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# A Summer Reading Enrichment Experience: One District's Effort to Prevent Summer Reading Loss

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# A SUMMER READING ENRICHMENT EXPERIENCE: ONE DISTRICT'S EFFORT TO PREVENT SUMMER READING LOSS

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# DEDICATION

To all the ambitious children who embrace learning despite being faced with unfathomable challenges in life, and to the devoted educators who support them in the learning process and offer them hope for a brighter future.

... being literate is closely linked to one's ability to communicate effectively, gain knowledge and comprehension, garner respect from peers and authority, and fully contribute and participate in society in a meaningful way. Building a literate society goes well beyond developing a child's ability to read or write. Rather, it speaks to the larger societal issues of access and equity. In our society, being literate opens doors- and opens them wide. (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2004, p. 29)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into effective literacy practices and key factors that promote reading achievement for elementary age students during summer break. More specifically, the study examined the effectiveness of a summer reading enrichment experience offered to children from low-income families in an effort to prevent summer reading loss. The students involved in this study were considered to have average reading skills.

The particular focus of this study led to the formation of the following question to guide this research: To what extent is a student's reading achievement impacted by extended literacy instruction or enrichment? In this mixed methods study, quantitative methods were used to determine if there was a gain in reading achievement for participating students through the analysis of archived reading achievement scores of the group of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their control group counterparts. This study also researched the nature of the effective instructional practices utilized by the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers via qualitative methods involving the analysis of teacher interview responses and archived classroom and program artifacts.

The setting for the study was in a rural public school district located in the Midwest. The findings revealed that the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience had an impact on the reading achievement gains made by the participating students although not to a level of statistical significance. The qualitative analysis provided a richer picture of

this learning opportunity aimed at preventing students from losing critical literacy skills during the summer months. Students gained ready access to a wide variety of books and technology and participated in a variety of literacy and enrichment activities during this unique summer experience.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

> Language is essential to learning, and reading, as a specialized form of language, is not only a basic skill, it is an indispensable tool for critical and creative thinking. Literacy allows us to make connections between our own and others' experiences; to inquire systematically into important matters; and to access, analyze, and evaluate information and arguments. In short, literacy is key to success in school and beyond for effective participation in the workforce, the community, and the body politic. (Braunger & Lewis, 2005, p. 2)

Reading literacy is a critical skill essential for learning. Through a variety of available resources of printed and/or electronic text, skilled and motivated readers have the opportunity to gain a deep knowledge base and develop a rich understanding of an endless array of interested subjects.

Recognizing the ever-increasing literacy demands and future academic challenges that await our students, educational leaders from across the States created a set of rigorous educational standards, referred to as the Common Core State Standards, to prepare *all* students to be college and career ready (Common Core, 2010). Students who successfully meet the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (referred to as the Standards) will be equipped to apply their literacy skills and thrive in an intellectually challenging, information-rich world. The ultimate objective of this lofty undertaking is to build literate individuals, as described below:

> Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature.

> They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. In short, students who meet the Standards develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language. (Common Core, June 2, 2010, p. 3)

Indeed, to best prepare our children to be successful in college and the workforce, they must be held to these high standards of literacy learning across the content areas. In the words of President Obama:

> If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career. (White House website, 2013)

Certainly, to ensure a bright future for our Country, an essential element of this national initiative must be to build strong literate individuals.

The elementary grades (K-4/5) serve as the critical period for children to develop the basic reading skills necessary to become literate individuals (Chall, 1983). Reading research has provided a wealth of information on topics related to effective reading instruction and recommended literacy practices (Allington, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000; Shanahan, 1998; Shanahan & Barr, 1998; Snow, Burns & Griffins, 1998), effective instructional strategies (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgeson, 2010; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 2005;), effective reading program design (Diamond, 2006) and reading interventions (Allington, 2006; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2010; Clay, 2005; Kim & Quinn, 2013; Kim & White, 2008; Schacter & Jo, 2005; Wasik & Slavin, 1993; What Works Clearinghouse, 2009).

An alarming number of school-age children have and continue to perform below proficiency in reading (ISBE, 2012; NAEP 2011). Evidence of achievement gaps have been under investigation based on race/ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status (Heyns, 1978; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; NAEP 2011; Reardon, 2011; Reardon & Galindo, 2009). Over the past 40 years, there has been a growing increase in the reading achievement gap between low-income students and their higher performing middle or higher income counterparts (Reardon, 2011). Summer break poses a particular challenge to students of low-income status in terms of loss of reading achievement contributing to a widening of the reading achievement gap from their higher-income counterparts (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996).

