classroom behaviors from developing. It can be challenging for educators "to find classroom management strategies that are proactive, preventative, and relatively easy to implement, and which provide minimal disruption to the classroom" (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010, p. 8). Teachers need to spend less time addressing student behaviors and more time engaging students in learning activities.

Planning and over-planning for the day leaves teachers with options to diffuse possible disruptive behaviors through classroom engagement activities. Moreover, "disruptive behavior (e.g., speaking without permission, getting out of seat) often

interferes with students' engagement in the learning process" (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010, p. 8). Three-tier interventions and the formative assessments, which are components of Reading First, allow teachers to adapt instuction as needed. The Reading First Model includes not only whole group instruction, but also small group work stations. The learning activities provided in the work stations reinforce whole group instruction. Problem behavior in the classroom can be averted or diffused by the use of multi-component classroom management strategies (Oliver et al., 2011).

Keeping students on task is a primary focus of classroom teachers. It is necessary for teachers to provide an educational setting that allows all students to learn. Requirements of high standards, at all levels, dictate teachers to differeniate each area of instruction and challenge every student. Being unable to comprehend the lesson or perform a task is just as frustrating for a student as being bored of material already mastered:

> When students perceive academic work as too difficult or too easy, which usually means there is either no flexibility or too much flexibility in how students achieve academic success, they feel a lack of respect. Lack of respect generally manifests in a negative attitude toward their academics. (Schussler, 2009, p. 116)

The third level, suggested by Goodwin and Miller (2012), to deter discipline problems involves the role played by the students themselves. Smith and Fowler (as cited in Goodwin & Miller, 2012) stated, "Students as young as kindergartners are capable of influencing their peers" (p. 83). Probably the most overlooked aspect of classroom management is the effect peers have on each other. By creating a positive peer culture, student behavior can be improved (Goodwin & Miller, 2012). Teachers can

create a positive atmosphere and earn student respect by creating engaging and cooperative learning activities that can be easily adapted to all learning levels within the classroom.

Cooperative Learning

Dr. Spencer Kagan is reknown for his research and expertise in the field of Cooperative Learning. Each year, thousands of teachers attend trainings and participate in book studies to learn how to develop cooperative learning strategies (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Throughout the training sessions, Kagan and Kagan (2009) have addressed four crises in education:

1. The Achievement Crisis

2. The Achievement Gap Crisis

3. The Race Relations Crisis

4. The Social Skills Crisis (p. 2.1)

The term, *Achievement Crisis*, was coined to describe the educational gaps and failing grades of schools in the United States compared other countries. It seems, "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (Kagan & Kagan, 2009, p. 2.2). A plausible solution to this crisis is cooperative learning. After much research, hundreds of studies show cooperative learning raises achievement at all levels and content areas (Kagan & Kagan, 2009).

The Achievement Gap Crisis focuses on the inequitable academic outcomes for different socioeconomic classes and different races (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Research shows "that every year, for decades, there is a sizeable gap between White students and

their Black and Hispanic peers" (Kagan & Kagan, 2009, p. 2.3). According to Kagan and Kagan (2009), part of the disparity is most Black and Hispanic children come from poorer families with less education and attend more disadvantaged schools. When a comparision of economic classes is considered, an achievement gap is found that is a major explanation of the race achievement gap (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Kagan and Kagan (2009) surmised, " We are on a collision course: the need for a more educated workforce is about to bump squarely into the reality of a less educated workforce" (Kagan & Kagan, 2009, p. 2.4).

The key to closing the achievement gap is equity (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Four controlled experimental studies were conducted to examine the academic gains of minority and majority students in both traditional and cooperative learning classroom environments. The studies found that in cooperative learning classrooms, minority students' gains far exceeded the gains of majority students in the same classrooms, thereby closing the achievement gap (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978). Kagan and Kagan (2009) pointed out that these gains by non-white students did not come at the expense of White students, but that White students gained more in the cooperative learning environment than in the traditional environment, as well. Kagan and Kagan (2009) reiterated, "everyone learns more with cooperative learning, but there is a dramatic catch-up effect" (p. 3.4). The cooperative learning process allows low achievers to watch and learn from their higher achieving peers. Through the process, the low achievers receive immediate feedback as they express their ideas and solve problems alongside their peers (Kagan & Kagan, 2009).

The Race Relations Crisis stems from racial tensions and discrimination which have hindered justice and social harmony in which "we have court-mandated desegregation, but within our classrooms and schools students self-segregate themselves along race lines" (Kagan & Kagan, 2009, p. 2.5). Studies have shown that students are choose friends within their own ethnic or cultural group, and fewer friendships are developing across ethnic and cultural lines (Aronson et al., 1978). This problem seems to begin towards the end of elementary school and culminates with strong racial divisions and tensions in high school (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Walk into any high school cafeteria and the patterns are evident.

Kagan, Zahn, Widaman, Schwarwald, and Tyrrell (1985) observed that when students enter school, friendships are not based on skin color; however, by grades 2-4, students begin to gravitate toward other students of the same racial group. By fifth and sixth grade, a huge chasm develops, and "data confirmed a phenomenon many teachers take for granted. As students get older, they self-segregate into same-race cliques, groups, and gangs. Racial prejudice, mistrust, and self-segregation is well documented" (Kagan & Kagan, 2009, p. 3.4).

In cooperative learning, teambuilding activities help mixed-race teams to know and like one another. They share ideas and begin to understand the perspectives of others in the group. Students are able to break down ethnic and cultural walls and know the individual, not the stereotype. Cooperative learning allows teamwork and friendship instead of racial tension (Kagan & Kagan, 2009).

Kagan and Kagan (2009) defined the Social Skills Crisis as the increasing lack of essential character traits and social skills in today's youth. There are various reasons for

the decline in desired character traits in students. A thorough examination of society

reveals the different causes. Factors, such as family size, family mobility, divorce rate,

single-parent families, negative influences from media and peers, violent content found

on television, video games, and today's music play a role in the decline in character of

the 21st century student (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Kagan and Kagan (2009) stated:

> No one is consistently providing opportunities, helping children forge positive
>
> values and virtues. But students need a value system-rights and wrongs to guide
>
> their behavior…Discipline and virtue have been replaced by immediate
>
> gratification, lack of impulse control, competition, and aggression. (p. 2.14)

Cooperative learning may counter this trend. Research has shown cooperative learning

experiences encourage development of the ability to understand both the cognitive and

the emotional perspectives of others (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Cooperative learning activities provide students a stable environment at school

where positive character traits can be nurtured and developed (Kagan & Kagan, 2009).

Research has shown that cooperative learning environments keep students more engaged

and less disruptive, therefore resulting in fewer suspensions and fewer expulsions

(Slavin, 1995).

Student Engagement

Captivating students to learn and stay engaged in the classroom setting is a

primary goal of all educators. Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, and Wellborn (2009)

found, "Research reveals that children's interest, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation for

learning in school deteriorate continuously from their entry into kindergarten until they

complete high school (or drop-out), with striking losses during the transitions to middle

school and high school" (p. 223). Skinner et al. (2009) stated, "it may be useful to consider these elements part of a motivational system, which gives rise to the quality of a student's academic beliefs, values, and actions in school" (p. 224). Systematic social changes, such as an ever-changing school bureaucracy during middle school and high school, do not blend well with the changing developmental needs of students at this juncture of their lives (Skinner et al., 2009). With this knowledge, it is imperative that students develop skills to self-engage and self-motivate during the primary years with the objective these skills will carry over into the middle and high school years (Kagan & Kagan, 2009).

Engagement should encompass behaviors, emotions, and attention. Desired outcomes would be for students to not only initiate interactions with the environment, but also encourage problem solving when obstacles or difficulties are faced (Skinner et al., 2009). The behavioral dimension involves effort, persistence, intensity, diligence, and resolve when faced with difficult tasks or obstacles. Emotional engagement includes enjoyment and satisfaction, and attention encompasses the cognitive realm of focus and desire to go a step further than is required (Skinner et al., 2009). Skinner et al. (2009) concluded that engagement is a major component in the dynamics of motivational development. Engagement influences learning and educational performance directly by mediating individual and interpersonal factors and by shaping reactions from the social domain (Skinner et al., 2009).

Gambrell (2011) listed "Seven Rules of Engagement" that are crucial in motivating students to read. These rules are research based practices for increasing intrinsic motivation for students to read. The first rule is: "Students are more motivated

to read when the reading is relevant to their lives" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 173). Gambrell

(2011) suggested having students keep a "reading diary," (p. 173) which might range

from writing sentences about what they selected to read (for second and third graders) to

drawing pictures about a story (for kindergarten and first grade).

Gambrell's (2011) second rule is: "Students are more motivated to read when they

have access to a wide range of reading materials" (p. 173). One way to make students

aware of the variety of reading materials in the classroom would be to have a "teacher

book-selling session" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 173). The teacher takes time each week to

share information or perhaps even read a selection from a few books to pique student

interest (Gambrell, 2011).

The third rule of engagment is: "Students are more motivated to read when they

have ample opportunities to engage in sustained reading" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 174).

Gambrell (2011) suggested instead of starting the year with the expectation that students

will maintain a self-selected reading time of 20-30 minutes, start with 10 minutes and

then increase the reading time over a period of several weeks.

Rule number four is: "Students are more motivated to read when they have

opportunities to make choices about that they read and how they enage in the complete

literacy tasks" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 175). The suggestion is made for the teacher to select

four or five books of interest at the student's reading level, and then encourage the

student to select one of those books for free reading time (Gambrell, 2011). This allows

the student to make a selection but controls the selection, so the student will not select a

book that out of his or her reading level (Gambrell, 2011).

Gambrell's (2011) fifth rule is: "Students are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to socially interact with others about the text they are reading" (p. 175). There is an ideal opportunity after self-selected reading time for students to take a few minutes and share with a peer about what they have just read. It is important to allow both students equal time to share (Gambrell, 2011).

The sixth rule is: "Students are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 176). Perception is everything, even to children. When labeling classroom libraries, do not use words, such as *Easy, Average,* or *Difficult.* Use words, such as *Hard, Harder,* and *Hardest* (Gambrell, 2011). The perception of reading a *Hard* book does more for a student's self-confidence than reading a book marked *Easy,* or even *Average* for that matter (Gambrell, 2011).

The final rule of engagement is: "Students are more motivated to read when classroom incentives reflect the value and importance of reading" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 176). Gambrell (2011) compared a classroom library to a woman's closet: How many times does a woman go into her closet full of clothes and not find a thing to wear? Students are the same with classroom libraries. Many libraries are full of old books that need to be replaced. Gambrell (2011) suggested the teacher take the time to mark the books to get rid of, and then select a day for the students to select a book from the group to keep for their library at home. Gambrell (2011) concluded, "highly motivated students who see reading as a desirable activity will initiate and sustain their engagement in reading and thus become better readers" (p. 177).

Sparks (2011) referred to a series of experiments by researchers at Arizona State University in Tempe and the University of Wisconsin-Madison who suggested "students can understand and infer more by physically acting out text—either in real life or virtually—than by reading alone" (p. 18). Glenberg et al. (2011) determined, "that when learning an oral language, caregivers frequently demonstrate the mapping between the verbal symbol and the object" (p. 2). For example, when a parent wants a child to blow a kiss, the parent models the behavior while saying the words. Utilizing Glenberg's et al. (2011) *Moved by Reading* strategies, phase one involves physical manipulation (PM), in which "children read texts that describe events in a particular scenario, such as a farm scenario. After reading a to-be-manipulated sentence, the child literally manipulates toys to simulate the context of the sentence" (p. 2).

Glenberg et al. (2011) realized, "Imagine manipulation (IM)" is the second phase, in which "children are taught to imagine manipulating the toys. That is, after some practice of PM, the manipulatives are removed, and the children are asked to imagine manipulating the toys while reading new stories from the scenario" (p. 3). In past studies, first and second grade students were observed; however, in the referenced study third and fourth grade students were observed.

The study also expanded to include whole group intervention instead of one-to-one and small groups. Finally, the study moved across the curriculum to include mathematical story problems. Summarizing the results, three conclusions were determined:

First, teaching a fundamental reading comprehension strategy in one domain (reading) can improve performance in another domain (mathematical story-

problem solving). Second, one such fundamental strategy is embodied simulation

of text content. Third, *Moved by Reading* successfully teaches this strategy and

shows promise for becoming a valuable, real-world intervention. (Glenberg et al.,

2011, p. 17)

This study showed the effect engaging students both mentally and physically can have on

not only reading, but all academic areas.

Many times teachers stay in their comfort zone when instructing students instead

of stepping outside of the box and involving students in academically engaging activities.

Landrum, Lingo, and Scott (2011) stated:

Providing students with opportunities to respond in class, using effective models

and relevant and engaging opportunities to practice, and offering consistent

feedback doesn't constitute special programming for students with challenging

behaviors. Rather, these essential components of instruction allow us to shape

and maintain success for all students. If teachers can use these strategies

effectively, then it is possible to guide students away from potential disruptive

behaviors and replace them with behaviors more conducive to academic success.

(p. 33)

Effective classroom engagement requires teachers use formative assessments to identify

the needs of their students. Schussler (2009) reiterated, "the most compelling

commonality that applies to all teachers, regardless of context, is the importance of

knowing and responding to students' needs, as individuals" (p. 117). Successful teachers

are those who continually assess their students' needs and then adjust their teaching

strategies to implement the process in an engaging manner to all students.