Effective reading instruction, recommended instructional strategies promoting student achievement and effective reading program design and interventions, the role of the teacher, socioeconomic home factors affecting student achievement, summer reading loss and summer reading programs form the conceptual framework for this review of literature. Vygotsky's (1978) Social Developmental Theory of Learning and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Chall's stages of reading development (1983) and Clay's description of the process by which students acquire the skills necessary to construct knowledge and build a self-mediating system (2005) serves as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of this study.

## Effective Reading Instruction

The essential elements of effective reading instruction were identified through an extensive meta-analysis of high-quality reading research studies conducted by the National Reading Panel (NRP/the Panel) of the National Institute of Child Health and

Human Development (NICHD) in 2000. The Panel considered the work completed by Snow, Burns, and Griffin of the National Research Council (NRC) in 1998, as well as the analyzed reading research findings to acknowledge the following areas of concentration to be integral in the teaching of reading skills:

> **Phonemic awareness**—understanding that the spoken words can be broken down into smaller segments of sound known as phonemes.
>
> **Phonics/alphabetic principle**—the knowledge that letters of the alphabet represent sounds referred to as phonemes, and that these sounds are blended together to form written words.
>
> **Fluency**—the ability to demonstrate recognition of words and to be able to read orally with accuracy and appropriate speed and expression and understand that which is read. One strategy to build fluency is through guided oral repeated reading which provides opportunities for practice along with the guidance from a skilled reader.
>
> **Teaching vocabulary words**—instruction to learn the meaning of new words, either as they appear in print or as introduced by each identified word. This type of instruction also aids reading ability.
>
> **Reading comprehension strategies**—approaches that are used to keep the reader actively thinking and aid in building an understanding of what is read. Examples of comprehension techniques that are given in the Report include summarizing information during the process of reading, formulating questions, creating graphic and semantic organizers, visualizing imagery and monitoring comprehension of the text. (NRP 2000)

Interestingly, a series of regional public hearings were conducted in various locations to allow the Panel to hear ideas expressed by a variety of interested members of the public (i.e., teachers, parents, students and policy makers). Common themes reportedly expressed by the public included:

- The importance of the role of parents and other concerned individuals, especially in providing children with early language and literacy experiences that foster reading development;
- The importance of early identification and intervention for all children at risk for reading failure;

- The importance of phonemic awareness, phonics, and good literature in reading instruction and the need to develop a clear understanding of how best to integrate different reading approaches to enhance the effectiveness of instruction for all students;
- The need for clear, objective, and scientifically based information on the effectiveness of different types of reading instruction and the need to have such research inform policy and practice;
- The importance of applying the highest standards of scientific evidence to the research review process so that conclusions and determination are based on findings obtained from experimental studies characterized by methodological rigor with demonstrated reliability, validity, replicability, and applicability;
- The importance of the role of teachers, their professional development, and their interactions and collaborations with researchers, which should be recognized and encouraged; and
- The importance of widely disseminating information that is developed by the Panel. (NRP, 2000, p. 2)

The Panel highlighted how effective literacy instruction recognizes that literacy builds upon a reader's background knowledge, that there should be a reciprocal role between reading and writing and that the ultimate goal is to construct meaning and comprehend text. Furthermore, instruction should be differentiated according to the students' strengths and needs (i.e., second-language learners, struggling reader) (NRP, 2000, p. 15).

The teacher is one of the most important, if not **the** most important influence on a student's reading achievement (Allington, 2006). The effective teacher provides deliberate teaching and modeling of effective comprehension strategies, offers a high percentage of instructional time devoted to actual reading and writing, provides access to appropriate level text, guides purposeful talk related to reading and thinking, designs meaningful tasks that offer choice and evaluates student work based on effort and improvement (Allington, 2002; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Johnston, 2004; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 2005).

In a 2000 Position Statement on Excellent Reading Teachers published by the International Reading Association, a description of essential key attributes that excellent reading teachers share was presented. In addition to the general qualities of an effective teacher (i.e., strong classroom management, strong content and pedagogical knowledge), excellent reading teachers appear to possess an understanding of reading and writing development, believe all children can learn to read and write, engage in ongoing assessment of individual student progress, employ a wide variety of teaching strategies and methods and connect to the previous experiences and knowledge base of the students, utilize a wide collection of texts and other instructional materials and serve as coaches and provide scaffolding when their students are faced with challenging literacy tasks (IRA, 2000, p. 4).

Additional qualities recognized as effective practices in teaching reading are offered by Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde (2005). Teachers who model their own reading and writing and actively employ reading strategies, serve as effective reading instructors to their students. They also help their students employ effective strategies throughout the reading process (i.e., before, during and after reading). Furthermore, they provide their students with authentic opportunities to utilize purposeful reading and writing activities to enhance their learning about subject matters under study (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 2005).

From a body of research, a resource guide was created of evidence-based reading comprehension strategies for students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgeson, 2010). These recommended literacy practices provide steps to actively engage students in the reading

process. Incorporating additional instructional strategies deemed to be effective in promoting student achievement based on a meta-analysis conducted by Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) may further enhance a teacher's reading instructional practices.

## Effective Reading Program Design

Ms. Linda Diamond, of the Consortium on Reading Excellence, Inc. identified three components that have proven essential in the development and implementation of an effective reading program: professional development, effective instructional tools, and a supportive school system (2006). Each of the three components is defined with key elements associated with each one based on collected evidence and research-based practices. To define effective professional development, the following elements should be included (1) theory behind selected reading approach, (2) modeling and demonstration of instructional practices, (3) practice within a workshop setting and with simulated conditions, (4) structured feedback, and (5) coaching in the classroom.

Diamond (2006) noted that it is necessary to provide teachers with appropriate research-based instructional tools to ensure effective reading instruction. A supportive leadership is the third necessary component of an effective reading program design to ensure that the given program is implemented with fidelity.

## Reading Interventions

For students who are at risk or experiencing difficulty learning to read, a more intensive, personalized instruction may be necessary compared to their typically developing classmates (Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014; Torgeson, 2004).

A synthesis of reading research was conducted by a team of selected researchers through the Institute of Education Sciences which culminated in a resource guide in the area of assessment, cognitive and language processing, interventions and recommended professional development and training to build a knowledge base on effective teaching instruction (Connor et al., 2014).

Within the classroom, additional guided reading sessions may be recommended as well as the availability of multilevel texts so that the students can be matched with text at the appropriate reading level so that they can read fluently, accurately and with understanding (Baker & Allington, 2003). Through a response to intervention approach and multi-tier interventions, teachers, reading specialists, special educators and other additional staff members may be utilized to provide specific intervention to those students identified as having reading difficulties (Baker et al., 2003; What Works Clearinghouse, 2009).

While some children who appear to be at risk require help specifically with word reading skills, others may require more intensive support as they present with more significant challenges including weaker vocabulary, general knowledge base and understanding of syntax (Torgeson, 2004). Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are likely to fall in this group and thus require more intensive support (Torgeson, 2004).

Individualized tutoring has proven to be an extremely effective form of intervention for students who require the most intensive support particularly when the services are provided by a certified teacher (D'Agostino & Murphy, 2004; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). The U.S. Department of Education (2003) has identified one-on-one

tutoring by qualified tutors for at-risk first through third grader as an effective, "gold standard" research-based intervention.

## Reading Achievement Gap

Despite this wealth of understanding on effective literacy practices and multi-tiered interventions, an alarming number of school-age children have and continue to perform below proficiency in reading (NAEP, 2011). Of further concern is the evidence of achievement gaps that exist based on race/ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Heyns, 1978; NAEP, 2011; Reardon, 2011; Reardon & Galindo, 2009).

Each year, public schools across the Nation conduct assessments in various content areas to hold schools, districts and States accountable for students at designated grade levels making adequate yearly progress toward meeting established learning standards. The U.S. Federal legislation of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) resulted in the establishment of state-wide assessment requirements to measure student and public school performance against learning standards. Based on the overall 2012 results for the Illinois School Achievement Test (ISAT) at Grade 4, 76% of fourth graders met or exceeded grade level state standards while 24% performed below proficiency. For the Grade 4 ISAT subgroup of economically disadvantaged students in Illinois, 64% of economically disadvantaged fourth graders met or exceeded in Reading while 36% within that subgroup performed below proficiency (ISBE, 2012). In contrast, 89% of fourth graders who were not eligible for free/reduced lunch met or exceeded in Reading while 11% within that subgroup performed below proficiency (ISBE, 2012).