Schussler (2009) indicated, "formative assessment and differentiated instruction are other specific ways teachers provide academic support to facilitate students' engagement" (p. 118). The use of classroom work stations is a prime example of both differentiation and student engagement. The most effective work station is one that is quickly and easily differentiated to address the needs of the student performing the task at the time, yet also engaging to students at all levels (Schussler, 2009).

Engaged Time on Task

Archer and Hughes (2011) suggested "the quantity of instuction can be seen as a necessary but not sufficient component of learning; the combination of quantity and quality of instruction is the key to student success" (p. 5). Educators focusing solely on quanitity of instruction will see little improvement in achievement unless quality instruction is used. Archer and Hughes (2011) synthesized, "The positive correlation between engaged time and achievement, while stronger than for allocated time, is relatively modest" (p. 6). Archer and Hughes (2011) also suggested part of the problem with schools today is the lack of academic learning time. Archer and Hughes (2011) revealed, "Academic learning time (ALT) is the amount of time students are successfully engaged in academic tasks at the appropriate level of difficulty. There is some indication that ALT occurs, on average, for only a small percentage of the day" (p. 6).

Strategies to Foster Successful Student Engagement

Lack of engagement in classroom activities due to frustration and boredom are two of the key causes of classroom disruption in primary classrooms (Rischer, 2008). Today's students are used to so much stimuli that teaching strategies of 10 years ago are no longer sufficient. Rischer (2008) offered teachers five strategies to address issues of

student boredom and frustration:

1. Be confident.

2. Know your students.

3. Over plan.

4. Prepare for the worst.

5. Be consistent.

Teachers who are cognizant of the five strategies will create classroom activities that will effectively reduce student boredom in the classroom (Rischer, 2008).

Student success is also strongly related to student self esteem (Goleman, 2008). All students generally react postively to praise; however, praise is an especially important reward to students who never receive it at home. Goleman (2008) surmised, "new studies reveal that teaching kids to be emotionally and socially competent boosts their academic achievement" (p. 8). What better way to reinforce this than to ensure a child can read at grade level and give him or her the emotional and social skills required? So much of a child's social and emotional well-being stems from feeling a part of the group. How unfortunate for a student to be asked to read aloud and for that student to struggle in front of peers? These are the experiences that could be avoided if a child's first reading instruction is successful.

Archer and Hughes (2011) suggested eight strategies for optimizing instructional time, which are summarized as follows:

1. Spend more time teaching essential subject matter.

2. Be aware of student needs and prepare suitable learning activities that complement those needs.

3. Have a schedule for instruction and adhere to it.

4. Use group instruction when feasible.

5. Be prepared.

6. Avoid digressions.

7. Decrease transition time.

8. Use routines.

Classroom teachers who increase the amount of allocated time spent teaching critical content areas and differentiate instruction allow students to achieve goals and find success in the classroom while building confidence to become independent learners (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Students also appreciate routine, so it is equally important that teachers are prepared for instuction, start lessons on time, and use a routine that will help avoid digressions and keep students on task (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Finally, "teaching students in large and small groups increases both ALT and the amount of instruction for each student, as compared to other instructional arrangements such as one-to-one instruction or seatwork" (Archer & Hughes, 2011, p. 7). Both strategies are effective in utilizing new skills, but neither is an equitable substitute for well-designed group instruction (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Many may think that to ask young students to be self-disciplined enough to engage in small group learning activities at such a young age is too much (Rischer, 2008). If explicit instruction and thorough demonstration of the required centers have occurred, students are given the opportunity to meet expectations of appropriate behavior and collaborative learning with peers.

Explicit Instruction

Archer and Hughes (2011) determined explicit instruction is the best tool available to maximize academic growth. Educators using this systematic methodology find it effective for teaching academic skills. Archer and Hughes (2011) noted, "students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved" (p. 1). Infusing student engagment practices with the elements of explicit instruction provide students with the necessary tools for success.

Many confuse explicit instruction with direct or scripted instruction. Reutzel and Clark (2011) stated:

"explicit instruction involves four interlocking elements of effective, unambiguous instruction: (1) explanation of the lesson objectives and purpose, (2) teacher modeling of how to use a strategy or acquire an unknown concept, (3) teacher-guided practice with scaffolding or support, and (4) independent practice. (p. 102)

The explanation component of explicit instruction refers to the *what*, *why*, and *where* of the objective to be taught in a language students understand (Reutzel & Clark, 2011).

The teacher modeling component requires teachers to model the skill or strategy exactly how it should be used. This may be the only opportunity students have to see the skill or strategy explicitly modeled (Reutzel & Clark, 2011). The teacher-guided practice component allows for continued teacher modeling; however, students are encouraged to participate as the teacher provides scaffolding and guidance as needed (Reutzel & Clark,

2011). The final component, independent practice, is the opportunity for students to implement the strategy while the teacher observes. Also, this is great time for teachers to check mastery by asking questions (Reutzel & Clark, 2011).

These principles should be viewed in a fluid manner and not like a recipe from a cookbook where all ingredients are necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Moreover, Archer and Hughes (2011) emphasized differing degrees of the principles and elements should be used depending upon which skill or strategy that is taught and to whom it is taught. Effective teachers will naturally supplement instruction with their own personalities creating a unique, yet engaging, learning opportunity (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Literacy Work Stations

Kraci (2012) asserted, "literacy work stations are one way to provide students a classroom environment that meets the characteristics of effective literacy classrooms, allows the teacher to work with small groups and keeps students engaged in literacy throughout the day" (p. 30). Ideally, the teacher is working with a small reading group while the rest of the students are assigned to individual or small-group work stations that reinforce fluency, comprehension skills, writing lessons, and other previously taught materials (Kraci, 2012). Diller (2003) indicated, "the term *work stations* also helps remind teachers that these are not an extra. They are not something students turn to when their work is finished" (p. 2). Diller (2003) further stated work stations need to meet the needs of all children and incorporate activities that strengthen and increase learning.

There are numerous work station stategies. Kraci (2012) suggested centers should be hands-on and provide opportunity for students to be "responsible for their learning

during center time and work with the materials to develop, discover, create, and learn a task at their own pace" (p. 29). Diller (2003) pointed out, "work stations take the place of worksheets. The emphasis is on hands-on learning that engages students" (p. 2). Work stations are an essential part of the Reading First Model but only if organized in a manner which allows students to effectively review and practice new skills (Diller, 2003; Dole et al., 2010).

Summary

Manzo (2008) stated, "with the end of the six-year period of Reading First on the horizon, no clear empirical picture has emerged of how well the federal program is doing at a national level in bringing struggling readers to proficiency" (p. 9). Individual schools will have to review data and determine the effectiveness of the model concerning their students. Many factors will have to be analyzed in order to get a clear answer.

These factors include explicit instruction, appropriate use of literacy work stations, effectivness of a Reading First Coach in training and instructing teachers, and proper evaluation and discussion of test results (International Reading Association. 2008). Additionally, administrative support for the model, the use of high quality professional development, priority placed on student engagement during the reading block, amount of discipline referrals for classroom disruptions due to students being actively engaged, parental involvement, and transition for students between Reading First grade levels and non-Reading First grade levels are factors to examine. These factors must be analyzed by individual school districts to determine the success of the model.

Any teacher who has not embraced the model can bring the whole program to an abrupt halt. Smaller districts struggle with the fact that one student having a bad day can

skew the results for the whole class. Teachers and administrators cannot look at standardized test results alone and answer the question of effectiveness of the model (Manzo, 2008). They must look ahead and envision what kind of successes are evident at the upper grade levels; therein lies the true answer of the effectiveness of the Reading First Model (Manzo, 2008).

In Chapter Three, the methodology used in this quantitative study was described. An overview of the problem and purpose of the study was presented, and the research questions were introduced. Descriptions of the population and sample were provided, as well as the instrumentation and analysis process.

Chapter Four included a review of the sample and demographic data. A PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between the NCE mean scores in third grade communication arts and the number of years schools used the Reading First Model. A PPMC was also performed to measure the correlation between the NCE mean scores and discipline data. Finally, a PPMC was performed to determine the correlation between discipline data and student engagement data collected from the online survey. Tables and figures were created to represent numerical data. The findings, conclusions, responses to the research questions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research were contained in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Reading has become the foundation for success. The ability to read is an increasingly indispensable skill given the growth of technology and the ever increasing explosion of information (Wren, 2002). Students learn to read in kindergarten through third grade, and in fourth grade, students begin the process of reading to learn (Glenberg et al., 2011). It is essential that reading comprehension continues to develop as students find it necessary to gain information in all academic subjects. Benefits of reading strategies developed in early years allow students to smoothly transition those strategies across the curriculum, and the use of explicit instruction in the classroom can be a successful tool (Glenberg et al., 2011).

Archer and Hughes (2011) maintained explicit instruction is the best tool available to maximize academic growth. Educators using this systematic methodology find it effective for teaching academic skills. Archer and Hughes (2011) determined, "students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved" (p. 1). Infusing student engagment practices with the elements of explicit instruction provides students with the necessary tools for success.

In this chapter, the research questions and hypotheses were restated. The population and sample size for the study were discussed. The MAP scores were collected to determine the academic progress of the students in the sample. These secondary data sets were examined from eight different schools over a four-year period. A survey was created to obtain data from building principals regarding the Reading

First in their respective schools. Data collection procedures were detailed. In the data analysis section, a discussion included how the data were organized and analyzed once collected and the application of the statistical tools used in each step of the process. Finally, ethical considerations were given to understand the process used to protect the identity of the district, schools, and participants in the study.

Problem and Purpose Overview

The Reading First Model "has spread awareness of what should be going on in the classrooms and in the teacher-training institutions. It has shown that a comprehensive solution to the nation's reading crisis is right in front of our noses" (Stern, 2007, para. 44). Since federal funding was eliminated in 2009, districts have had to make decisions about whether to continue the program and fund it locally, maintain key components of the program and do away with others, or eliminate the program all together.

For the purpose of this study, the key components of the Reading First Model included scientifically based instruction of a core reading program, high quality professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30 minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, & Nelson, 2010).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model?

2. What is the correlation between discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model?

3. What is the correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption?

Hypotheses

Null hypothesis 1. There is not a correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model.

Null hypothesis 2. There is not a correlation between discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model.

Null hypothesis 3. There is not a correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption.

Research Design

This quantitative study was designed to determine if it was still in the best interest of schools to continue the Reading First Model. Data were reviewed to determine the correlation between student engagement activities, practiced as part of the Reading First Model, and the number of discipline referrals for classroom disruption. MAP data for third grade communication arts were analyzed from a sample of Missouri school districts that continue to participate in the key components of the Reading First Model. Data from third grade MAP scores were used because this is the earliest grade level the MAP is administered. Discipline data for discipline referrals for classroom disruptions in third grade were gathered from the same sample of school districts to

determine the correlation between number of discipline referrals for classroom disruption and MAP scores.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included public elementary school principals in Missouri and MAP scores, in the area of communication arts, for years 2008-2012. Third grade communication arts MAP scores from a sample of Missouri elementary schools that participated in the key components of the Reading First Model were gathered from the MODESE website.

A stratified sample was used which consisted of districts still participating in the key components of the Reading First Model. The list of districts was obtained from each Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC). Each school was contacted by phone to verify the key components were still in place. If a district was not still practicing the key components defined for this study, an alternate district replaced the former Reading First district, preferably from the same RPDC area. From the same sample, MAP data were obtained from the MODESE website. Specifically, third grade MAP scores in the area of communication arts for years 2008-2012 were entered into an Excel file. As shown in Table 1, schools from six of the nine RPDCs participated in this study.

Table 1

List of Reading First Schools by Regional Professional Development Center

School Identifier	RPDC Region
RF 1	6
RF 2	7
RF 3	2
RF 4	1
RF 5	4
RF 6	6
RF 7	4
RF 8	5

Note. Reading First (RF). No schools in regions three, eight, or nine met the criteria for the study.

Once the sample was selected, survey participants were recruited from elementary principals of schools continuing to use key components of the Reading First Model. An introductory phone call (see Appendix A) was made to each elementary principal prior to an electronic communication (e-mail) containing an informational letter and the informed consent form (see Appendix B). The participants were asked to return the consent form via fax to the phone number provided. Once the informed consent forms were collected, the online survey link was e-mailed to the participating principals.

Instrumentation

Third grade MAP scores in the area of communication arts, from a sample of Missouri School Districts that continued to participate in the Reading First Model from 2008-2009 school year through the 2011-2012 school year, were gathered from the MODESE website. A sample size of eight schools from across the state of Missouri provided adequate data for analysis for this research (Bluman, 2010). From that sample, the Number or Points (NP) of the Mean Scale Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) were

gathered from the MODESE website. This score is also used to describe central tendency. The NCE is an equal-interval scale and can be treated arithmetically. The mean NCE is computed by adding the NCE scores of all the students in the group with MAP scores and then dividing by that number of students (MODESE, 2011).

The Missouri Reading First Annual Performance Report 2009 provided the following analysis of demographics for the Reading First student population. It was an assumption that the student demographics for 2010, 2011, and 2012 would be similar (Schnell, Richardson, Levesque, Mathews, Scordias, & Hyken, 2009). The students represented were evenly distributed by gender, and approximately 85% did not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Schnell et al., 2009). Most students spoke English as their primary language and were not classified as migrant (Schnell et al., 2009). Finally, recent studies showed about 70% of the students qualified for free and reduced price meals (Schnell et al., 2009).