At Grade 8 on the ISAT Reading Section, 86% of all Illinois eighth graders administered the ISAT met or exceeded state standards while 14% performed below proficiency. For the subgroup of eighth graders identified as economically disadvantaged, 79% met or exceeded standards while 21% of eighth graders in that subgroup was below proficiency. In comparison, 93% of those eighth graders not eligible for free/reduced met or exceeded standards while 7% of the eighth graders in that group performed below proficiency based on 2012 ISAT results posted on ISBE website. Free and reduced subgroup was the only one listed for this report since this group of students is the focus of this research. Another subgroup, students with disabilities, showed an even higher percentages of students performing below proficiency in Reading ISAT, i.e., over 50%, at both the fourth and eighth grade levels.

For over the past 40 years, the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been responsible for the periodic academic assessments of a representative sample of elementary and secondary students across the Nation through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Project. The 2011 NAEP results are presented in what is referred to as "Nation's Report Card." For the purpose of the present research focus, only NAEP Reading scores for Grades 4 and 8 will be shared.

Based on a review of the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading, 34% of those fourth graders assessed performed at or above the Proficient level. Nationally, the overall average 2011 reading scores were higher for fourth graders from both higher-income (i.e., non- eligible for subsidized school lunches) and lower-income (i.e., eligible for free or reduced school lunches) levels when compared

to results from 2009. However, at the fourth grade level, students who were identified as being eligible for free lunch scored on average 29 points lower than their non-eligible counterparts. Moreover, fourth graders with reduced lunch status scored 17 points below their non-eligible peers (NCES, 2011).

At the eighth grade level, overall a higher percentage of students performed at or above the Proficient level in 2011 (i.e., 34%) compared to those performing at the same level in 2009 (32%). On average, higher scores were noted in 2011 from 2009 for eighth graders across racial, gender and socioeconomic status.

Results of the 2011 NAEP Reading Assessment reveal that female students outperformed their male counterparts. Fourth grade girls scored an average 7 points higher and eighth grade girls scored 9 points higher than their male counterparts. Looking at trends of students performance, 74% of those fourth graders who scored below the 25$^{th}$ percentile on the 2011 NAEP Reading Assessment were identified as being eligible for free/reduced lunch services. Sixty seven percent of eighth graders identified as being eligible for free/reduced lunch scored below the 25$^{th}$ percentile in 2011.

**Income-Based Achievement Gap**

Influences such as high chronic absenteeism rate, disparities related to out-of-school academic and enrichment learning opportunities and recreational and community activities each can contribute to the income-based academic achievement gap that exists between children of low-income and their middle to higher income counterparts (Bruner, Descher, & Chang, 2011; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Buchanan, 2007; Putnam, Frederick & Snellman, 2012; Reardon, 2013). Economy Policy Institute's Research Associate Rothstein (2008) noted, "It's no cop-out to acknowledge the effects of socioeconomic

disparities on student learning. Rather, it's a vital step to closing the achievement gap" (p. 8). Rothstein urges reforms to reduce socioeconomic inequities along with school improvement efforts to narrow the achievement gap.

## Engaged Academic Learning Time

A field of work in the area of engaged learning time (Bloom, 1976; Carroll, 1989; Fisher & Berliner, 1980; Haertel, Walberg, & Weinstein, 1983; Karweit, 1985; Lomax & Cooley, 1979; Walberg, 1988) has led to important findings on engaged academic learning as reported by McCombs, Augustine, Schwartz, Bodilly, McInnis, Lichter, and Cross (2011) in Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning including the amount of time engaged in academic learning and the quality of that instruction are two important constructs related to promoting student achievement, the importance of spaced practice and amount of time required to learn a particular concept may differ depending on a student's level of achievement and outside factors may affect the amount of time a student spends learning (McCombs et al., 2011).

## Summer Learning Loss

While each school year is full of opportunities for **all** children to learn and grow as readers, the same is not necessarily true during the summer months (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007). Schools following a traditional academic calendar typically include a summer break from learning that may extend to as many as 10 to 12 weeks in length (Kirkland 2008). Summer break is felt to be too long for the majority of students and of detriment to the achievement of children from poor families who do not enjoy the rich activities and cultural and community based experiences as their more advantaged

peers (Fairchild, as cited in Buchanan, 2007). Another possible area that may be impacted during the summer is related to consistent access to nutritious meals.