Classroom discipline referrals for disruption of the learning process were collected from the school districts from 2008-2009 school year through the 2011-2012 school year. The survey (see Appendix C) consisted of nine questions requesting information on student participation, discipline referrals for classroom disruption, and student engagement strategies. For the purpose of this study, classroom disruption was defined as any behavior that stopped the teacher from teaching and other students from learning.

Data Collection

Each RPDC district was contacted to determine which districts were still using the key components of the Reading First Model. From those districts, a sample of districts

was randomly selected from around the state. If any of the districts chose not to participate, the district was replaced with another randomly selected district. Survey participants were recruited from the principals in the sample districts. An e-mail provided participating principals with a web link to the survey conducted through SurveyMonkey. The mean NCE scores for third grade communication arts were gathered for 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 from the MODESE website.

Data Analysis

A PPMC was applied to determine the correlation between the mean NCE scores in third grade communication arts and the number of years school districts used the Reading First Model. A PPMC was also applied to discipline data for classroom disruptions gathered from the same sample of Missouri school districts and mean NCE scores. The discipline data served as the independent variable (X) and the mean test scores served as the dependent variable (Y). A PPMC was also performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between discipline data for classroom disruptions and student engagement. The discipline data served as the independent variable (X) and the student engagement data served as the independent variable (Y). A scatter plot was constructed as a visual representation to depict the nature of the correlation of the variables.

Ethical Considerations

The Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board approved the study before research began (see Appendix D). All surveys were kept secure and confidential throughout the research process. Survey distribution and data collection were handled in a discrete manner.

Summary

Students begin school with the aspiration of learning to read and soon progress to a higher goal: reading to learn. It is essential that reading comprehension continues to develop as students find it necessary to gain information in all academic subjects (Glenberg et al., 2011). Benefits of reading strategies developed in early years allow students to smoothly transition those strategies across the curriculum, and the use of explicit instruction in the classroom can be a successful tool in the process (Glenberg et al., 2011).

Student MAP data from the MODESE and online survey results from principals who participated in this study were collected and placed into a spreadsheet which was used as a tool to sort the data for analysis. Figures and tables were created using the spreadsheet software. Student test data were from reliable and valid sources as demonstrated through the testing companies' research and analysis (MODESE, 2013). The surveys provided a human perspective to the student engagement piece and a means of collecting discipline data for third grade students in each of the participating buildings.

In Chapter Three, the methodology used in this quantitative study was described. An overview of the problem and purpose of the study was presented and the null hypothses were introduced. Descriptions of the population and sample were provided, as well as the instrumentation used. Finally, the data collection and data analysis process were detailed.

Chapter Four included a review of the sample and demographic data. Next, the research questions were presented. The quantitative data were reviewed and analyzed. Tables and figures were created to display the data.

In Chapter Five, findings, conclusions, and the research questions were presented.

Responses to the questions and determination of the hypotheses were revealed.

Implications for practice and recommendations for future research were discussed.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Data

According to the Center for Child Development, the Reading First Model "was designed to bridge the achievement gap between different groups of students by ensuring that more children received effective reading instruction in the early years" (as cited in Wong-Ratcliff et al., 2011, p. 22). Since funding was cut in 2009, districts have had to make decisions about whether to continue the program and fund it locally, maintain key components of the program and do away with others, or eliminate the program all together. For the purpose of this study, the key components of the Reading First Model included scientifically based instruction of a core reading program, high quality professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30 minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, & Nelson, 2010).

Chapter Four included a review of the study design, sample, and demographic data. This chapter also included an analysis of the mean NCE scores and the correlation, if any, to the number of years schools participated in the Reading First Model. Discipline data for classroom disruptions were gathered from the same sample of Missouri school districts, and a PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between the two variables: NCE mean scores and discipline data (Bluman, 2010). Figures and tables were used to represent the numerical data in a compact and easy to understand format. The survey questions dealing with the principals' perspectives on student engagement activities in the Reading First classroom were summarized and detailed.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the correlation between student achievement and discipline referrals for classroom disruption in classrooms practicing the key components of the Reading First Model. Additionally, online surveys were administered to building level principals. The purpose of the survey was twofold. First, data were collected from participants about discipline referrals for classroom disruptions in third grade classrooms. Then, student engagement data were collected. The survey consisted of nine questions requesting information on student participation, discipline referrals for classroom disruption, and student engagement strategies. For the purpose of this study, classroom disruption was defined as any behavior that stopped the teacher from teaching and other students from learning.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model?

2. What is the correlation between discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model?

3. What is the correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption?

Hypotheses

Null hypothesis 1. There is not a correlation between increased student achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model.

Null hypothesis 2. There is not a correlation between discipline referrals for classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model.

Null hypothesis 3. There is not a correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption.

Sample

A stratified sample was used which consisted of Missouri districts that participated in the key components of the Reading First Model. The list of districts was obtained from each Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC). As shown in Figure 1, the state of Missouri is divided into nine RPDCs. Each RPDC was contacted to request a list of schools that utilized Reading First in their respective regions. A survey sample of districts from across the state of Missouri was selected, and MAP data were obtained from the MODESE website.

The mean NCE scores for third grade communication arts were gathered for years 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. Each school was contacted by phone to verify the key components were still in place. If a district was not still practicing the key components defined for this study, an alternate district replaced the former Reading First district, preferably from the same RPDC area. Regions three, eight, and nine had no schools that met the criteria and were, therefore, not included in the study. Survey participants were recruited from principals of schools continuing to use the key components of the Reading First Model. An e-mail provided participating principals with a web link to the survey conducted through SurveyMonkey.
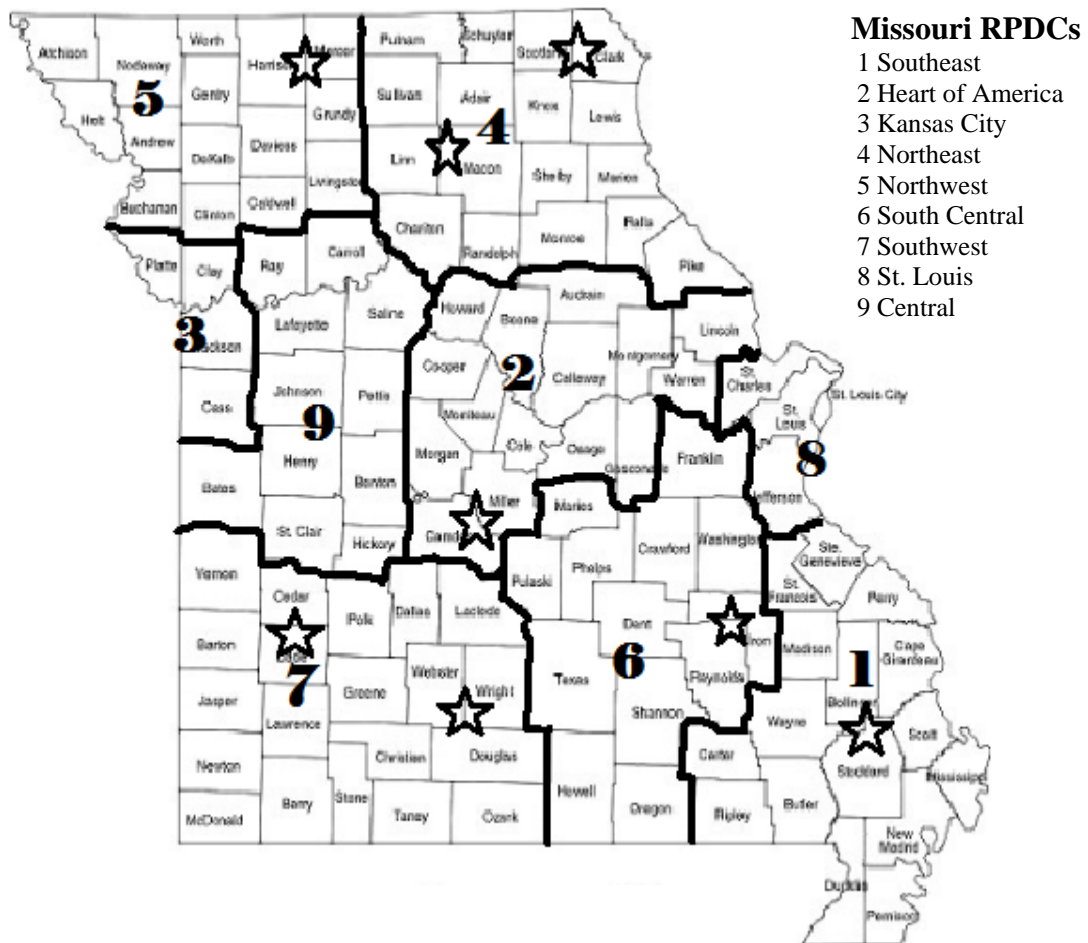
Figure 1. Map of Missouri RPDC regions. Regions three, eight, and nine had no schools

meeting the criteria for the study (MODESE, 2013). Stars represent approximate

locations for schools selected for the study.

Elementary Building Demographics

A sample of Missouri elementary schools that participated in the key components of the Reading First Model were randomly selected and demographic data were collected from the MODESE. As shown in Table 2, the sample consisted of schools across the state of Missouri. Eight schools were selected and agreed to participate in the study. One of the schools, RF 2 only participated in Reading First for the 2011 and 2012 school years. Two schools, RF 3 and RF 8, were selected in the first wave of schools to receive the Reading First grant and have continued implementation of the model since its origination.

Table 2

Reading First School by RPDC and Number of Years in Reading First

Reading First School	RPDC Region	Years in Reading First
RF 1	6	6 years
RF 2	7	2 years
RF 3	2	9 years
RF 4	1	8 years
RF 5	4	7 years
RF 6	7	6 years
RF 7	4	4 years
RF 8	5	9 years

Note: Reading First (RF).

Some demographics were significantly different between the Missouri state average for elementary building data and the data for elementary schools that participated in the study. As shown in Figure 2, the free and reduced price meals population in the schools that participated in the study was significantly higher than the state average. In 2009, the free and reduced price meals average for the same schools was 69.31% compared with the state average of 43.7%. The 2010 average for participating schools was 71.25%, while the state average was 46.9%. The 2011 average for schools that participated in the survey was 70.94% compared to the state average of 47.8%. In 2012, the free and reduced price meals average for the same schools was 73.96% compared to the state average of 49.5%.
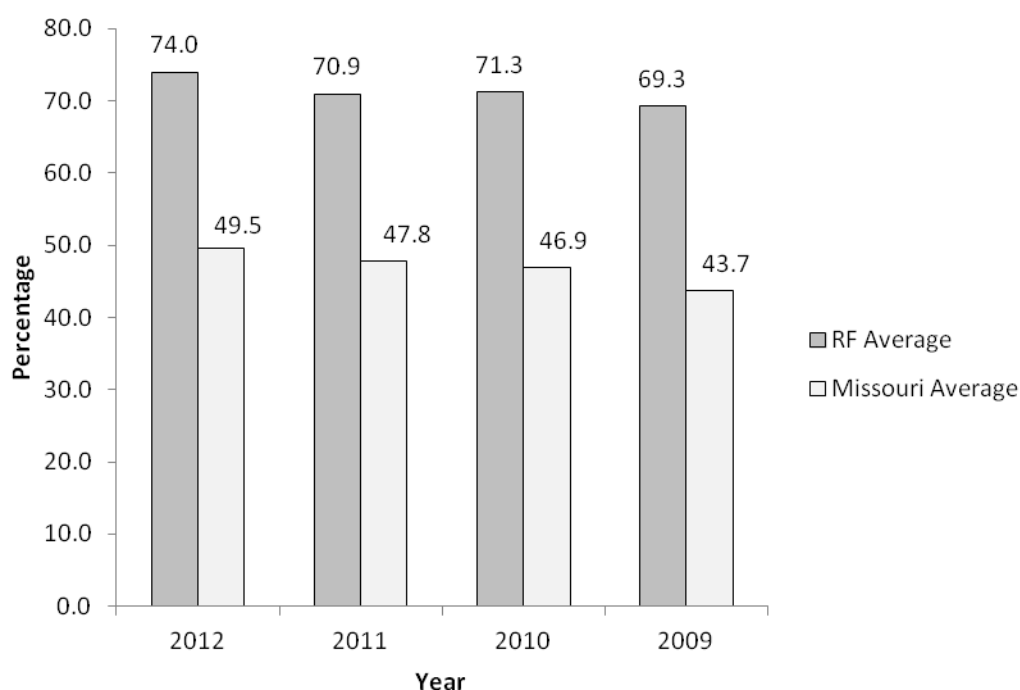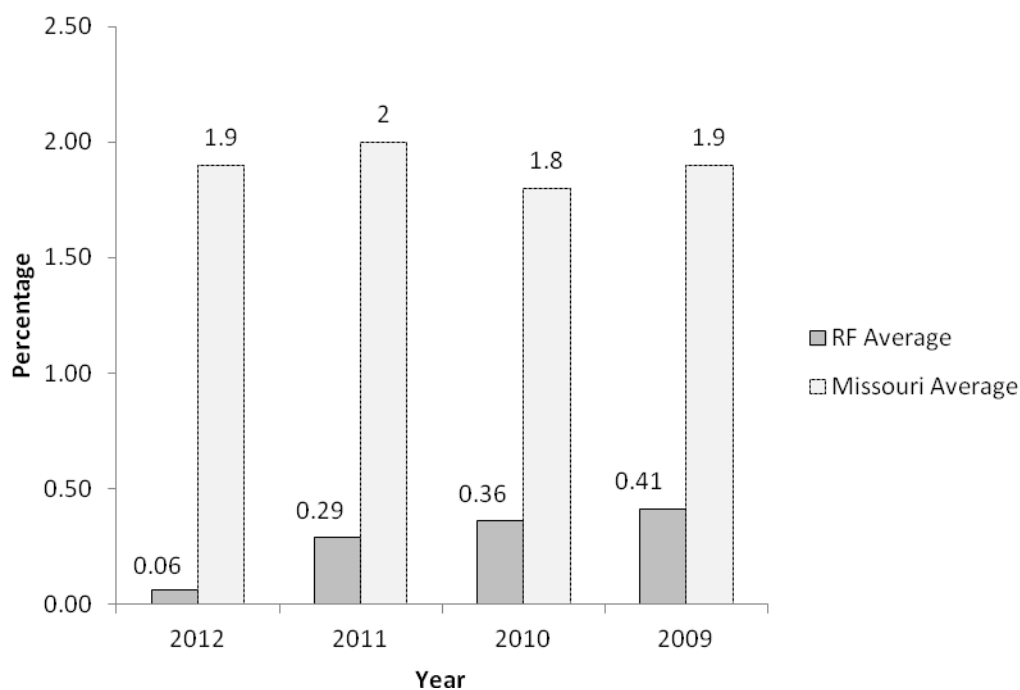

Figure 2. Free and reduced price meals percentages.

As shown in Figure 3, the Asian population decreased in the Reading First schools. Over a four-year period, the population declined by .36%, while the state average remained fairly constant.
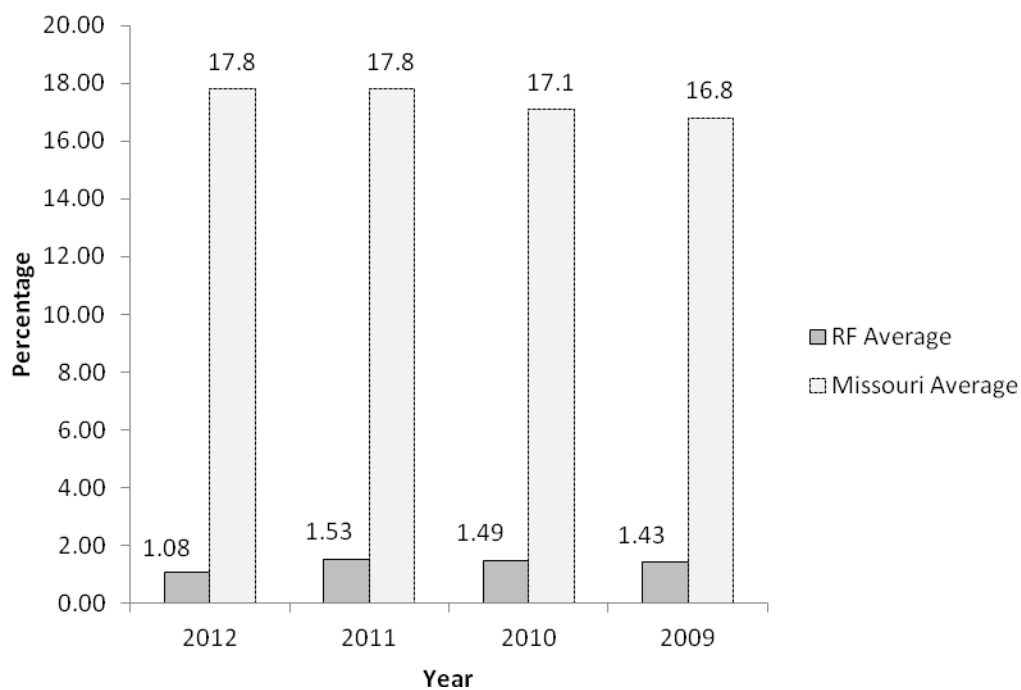

Figure 3. Asian population percentages.

As shown in Figure 4, the Black population decreased .35% in Reading First schools, while increasing by 1% in the state over the four-year period. Each year, the same schools had a significantly lower Black population than the state. The 2009 Black population average for schools participating in the survey was 1.43% compared with the state average of 16.8%.
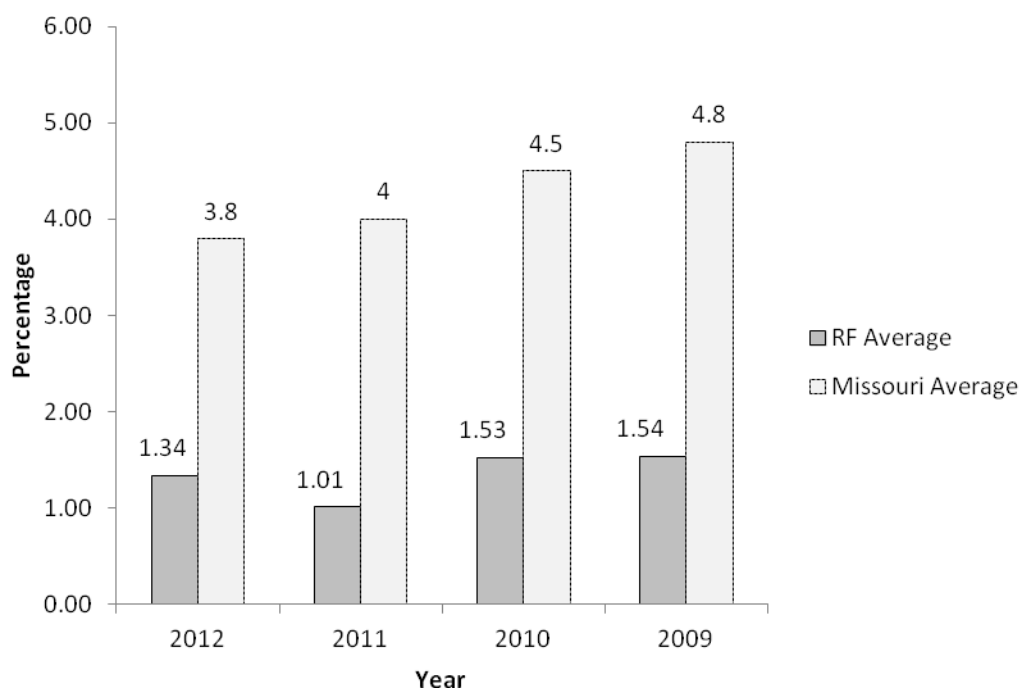
In 2010, the average for schools that participated in the survey was 1.49%, while the state average was 17.1%. The 2011 average for participating schools was 1.53% compared with the state average of 17.8%. In 2012, the Black population average for the same schools was 1.08%, while the state average was 17.8%.
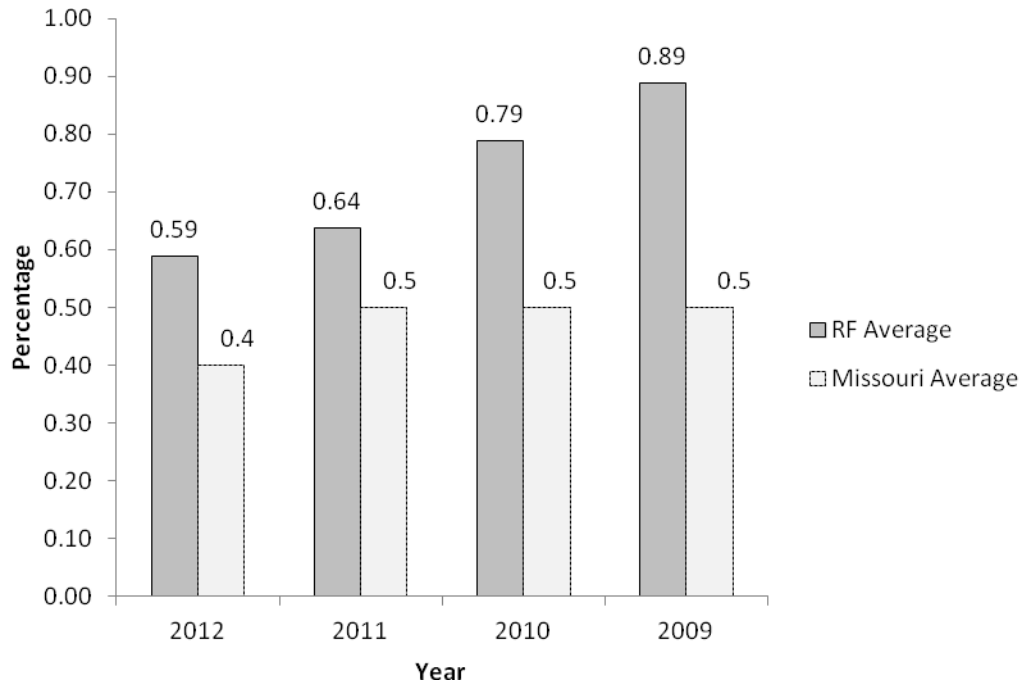

Figure 4. Black population percentages.

As shown in Figure 5, the Hispanic population decreased over the four-year period in schools that participated in the survey and in the state. Participating schools showed a decline of .2% compared with 1% for the state.

Figure 5. Hispanic population percentages.

As shown in Figure 6, the Indian population in the schools that participated in the study decreased .3%, while the state average remained fairly constant. In 2009, the Indian population average for the same schools was .89% compared with the state average of .5%. The 2010 and 2011 average for participating schools declined to .79% and then to .64% compared to the state average that remained at .5%. In 2012, the Indian population average for Reading First schools was .59% compared to the state average of .4%.

Figure 6. Indian population percentages.

The final demographic group was the White population. As shown in Figure 7, the White population increased in Reading First schools and in the state. The Reading First average remained fairly constant with an increase of .88% compared to the state average increase of 2% over the four-year period.
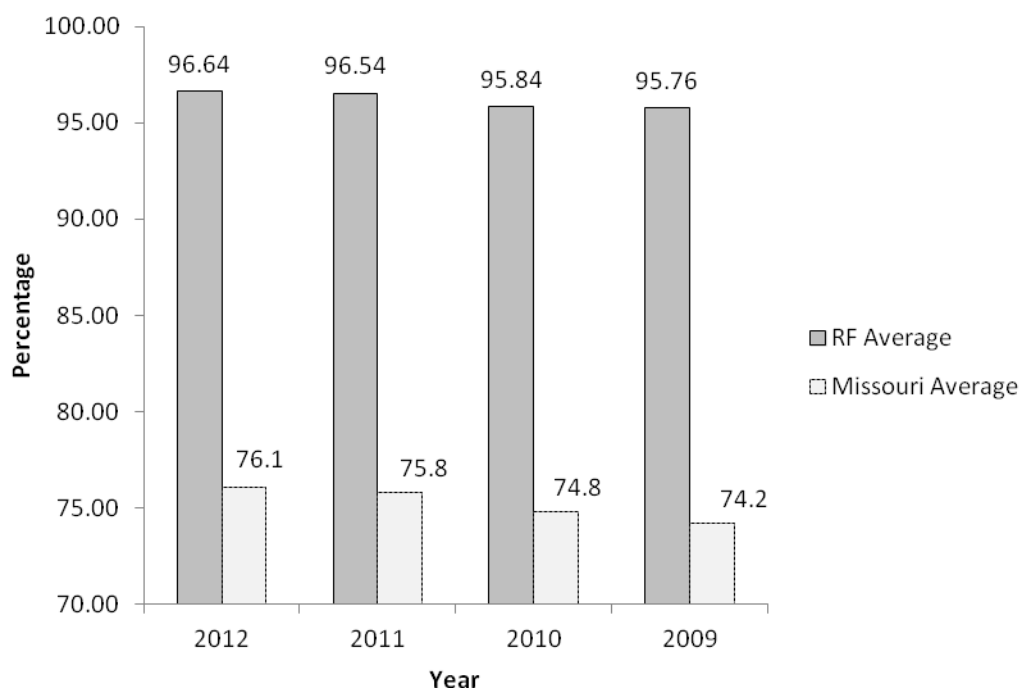
Figure 7. White population percentages.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

One purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the correlation between the Reading First Model and student achievement. Third grade communication arts MAP data were gathered from the MODESE for each of the schools that participated in the study and for the state of Missouri (see Table 3). From that sample, the Number of Points (NP) of the Mean Scale Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) were examined. The NCE is an equal-interval scale and can be treated arithmetically by adding the NCE scores of all the students in the group with MAP scores and then dividing by that number of students (MODESE, 2011).

From 2008-2009 to 2011-2012, the RF 1 mean NCE score decreased initially by 17.5 points, then increased 35.9 points before returning to the original score of 647.5 in 2012. RF 2 showed a gradual decrease over the four-year period. RF 3 produced an initial three-year increase of 12.7 points, reaching 644.3 before dropping 6.5 points at the end of the four-year period. RF3 was one of two schools that had a higher mean NCE score in year four, than in year one; however it was not the highest score for the school over the four-year period.

RF 4 score of 647.2 was above the state average (637.4) then dropped to 638.3, increasing to 638.6 the next year, before reaching 645.3, which was two points below where the school's scores were initially. RF 5 had the most significant drop (22.1 points) over the four-year period. RF 6 was the only school to raise mean NCE scores each of the four years. The score for the first year was 624.1, and the next year the scores increased by 3.3 points. In 2010-2011, the largest increase was produced (8.9 points), and 2012 showed continued improvement with a final increase of 5.4 points.