Given necessary funding and available building and instructional resources, some districts are fortunate to have the opportunity to offer voluntary or mandatory short-term summer programming to a select number of eligible children (i.e., summer school, Reading Club, extended school year). It is not unusual, however, for the majority of children in a given public school district to be without formal instruction for the entire duration of summer break. Cooper et al. (1996) shared the sentiments of proponents of alternative scheduling, suggesting that continuous learning is more conducive to learning and "a 3-month break is simply too long" (p. 228).

Children of middle to upper-income backgrounds are likely to enjoy a variety of stimulating summer learning experiences with their families and through their communities. Children from disadvantaged homes are typically not so fortunate (Alexander et al., 2007). During summer vacation, on average, children experience some learning loss. All students lose some math skills, while some, namely low-income students, lose skills in reading and spelling, which can accumulates over time (Alexander et al., 2007; Heyns, 1978).

Children from low-income families are particularly vulnerable in feeling the negative effects of summer learning loss which may result from a limited amount of access to print in their homes and communities (Neuman & Celano, 2001), as well as minimal family and community enrichment experiences, in stark contrast to the opportunities and resources available to their counterparts from middle or higher income families (Alexander et al., 2007).

Studies have revealed that achievement gaps based on socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity tend to widen more in the summer than during the school year (Borman & D'Agostino, 1996; Hayes & Grether, 1983; Heyns, 1978) Based on a meta-analysis conducted by Cooper et al. (1996), a decline in achievement was noted in student scores at the end of summer when compared to the beginning of summer/end of past school year. The average decline was noted to be approximately one month in grade level equivalency with a decrease in math skills being more pronounced than reading. Middle class students showed slight gains in reading scores over the summer while lower income students demonstrated loss of reading skills (Cooper et al., 1996). This difference in the effects of summer on reading achievement based on income was thought to be related to the varying numbers of opportunities for students to practice and learn during summer break (Cooper et al., 1996).

In Cooper et al.'s study (1996), summer learning loss had a significant cumulative effect on student achievement over time. The achievement of a group of first graders was studied over time. By the time the group was of ninth grade status, a large achievement gap was noted for those students from low socioeconomic households. These results were felt to be the result of a cumulative effect based on different "out of school learning" opportunities offered to students during summer breaks based on various social and economic factors (Alexander et al., 2007).

Limited access to books and other forms of print at home and in the community is an unfortunate environmental reality for students living in poverty (Neuman & Celano, 2012). The limited access to books can lead to limited reading which directly impacts reading skills is offered as a possible explanation for the rich/poor reading achievement

gap (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003). Furthermore, low-achieving students who are continually faced with difficult to read text are likely to be less motivated to read voluntarily. As a result, students at risk for reading difficulties tend to spend less time practicing reading during their free time compared to more successful readers (Allington et al., 2003).

## Summer Learning Programs

For schools following a traditional 180 day calendar, a summer break period typically follows each completed school year. The duration of summer vacation can last up to 10-12 weeks in length. Traditional summer school is often limited to remediation for struggling students (Cooper, Charlton, Valentine, & Muhlenbrcuk, 2000). In fact, traditional summer school is described by some as having a feel sometimes equated to that of a "jail term" (as noted by former National Association for Year-Round Education Executive Director Marilyn Stenvall in Buchanan, 2007). Other more promising summer alternatives are being investigated to extend learning in more positive and focused manner (McCombs et al., 2011). Instruction described as being most effective are those aligned to identify learning standards and focused on specific skills such as reading (Superintendent Steve Farrar, as cited in Buchanan, 2007). Summer learning programs may be designed in a variety of ways-mandatory or voluntary; home, classroom or community-based; certified or non-certified instructor/adult or youth; district or private; number of days and hours of operation.

Researchers have examined the effects of various summer reading interventions that utilize research-based reading instruction on the reading achievement of children with encouraging results for students at-risk and/or from low-income homes (Allington,

Kim & White, 2008; Kim & Quinn, 2013; Lauer, Akia, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, & Martin-Glenn, 2006). Therefore, it is with a sense of moral purpose and urgency that this research study is intended to examine a summer reading programming option offered to children from low-income families. The hope is that through their active participation in a summer reading and enrichment experience, these students will benefit from extended engaged academic learning time that will aid in preventing summer reading loss.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to gain insights into effective summer reading interventions and major key factors that help maintain children's achievement scores while school is not in session. Of particular concern are those children considered most at-risk for summer reading loss. Research indicates that children at risk and/or from low-income families are most vulnerable to lose reading skills as well as other areas (i.e., math skills), over summer break compared to their middle or higher income peers and promote reading interventions (Cooper et al., 1996; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Lauer et al., 2006). This particular study examined the effectiveness of a reading enrichment experience serving a group of low-income elementary students over a six-week period during summer vacation in an effort to prevent summer reading loss.