RF 7 did not receive mean NCE scores from the MODESE due to the fact the school had less than five students in each of the four years. The final school, RF 8, scored 650 the first year of the study, then the score declined 9.3 points to 640.7 the second year. RF 8 produced the highest mean NCE score of all the schools throughout the four-year period during 2010-2011. During that year, the school scored 668.6, an increase of 27.9 points; however, the school's score decreased the final year to 637.5.

The mean NCE score ranged from 624.1 to 651.1 in 2008-2009. The range in year two was 616.2 to 647.6. In year three, the range was 618.4 to 668.6, and in 2011-

2012 the range was 628.675 to 649.2. The largest descrepancy was during the third year, and the smallest during year four.

The average for each of the schools revealed that RF 8 had a four-year average of 649.2; RF 1 averaged 647.7; RF 2 averaged 644.9; RF 4 averaged 642.4; RF 3 averaged 638.3; RF 6 averaged 632.4; and RF 5, the school which began with the highest mean NCE score, averaged only 628.8.

Table 3

Mean NCE Scores

Reading First School	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Four-Year Average
RF 1	647.5	630.0	665.9	647.5	647.7
RF 2	651.0	647.6	643.3	637.9	644.9
RF 3	631.6	639.5	644.3	637.8	638.3
RF 4	647.2	638.3	638.6	645.3	642.4
RF 5	651.1	616.2	618.4	629.0	628.8
RF 6	624.1	627.4	636.3	641.7	632.4
RF 7	*	*	*	*	*
RF 8	650.0	640.7	668.6	637.5	649.2
State of Missouri Average	637.4	640.3	641.2	641.8	640.2

Note: Reading First (RF). * No calculations from MODESE due to less than five third graders. Data were taken from MODESE (2013).

A PPMC was performed using the number of years schools participated in the

Reading First Model as the independent variable (X) and the NCE mean score as the

dependent variable (Y). The result was $r = 0.133$. According to Bluman (2010), any r

below .38 at the .05 level and with 25 degrees of freedom is not statistically significant.

As shown in Figure 8, there is a very weak positive correlation. The $R^2 = .0176$ would

signify that there is little to no correlation between the two variables. A regression

analysis was applied to the variables and a p-value of .695 was produced. The p-value of

.695 is considerably higher than 0.05; therefore, there is sufficient evidence to fail to
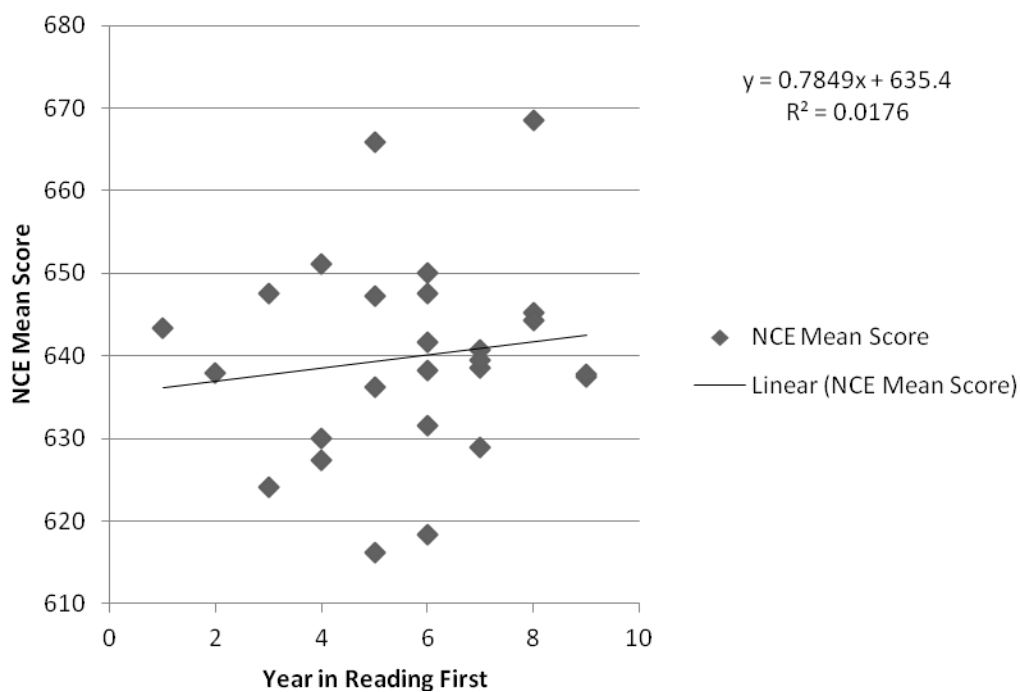
reject null hypothesis 1.

Figure 8. NCE mean and years in Reading First

An online survey was administered to elementary principals from schools that were still using the key components of the Reading First Model in their third grade classrooms. The survey participants were given two weeks to complete the online survey. Responses from each question were tabulated and displayed in tables corresponding to each of the nine survey questions/statements.

Survey question 1. Identification of the building and or district. The results of this question will remain anonymous. The question was asked in order to correlate the schools with the MAP data collected from the MODESE and insure that as many RPDCs were incorporated into the study as possible. Once identified, building demographics were gathered from the MODESE. MAP data were also gathered from the MODESE in order to perform statistical analysis for the study.

Survey question 2. How many years has your school been involved in Reading First? Eight building principals participated in the survey. The individual building's years of participation in the Reading First Model ranged from two years to nine years. Of the principals participating in the survey, there was one school that participated for two years, one school that participated for four years, two schools that participated for six years, one school that participated for seven years, one school that participated for eight years, and two schools that participated for nine years.

Survey statement 3. Please select the components of the Reading First Program your district still implements. For the purpose of this study, the key components of the Reading First Model included scientifically based instruction of a core reading program, high quality professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30

minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, and Nelson, 2010). The online survey
included the key components listed and the option of whether the school still used a
reading coach. As shown in Table 4, all eight RF schools continue using the key
components of the Reading First Model. One principal noted the teachers incorporated
more than 90 minutes, but it was a split period. Another principal reported the teachers
had used small group interventions in past years, but as funding was cut, they were
unable to keep the reading coach, and therefore, were unable to use small group
interventions during the 2013 school year.

Table 4

Years Incorporating Reading First Model

Reading First School	Years in Reading First	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
RF 1	6 years	X	X	X	X
RF 2	2 years			X	X
RF 3	9 years	X	X	X	X
RF 4	8 years	X	X	X	X
RF 5	7 years	X	X	X	X
RF 6	6 years	X	X	X	X
RF 7	4 years	X	X	X	X
RF 8	9 years	X	X	X	X

Note. Reading First (RF).

Survey question 4. **How many third grade students in your building participated in the Reading First Program during the following years: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012?** The survey results were tabulated by year. There was a significant range in third grade student enrollment among the eight schools participating in the study. All the schools participated in the Reading First Model for four years with the exception of RF 2 and RF 7. The averages for these two schools were based upon the years the schools had third grade students that participated in the Reading First Model.

As shown in Figure 9, there was a wide range of student enrollment among the schools for the 2008-2009 school year. RF 7 had the smallest enrollment with three students, and RF 4 had the largest enrollment with 69 students. RF 2 had no participants due to the fact the school would not begin implementing Reading First in third grade until the 2010-2011 school year.
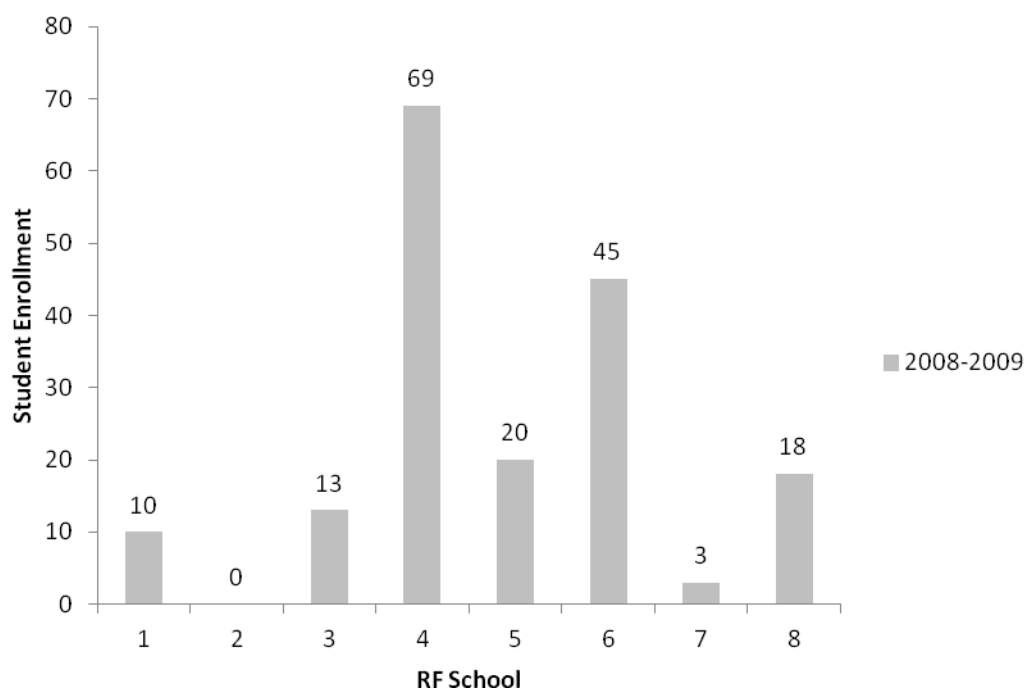
Figure 9. 2008-2009 Reading First enrollment.

As shown in Figure 10, the trend continued in the 2009-2010 school year. Small third grade enrollments along with schools with a more moderate enrollment were represented. During the 2009-2010 school year, RF 7 had the smallest enrollment with one student compared to RF 4, which had an enrollment of 69 students.
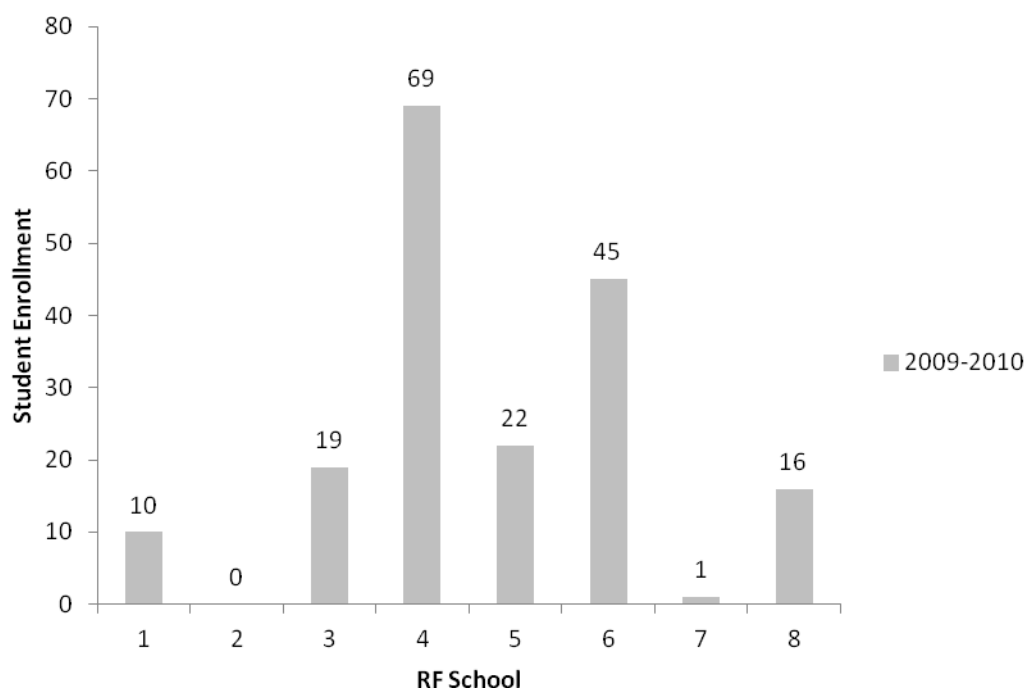
Figure 10. 2009-2010 Reading First enrollment.

As shown in Figure 11, RF 2 participated in Reading First for the first time. Due to the size of the third grade population in RF 2, the numbers for the total enrollment increased significantly. During the 2010-2011 school year, RF 7 had the smallest enrollment with four students, while RF 2 had the largest enrollment with 157 students.
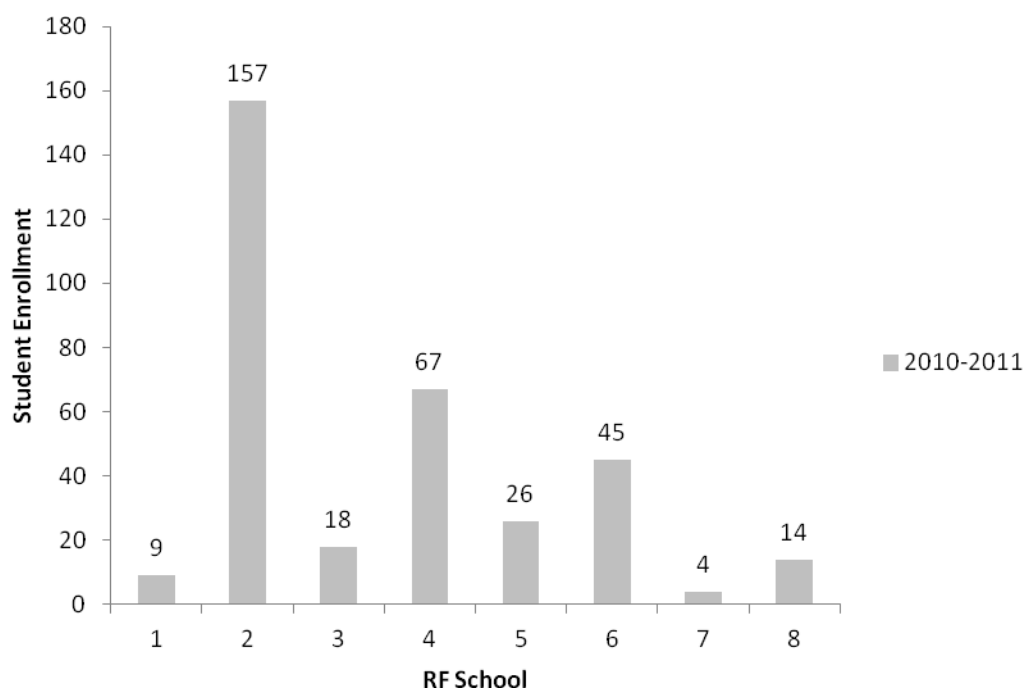
Figure 11. 2010-2011 Reading First enrollment.

As shown in Figure 12, RF 2 had the largest enrollment, and RF 7, for the first time, had no third grade students participating in the Reading First Model. During the 2011-2012 school year, RF 2 had the largest enrollment with 162 students compared with RF 7 which had no third grade students. As shown in Figure 12, RF 6 maintained 45 students, the same enrollment as the previous three years (see Figures 9, 10, & 11).
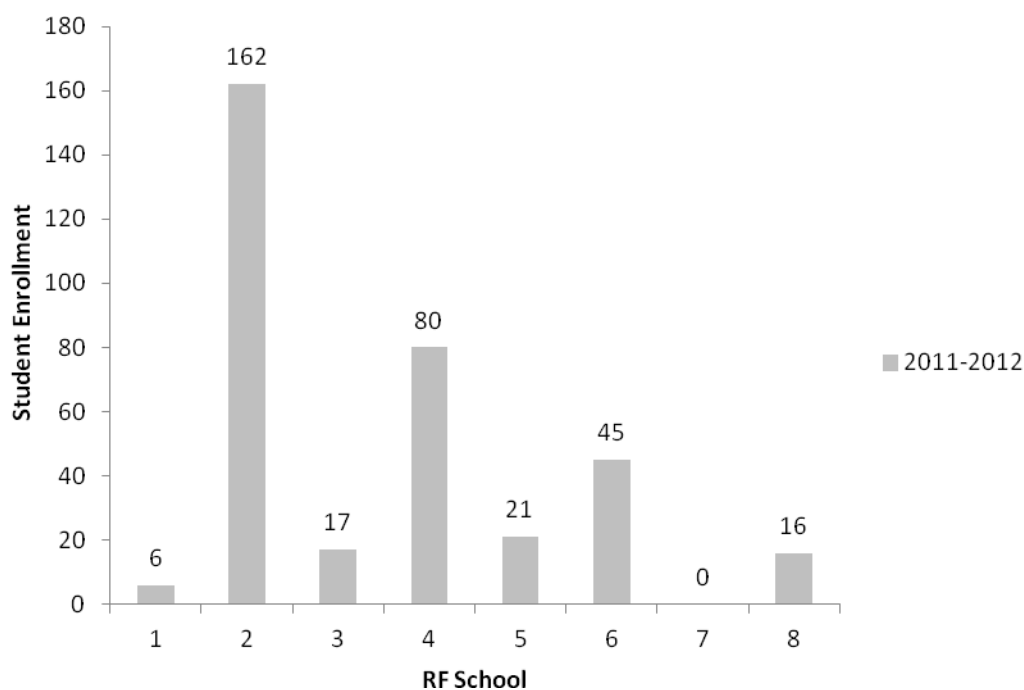
Figure 12. 2011-2012 Reading First enrollment.

As shown in Figure 13, the enrollments for the eight districts were computed to find the average enrollments over the four-year period. RF 1 averaged an enrollment of 8.75 students. RF 2 averaged 159.5 students over two years of participation. RF 3 averaged 16.75 students, and RF 4 averaged 71.25 students. RF 5 averaged 22.25 students, while RF 6 averaged 45 students. RF 7 recorded the lowest average enrollment, 2.67, over the four-year period. RF 2 averaged the highest enrollment over the two years of participation in Reading First (159.5). RF 8 averaged 16 students. The average enrollment of third grade for schools that participated in the survey was 42.77.
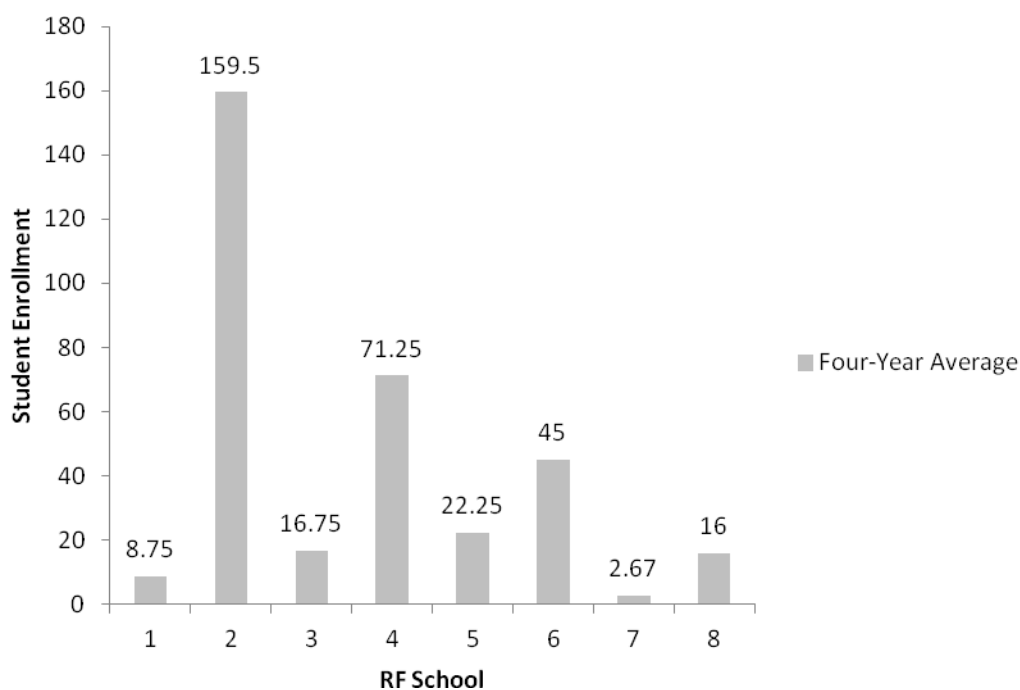
Figure 13. Reading First enrollment four-year average. RF 2 only participated in Reading First for the 2011 and 2012 school years. RF 7 had no third grade students during the 2012 school year.

Survey statement 5. Please state the number of discipline referrals for classroom disruption for third grade students participating in the Reading First Program during each of the following years: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012. As shown in Table 5, RF 2 provided no data for 2009 and 2010 since the school had not yet begun using the Reading First Model. RF 7 had no enrollment during 2012.

Participating school principals were asked to categorize discipline referrals for classroom disruption in third grade Reading First classrooms. A rating system was developed to categorize the data: classrooms with 0-1 referrals (1), classrooms with 2-4 referrals (2), classroom with 5-7 referrals (3), classrooms with 8-10 referrals (4), and

classrooms with 11 or more referrals (5). The mean of 2009 was 1.88. The mean for

2010 was 2. The mean for 2011 was 2.38, and the mean for 2012 was 2.12. The average

number of discipline referrals for third grade students in the eight schools was 2.22.

Table 5

Third Grade Discipline Data for Reading First Schools

RF School	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Average
RF 1	1	1	1	1	1
RF 2	*	*	3	3	3
RF 3	3	5	3	5	4
RF 4	3	3	2	2	2.5
RF 5	2	2	2	2	2
RF 6	2	2	2	2	2
RF 7	2	1	5	1	2.25
RF 8	1	1	1	0	1

Note. Reading First (RF). * Refers to schools with no discipline data for the corresponding year.

As shown in Figure 14, there was a sharp increase in referrals during 201l. This

was the first year RF 2 had discipline data included. RF 2 had 157 students and reported

5-7 referrals for both the 2011 and 2012 school years. RF 7 reported 11 or more referrals

and had an enrollment of four students.
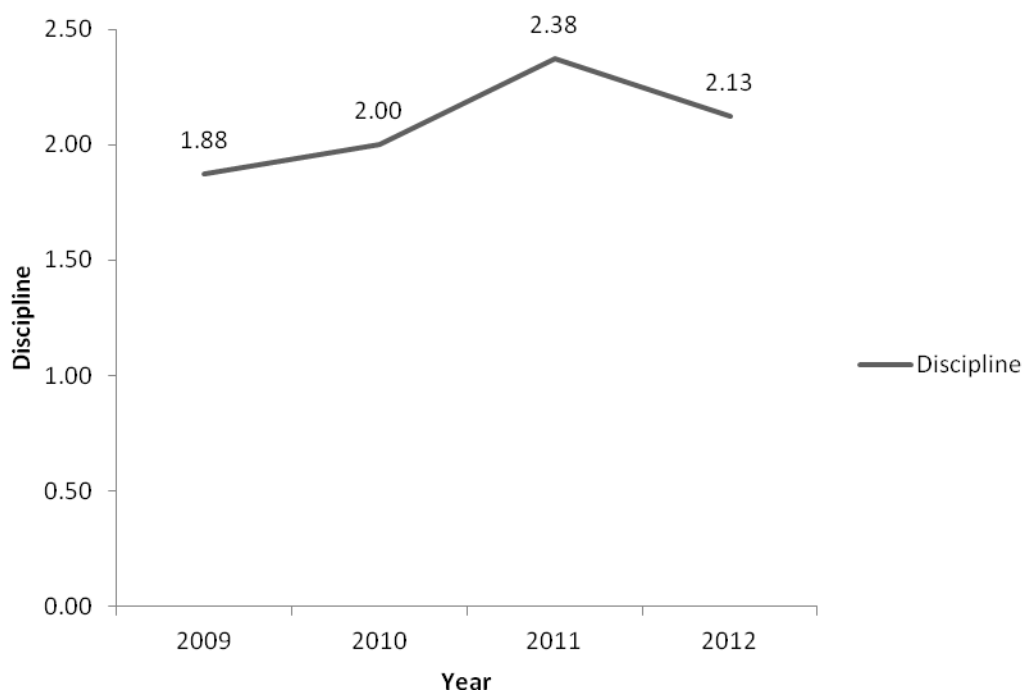
Figure 14. Four-year discipline referral average.

A PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear

correlation between the two variables (Bluman, 2010). The discipline data served as the

independent variable (X) and the NCE mean test scores served as the dependent variable

(Y). The data for discipline referrals revealed a mean of 1.938, a median of 2, a mode of

1, and a standard deviation of 1.075. There were no outliers found within the discipline

data.

The NCE mean score data revealed a mean of 640.511, a median of 642.35, no

mode was established, and a standard deviation of 7.765. There were no outliers found

within the MAP data either. The PPMC was .9344. RF 7 was excluded from the

calculations due to the fact there were no NCE mean scores calculated by the MODESE due to small enrollment.

As shown in Figure 15, a scatterplot was constructed and a trendline drawn showing a high positive correlation between the two variables. The R^2 of .87 revealed that 87% of the variation in the dependent variable is due to variation in the independent variable. The other 13% is unexplained. The p-value was .002, which is considerably less than .05, another indicator that there was a high correlation between the NCE mean scores and discipline data. With analysis of the data presented, there was evidence to reject the null hypothesis.
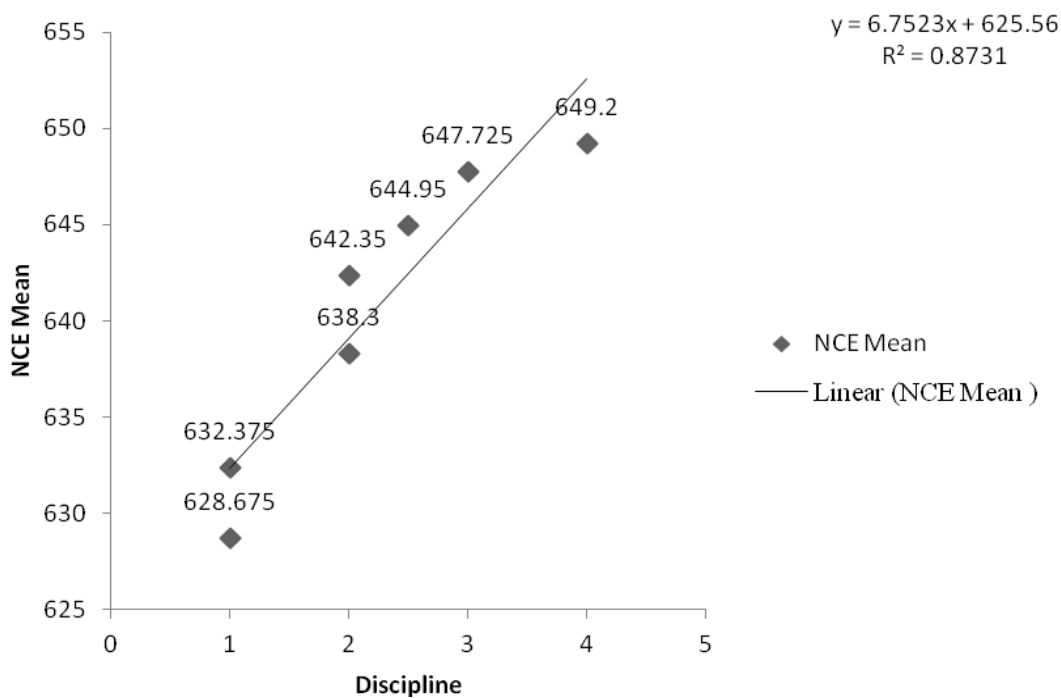
Figure 15. Mean NCE and discipline.

For the next set of statements, respondents were directed to select the response
that best reflected their experience with the Reading First Model. The Likert-scale
choices were: Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, or Disagree.

**Survey statement 6. Student engagement activities practiced during the
Reading First block have a positive effect on student behavior.** As shown in Table 6,
principals that participated in the survey agreed that student engagement activities
practiced during the Reading First block had a positive effect on student behavior.
Specifically, 62.5% of the principals agreed and 37.5% somewhat agreed with the
statement.

Table 6

Student Engagement Activities

Statement	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Student engagement activities practiced during the Reading First block have a positive effect of student behavior.	62.50%	37.50%	0%	0%	100%
Total responses	5	3	0	0	8

**Survey statement 7. Teachers have begun to modify student engagement
activities learned through the Reading First Program for use in other subject areas.**
All eight principals felt transitioning successful student engagement strategies across

curricular lines was occurring to some degree in third grade classrooms. As shown in

Table 7, 50% agreed and 50% somewhat agreed with the statement.

Table 7

Teacher Modification of Student Engagement

Statement	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Teachers have begun to modify student engagement activities learned through the Reading First Program for use in other subject areas.	50%	50%	0%	0%	100%
Total responses	4	4	0	0	8

Survey statement 8. Discipline referrals for classroom disruption have decreased in third grade classrooms since the induction of Reading First Program's high quality student engagement activities. There was no clear conclusion to whether or not principals felt discipline referrals for classroom disruption had decreased since the induction of the Reading First Model. As shown in Table 8, all eight principals answered the question; however, the results ranged from agree to somewhat disagree. Of participants surveyed, 37.50%, or three of the principals, answered agree; 37.50%, or three of the principals, answered somewhat agree; and 25%, or two of the principals, answered somewhat disagree.

Table 8

Student Engagement and Discipline Referrals

Statement	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Discipline referrals for classroom disruption have decreased in third grade classrooms since the induction of the Reading First Program's high quality student engagement activities.	37.50%	37.50%	25%	0%	100%
Total responses	3	3	2	0	8

Survey statement 9. Classrooms participating in high quality student engagement activities generally have fewer classroom disruptions. Only six principals responded to question 9. Two of the principals had only been at their respective schools for two years or less and did not feel qualified to respond to the question. As shown in Table 9, of the principals who did respond, there was a strong perception there were fewer disruptions in classrooms participating in high quality student engagement activities. Five of the six principals agreed that classrooms practicing high quality student engagement activities had fewer discipline referrals.

Table 9

Discipline Referrals in Student Engagement Classrooms

Statement	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Classrooms participating in high quality student engagement activities generally have fewer discipline referrals for classroom disruptions.	62.50%	12.50%	0%	0%	75%
Total responses	5	1	0	0	6

Note. Two principals did not respond to this question.

Student engagement data were calculated in the following manner: A rating system was correlated with the Likert-scale and used to categorize the data: a response of agree (1), somewhat agree (2), a response of somewhat disagree (3), and a response of disagree (4). The scores were added for each RF school and then averaged.

A PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between the two variables (Bluman, 2010). The discipline data served as the independent variable (X) and the student engagement data served as the dependent variable (Y). The data for discipline referrals revealed a mean of 2.219, a median of 2.125, a mode of 1, and a standard deviation of .0995. There were no outliers found within the discipline data.

The student engagement data revealed a mean of 1.475, a median of 1.625, a mode of 1, and a standard deviation of .0416. There were no outliers found within student engagement data. The PPMC was .8741. RF school 7 was not excluded from the calculations for discipline and student engagement due to the fact the building principal completed the online survey with the data required.

As shown in Figure 16, a scatterplot was constructed and a trend line drawn to provide a visual of these findings. As shown on the scatterplot, there was a high positive correlation between the two variables. The R^2 of .76 revealed that 76% of the variation in the dependent variable was due to variation in the independent variable. The other 24% was unexplained. The p-value was .015, which is less than .05, another indicator that there was a positive correlation between discipline data and high quality student engagement activities used in the Reading First Model. With analysis of the data presented, there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis.
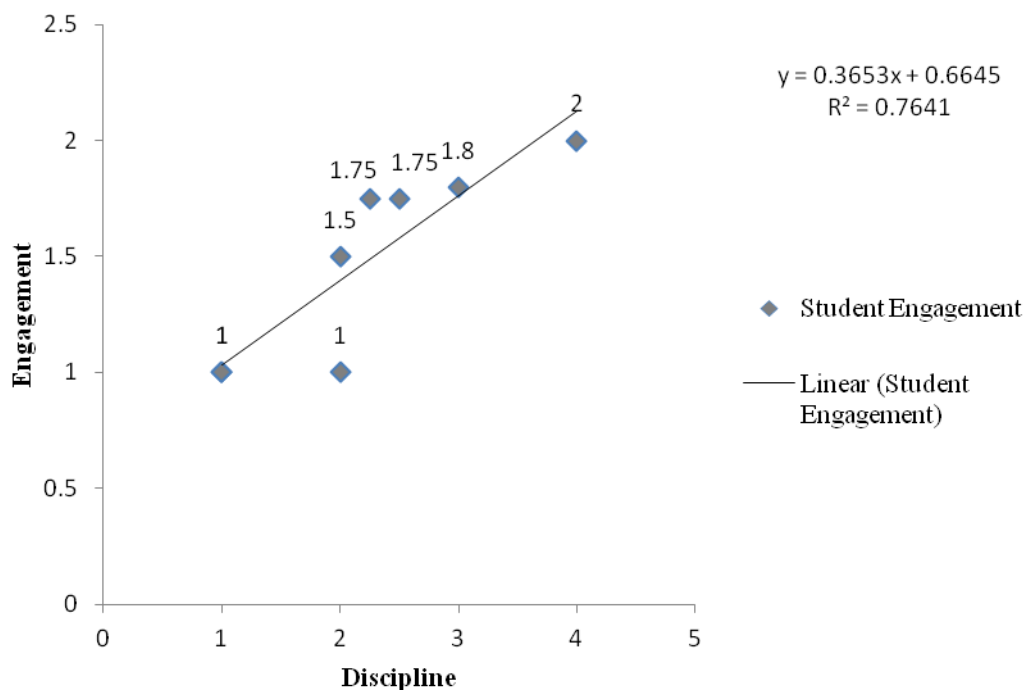
Figure 16. Student engagement correlation with student discipline.

Summary

Since funding was eliminated in 2009, Reading First districts have had to make decisions about whether to continue the program and fund it locally, maintain key components of the program and do away with others, or eliminate the program all together. The Reading First Model has made educators aware of what reading instruction should look like in both classrooms and teacher-training institutions (Stern, 2007). Individual schools will have to review data and determine the effectiveness of the model concerning their students.

For the purpose of this study, the key components of the Reading First Model included scientifically based instruction of a core reading program, high quality

professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30 minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, & Nelson, 2010). This study was guided by three research questions which focused on high quality student engagement activities practiced during the Reading First Model and the correlation of these activities to achievement on the MAP and discipline referrals for classroom disruptions.

Chapter Four included a review of the sample and demographic data. To test null hypothesis 1, MAP data were gathered from the same sample of Missouri school districts and a PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between the dependent variable (number of years the school participated in the Reading First Model) and the independent variable (NCE mean scores). A PPMC was also used to determine the correlation between the discipline data and the NCE mean scores. Finally, a PPMC was applied to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between discipline data and student engagement data compiled from the online survey.

Included in Chapter Five was a synopsis of the study. The findings from the analysis of data were presented, and the relationship of the findings to the conceptual framework were discussed. Each of the research questions was revisited and conclusions given based on the statistical data. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research were conveyed.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

Reading has become the foundation for success. Reading is a life-long skill and establishes a solid base for success in an age of technology and information (Wren, 2002). Early reading skills taught in kindergarten are enhanced throughout primary school enabling students to read for both information and pleasure (Wren, 2002). Benefits of reading strategies developed in early years allow students to smoothly transition those strategies across the curriculum and the use of explicit instruction in the classroom can be a successful tool (Glenberg et al., 2011).

Archer and Hughes (2011) found explicit instruction is the best available strategy to maximize academic growth Archer and Hughes (2011) related, "students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved" (p. 1). The combination of student engagment practices and elements of explicit instruction provide students with the optimal learning experience (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

W. L. Bateman (n.d.) once stated, "If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got" (para. 1). Over the years, various reading models have been introduced in public education trying to bridge the reading achievement gap created by poverty and other societal issues (Lee, 2006). All of these approaches have one goal in common, to improve achievement.

Research existed on the correlation between student engagement and student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) and between student engagement

and discipline referrals for classroom disruption (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering,

2003). However, there was little research on the correlation between student

achievement and discipline referrals for classroom disruption in classrooms that

practiced the key components of the Reading First Model. This study was guided by

three research questions which focused on high quality student engagement activities

practiced during the Reading First Model and the correlation of these activities to

achievement on the MAP and discipline referrals for classroom disruptions. The key

components of the Reading First Model included scientifically based instruction of a

core reading program, high quality professional development, a formative assessment

(DIBELS), a 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group interventions, and the

use of 30 minute reading work stations (Dole, Hosp, & Nelson, 2010).

Findings

Research question 1. What is the correlation between increased student

achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model?

Null hypothesis 1. There is not a correlation between increased student

achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model.

Lee (2006) concluded that the Reading First Program did not have an impact on

reading achievement. Data collected from the eight schools participating in this study,

produced similar results. The data collected provided sufficient evidence to fail to reject

the null hypothesis.

RF 6 was the only school to raise mean NCE scores each of the four years of the

study. All other schools showed fluctuation in their mean NCE scores during the four-

year period. RF 6 participated in the program for 6 years. Trainin and Wilson (2009-

2010) attributed success of the program to two factors, one being longevity. However,

RF 1, RF 3, RF 4, RF 5, and RF 8 participated in the program for 6 or more years, and

none of these schools realized the level of success in achievement that RF 6 attained.

Research question 2. What is the correlation between discipline referrals for

classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools

continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model?

Null hypothesis 2. There is not a correlation between discipline referrals for

classroom disruption and increased student achievement on the MAP in schools

continuing to follow key components of the Reading First Model.

A PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear

correlation between the two variables (Bluman, 2010). The discipline data served as the

independent variable (X) and the NCE mean test scores served as the dependent variable

(Y). According to the findings, there was a high positive correlation between the two

variables. The R^2 of .87 revealed that 87% of the variation in the dependent variable was

due to variation in the independent variable. The other 13% was unexplained. The *p*-

value was .002, which is considerably less than .05, another indicator that there was a

high correlation between the NCE mean scores and discipline data. The analysis of the

data revealed evidence to reject the null hypothesis

Research question 3. What is the correlation between the student engagement

component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption?

Null hypothesis 3. There is not a correlation between the student engagement

component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption.

A PPMC was performed to measure the strength and direction of a linear correlation between the two variables (Bluman, 2010). The discipline data served as the independent variable (X) and the student engagement data served as the dependent variable (Y). The data for discipline referrals revealed there was a high positive correlation between the two variables. The R^2 of .76 revealed that 76% of the variation in the dependent variable was due to variation in the independent variable. The other 24% is unexplained. The p-value was .015, which is less than .05, another indicator that there was a positive correlation between discipline data and high quality student engagement activities used in the Reading First Model. With analysis of the data presented, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Limitations of Findings

There were two major limitations of this study. The first was the number of schools still participating in the Reading First Model. It was difficult to find schools and once they were identified, it was just as difficult to get administrators who were willing to take the online survey. Three of the nine Missouri RPDCs no longer have schools using the Reading First Model due to lack of funding.

The other limitation was the fact that the information obtained through the online survey may not reflect the perceptions of all principals of schools participating in the Reading First Model. Portions of the survey required principals, some who were newly hired, to respond to areas of the Reading First Model that may have been unfamiliar to them. These principals may have made judgment calls on what they had observed during their tenure at the school they represented.

Relationship of Findings to Conceptual Framework

The positivist research perspective allowed the focus to be placed on the strategies the Reading First Model offered that traditional classroom settings did not. The nontraditional classroom setting of the Reading First Model incorporated student engagement and movement during learning which fostered positive student behavior. Positivism "is a belief that we can truly figure out 'what works' through the right procedures and practices, be it in the spheres of medicine, bridge building, or education" (Butin, 2010, p. 60). High quality student engagement activities were used during the Reading First Model to guide students in a positive manner through the learning process by keeping them engaged and on task.

This study, through the positivist approach, sought to determine if there was a correlation between the strategies implemented as part of the Reading First Model and improved student achievement, along with a reduction in discipline referrals for classroom disruption. The framework of positivism was used in answering the questions of this study

A Reading First classroom differs from a traditional reading classroom due to the focus on student engagment. Students are not kept busy with seatwork, rather they are stimulated with various student engagement activities. Butin (2010) declared Positivism is concerned with finding the best solution. To reveal the answer using the positivist approach one would focus on the student engagement variable to determine the correlation between high quality student engagement and higher achievement. Also one would focus on the number of discipline referrals for classroom disruptions.

Therefore, a close examination of these variables under the umbrella of the Reading

First Model served as the purpose of this study.

Conclusions

The data from this study do not support a correlation between increased student

achievement on the MAP and participation in the Reading First Model. The statistical

analysis in Chapter Four suggested the Reading First Model did not affect third grade

mean NCE scores. Shannon (2007) found similar results. When so many variables play

a role in educating a child, it is hard to single out one variable as the reason why a

program succeeded or failed (Shannon, 2007).

The data collected in this study suggested there is a positive correlation between

discipline referrals for classroom disruption and student achievement on the MAP. In

order for students to master material and be successful on tests, they must learn the

material. Keeping students on task is a primary focus of classroom teachers. It is

necessary for teachers to provide an educational setting that allows *all* students to learn.

Teachers differeniate all areas of instruction in order to meet the high standards required

at each level.

Teachers strive to challenge all students. Being unable to follow where the lesson

is going or lack of understanding of how to perform a task is just as frustrating for a

student as being bored with material already mastered. Schussler (2009) believed

students feel a lack of respect from teachers when lessons fail to challenge them

academically. This perceived lack of respect by students then translates into a negative

attitude toward the classroom environment (Schussler, 2009). Presenting students with a

positive learning environment keeps them engaged and allows the structure required to be successful (Schussler, 2009).

The data collected revealed there was a positive correlation between the student engagement component of the Reading First Model and discipline referrals for classroom disruption. Much research exists on the positive role student engagement has in the area of student achievement (Goleman, 2008; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Rischer, 2008; Skinner et al., 2009). Students must be in class and participating in order to gain the knowledge required to be successful on achievement tests. Students participating in classrooms where high quality student engagement activities are taking place will be less likely to cause classroom disruptions that end with a discipline referral.

Teachers who are able to create positive learning environments through high student engagement activities prevent negative classroom behaviors from developing. It can be challenging for educators "to find classroom management strategies that are proactive, preventative, and relatively easy to implement, and which provide minimal disruption to the classroom" (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010, p. 8). Teachers need to spend less time addressing student behaviors and more time engaging students in learning activities. Planning and over-planning for the day leaves teachers with options to diffuse possible disruptive behaviors through classroom engagement activities. Guardino and Fullerton (2010) ascertained, "disruptive behavior (e.g., speaking without permission, getting out of seat) often interferes with students' engagement in the learning process" (p. 8).

The Reading First Model includes not only whole group instruction, but also small group work stations. Work stations reinforce whole group instruction, a three-tier

intervention model, and formative assessments that allow teachers to adapt instuction as needed. Problem behavior in the classroom can be averted or diffused by the use of multi-component classroom management programs (Oliver et al., 2011).

Implications for Practice

The positive correlation between student engagement activities and discipline referrals for classroom disruption in Reading First Schools suggested several implications for practice. Classroom teachers can use this information to assess the strategies they are using in the classroom. High quality student engagement activities planned within the structure of the school day will allow for less time spent on classroom management issues.

Principals and professional development teams can value the research obtained within this study to foster high quality student engagement professional development opportunities for staff members. Principals can make student engagement activities part of the evaluation process by demanding teachers respond to the new challenges of the 21st century student with something other than worksheets and desk work. Equally important, it is essential that principals understand the importance of high quality student engagement activities and the role these activities play in high achieving schools.

Most importantly, this study impacts students. By teachers making all learning activities high quality student engagement activities, students will flourish in the classroom, and principals will see fewer students in their offices. Students will become more self-disciplined by being a part of cooperative learning activities that require active engagement.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are two main recommendations for future research. First, there is a need for further examination of other variables that might have an effect on discipline referrals for classroom disruption and the student engagement component of the Reading First Model. Statistical analysis of the correlation between student engagement and discipline referrals for classroom disruption revealed an R^2 of .76, which meant 76% of the variation in the dependent variable (student engagement) was due to variation in the independent variable (discipline data). The other 24% was unexplained. Determining the cause of the other 24% would be beneficial to classroom instructors.

Also worthwhile, would be a qualitative analysis of the research. Interviewing teachers who have been trained to use high quality student engagement activities in the classroom would be one approach. An analysis of their answers to questions pertaining to keeping students on task during student engagement activities might prove to be insightful. Interview questions might include:

1. What are your expectations of students during student engagement activities, and how do you express those expectations to your students?

2. How do you prepare students to be successful during independent student engagement activities?

3. How do you select groups for cooperative student engagement activities?

4. What types of interactive discussions do you encourage during student engagement activities, and how do you foster those discussions?

5. What types of behaviors do you consider disruptive enough to write a

discipline referral, and how many referrals have you written over the last year?

      6. What are three of the most successful student engagment activities you use, and why do you consider them to be more successful than others?

      Teachers' perceptions and opinions surrounding student engagement activites would provide insight into specific strategies that are used to decrease misbehaviors through a pro-active approach to discipline. Classroom teachers who increase the amount of allocated time spent teaching critical content areas and differentiate instruction through the use of high quality student engagement activities allow students to achieve goals and find success in the classroom, while building confidence to become independent learners (Kagan & Kagan 2009). Students appreciate routine, and it is important that teachers prepare for instuction, start lessons on time, and use a routine that will help avoid digressions and keep students on task (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Also, teaching in groups will increase the amount of academic learning time and quality instruction time for students (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Both one-to-one instruction and seatwork are useful in practicing newly acquired skills, but neither is a equitable substitute for well-designed group instruction (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

      The second recommendation for further research is to examine student achievement and discipline referrals from the students' perspectives. Very little research exists in this area. A mixed study using both qualitative and quantitative methodology would be advantageous. It would be interesting to explore the quantitative aspect of the correlation between student grades and discipline referrals, as well as the qualitative aspect to reveal the underlying causes of student disciplinary referrals.

One strategy would be to select five elementary students with a history of disciplinary issues and classroom teachers who instruct those students. The process might contain individual interviews with students and teachers and conclude with a joint group interview. The following questions might be asked of the student interviewees:

1. What activities make you feel successful in the classroom?

2. Why do you feel you are successful at these activities?

3. What are some of the activities where you do not feel successful?

4. Why do you not feel successful at these?

5. What are some of the reasons you have received discipline referrals?

6. What are the reasons why you acted out in this manner during class?

7. How do your discipline referrals affect your grades?

Questions for classroom teachers would be similar to those presented previously. Other questions may arise during the student interviews. The joint group interview questions would include:

1. What are your teachers' expectations of you during learning time?

2. What are your expectations for your teacher during learning time?

3. What are some things that your teacher can do to help you be more successful and less disruptive in class?

4. What behaviors do you notice in this student that are triggered by certain activities?

5. What are possible solutions to avoid the triggers and assure the student benefits from the activity?

Additional questions may be generated in a joint group setting that would illicit rich, descriptive responses and insightful information.

Summary

High quality student engagement activities allow students to become successful learners. Student engagement activities that work in the classroom have been developed to be used in all classroom settings and are for all ages. Explicit instruction must be offered alongside these high quality student engagement practices in order to allow students to receive the training required before practicing new skills.

Over the years, instructional strategies and models have been developed to encourage student engagement activities that result in high achievement. The purpose of this study was to examine one specific model, Reading First. The Reading First Model was implemented in schools throughout Missouri, and even after funding was eliminated many schools chose to use local funds to practice the key components of the model (Barbash, 2008).

In Chapter One, an historical basis for the research and the conceptual framework were described. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the study questions, and the hypotheses were also introduced. The key definitions, limitations, and assumptions were presented. In Chapter Two, a historical background of the study and a literature review of supporting and opposing evidence were provided.

An explanation of the methodology used in this quantitative study was stated in Chapter Three. An overview of the problem and purpose of the study was recounted, and the null hypotheses were identified. The population and sample were described, as well as the instrumentation and analysis process.

In Chapter Four, the sample and demographic data were reviewed. The research questions and null hypotheses were restated. The quantitative data were evaluated, and tables and figures were designed to present the data.

In Chapter Five, findings, conclusions, and the research questions were discussed. Responses to the research questions and determination of the hypotheses were provided. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research were detailed.

Appendix A

Phone Script

Hello, May I please speak with Principal (_____)?

Principal (_____), my name is Shelly Fransen, and I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. Your school's name was given to me by your RPDC as a district that still participates in the key components of the Reading First Model. Those components are: scientifically based instruction of a core reading program, high quality professional development, formative assessment (DIBELS), 90 minute uninterrupted reading block, small group intervention, and 30 minute reading work stations.

Does your school still participate in the components of the Reading First Model?
(If answer is No)…Thank you for your time, but your school does not meet the requirements of this study.

(If answer is Yes)…Your school meets the requirements of the study.

Would you be interested in taking an online survey (approximately 10 minutes) regarding your school's participation in the Reading First Model? The questions will focus on student engagement activities used during Reading First and discipline referrals for classroom disruption for third graders during Reading First time.

(If answer is No)…Thank you for your time.

(If answer is Yes)…I appreciate your willingness to participate in the survey, I will email you a Letter of Informed Consent that I will need you to sign and fax back to me as soon as possible. As soon as I have the signed form I will email you the survey.
Do you have any questions?
Thank you so much for your time and have a great day!

Appendix B

Lindenwood University

School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway

St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

A Study of Student Engagement Activities, Discipline Referrals, and Student Achievement in Reading First Schools

Principal Investigator   Shelly Fransen

Telephone: 417-858-XXXX E-mail: sfransen@sks.k12.mo.us

Participant _____

Contact info_____

1.   You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Shelly Fransen under the guidance of Dr. Cathy Galland. The purpose of this research is to determine if there is a correlation between student engagement activities practiced as part of the Reading First Model and the number of discipline referrals for classroom disruption.

2.   a) Your participation will involve voluntary participation in a survey, following completion of this form.

    b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 10 minutes for the online survey.

3.   There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4.   There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge of student engagement in the classroom.

5.   Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Shelly Fransen, 417-XXX-XXXX or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Cathy Galland, 417-XXX-XXXX. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs, at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator Date   Investigator Printed Name

_____   _____
Participant's Signature Date   Participant's Printed Name

Appendix C

Survey Questions

1. Building and or District._____

2. How many years has your school been involved in Reading First?

3. Please select the components of the Reading First Program your district still

   implements.

   ____scientifically based instruction of a core reading program

   ____high quality professional development

   ____formative assessment (DIBELS)

   ____90 minute uninterrupted reading block

   ____small group intervention

   ____30 minute reading work stations

   ____Reading Coach

4. How many third grade students in your building participated in the Reading First

   Program during the following years?

   ____2009   ____2010   ____2011   ____2012

5. Please state the number of discipline referrals for classroom disruption for third

   grade students participating in the Reading First Program during each of the

   following school years.

   ____2009   ____2010   ____2011   ____2012

Please select the response to each statement that best reflects your experience with the Reading First Program. For this survey, student engagement will be defined as "the extent to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked with high-quality learning outcomes" (Krause & Coates, 2008, p. 493).

6. Student engagement activities practiced during the Reading First block have a positive effect on student behavior.

    Agree   Somewhat Agree   Somewhat Disagree   Disagree

7. Teachers have begun to modify student engagement activities learned through the Reading First Program for use in other subject areas.

    Agree   Somewhat Agree   Somewhat Disagree   Disagree

8. Discipline referrals for classroom disruption have decreased in third grade classrooms since the induction of Reading First Program's high quality student engagement activities.

    Agree   Somewhat Agree   Somewhat Disagree   Disagree

9. Classrooms participating in high quality student engagement activities generally have fewer classroom disruptions.

    Agree   Somewhat Agree   Somewhat Disagree   Disagree

Appendix D

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE: November 20, 2012

TO: Shelly Fransen

FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [392085-1] A Study of Student Engagement Activities, Discipline Referrals, and Student Achievement in Reading First Schools

IRB REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE:
November 20, 2012

EXPIRATION DATE: November 20, 2013

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal

regulation. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a

description of the study and
insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must

continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.
Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 20, 2013.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Lucas Ravenscraft at lravenscraft@lindenwood.edu, or send them to IRB@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

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Vita

Shelly Lynette Fransen was born in Beloit, Kansas on March 21, 2963. Shelly had the privilege of growing up on a farm and much of the person she has become was due to the Quaker influence instilled in her by her parents. Hard work and self-discipline were traits learned from both her parents. Church continues to play an important part of Shelly's life. She currently is a member of the Blue Eye United Methodist Church where she is Worship Leader.

Shelly received her Bachelor of Science in Social Science Education from Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, in 1985. She also holds Masters Degrees in Educational Curriculum from Wichita State University and Educational Administration from William Woods University. Shelly received her Specialist Degree in Educational Administration from Missouri State University.

Shelly taught for 19 years prior to becoming an administrator. She served for two and a half years as building principal before assuming the duties of district superintendent at Shell Knob. She currently fulfills both the role of building principal and district superintendent.