Of interest to this researcher was to address the following question: To what extent is a student's reading achievement impacted by extended literacy instruction or enrichment? Therefore, this study was focused on uncovering any factors that may contribute to promoting effective reading habits and skills for students who are economically disadvantaged and most vulnerable to experiencing summer reading setback over break (Alexander et al., 2007).

## Research Questions

The present study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?
2. Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?
3. What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

## Methods

Mixed-methods were used to examine the effectiveness of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience for a group of elementary students in preventing summer reading loss. For research question 1, a quasi-experimental design was used to determine the mean reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience compared to a group of non-participating students. The study also investigated whether there was a correlation between the attendance rate of the student participants, as measured in the total number of days they were present in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, and their gain in reading achievement. Utilizing qualitative methods, this study also examined the nature of effective instructional practices utilized by the teachers of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience through analysis of coded teacher interview responses and archived classroom and program artifacts. The categories of coded data were based on best-practices themes related to

effective literacy instructional practices (NRP, 2000) and recommended instructional practices (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001)

## Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure understanding of terms used throughout the study:

Acuity: Acuity InFormative Solutions measure content that is aligned with state standards; provides a scaled score to monitor growth over time and across grade level (Acuity, CTB McGraw-Hill, 2010).

Access to Print: Availability of reading materials of printed and electronic nature in the home, school and/or community (Allington, 2008).

Comprehension (in reading): The process of constructing meaning while reading text (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

Decoding: Using letter-sound relationships to translate a word from a series of symbols to a unit of meaning (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

Engaged Academic Learning Time: The amount of time spent on a task considered rigorous in nature and at the appropriate level of difficulty (Karweit, 1985).

Lexile measure: information on a reader's ability based on the myON placement and benchmark tests of reading comprehension that gives guidance on appropriate level for a reader as noted myON reader (myON Capstone digital, 2011).

MAP RIT Reading Scaled Score: A scale used to measure student achievement in Reading, based on a Rasch UnIT, a scale of equal units independent of grade level which allows for comparisons of scores over time (NWEA, 2011).

MyON Reader: An electronic library system that offers a wide range of reading materials for student use (myON Reader Guide, Capstone Digital).

Opportunity Gap: The difference in the opportunities to engage in educational summer enrichment and extracurricular activities, sports, volunteering in community life, availability of books and exposure to rich vocabulary between students of varying income levels. Studies indicate that these educational and enrichment opportunities are more likely to be afforded to children of middle or higher income than to children of low-income status, hence, an opportunity gap is described based on income levels (Buchanan, 2007; Putnam, Frederick & Snellman, 2012; Reardon, 2013).

Reading Achievement Gain: Calculating a measure of growth by finding the difference between the scores of a pre- and post- test score for student participants in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Scaffolding: Based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory that involves the interaction between the learner and mentor (adult or more knowledgeable person) and with the support of the more knowledgeable person, the learner is able to perform a task that he or she would not have been able to otherwise and that the learner will then advance to a level of being able to perform the task independently.

Seasonal Learning: Formal academic learning occurs while students are in school during part of a calendar year; differences are noted in the amount of out of school learning while they are at home and in the communities. The differences in out of school learning opportunities among students are noted across socio-economic status which has been found to contribute to a cumulative effect on student achievement over time

(Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001); Summer learning differentials contributes to the achievement gap that is noted across socioeconomic lines (Heyns, 1987).

Summer Reading Program: Intervention of a specified duration during the summer months that focuses on reading related activities and/or enrichment. opportunities; may or may not include explicit reading instruction; possibly electronic in nature; may be delivered in classroom, home or community (McCombs et al., 2011).

Summer Learning Gap: The differences in students' learning opportunities while school is not in session have led to achievement gaps across family social economic status and race/ethnicity. While learning gains tend to be more similar across socioeconomic lines during the school year, out of school learning opportunities differ socioeconomically. The accumulation of the effects of the differential summer learning experiences over the years has led to the achievement gaps based on family socioeconomic status (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007).

Summer Learning Loss: According to research, students, on average, lose skills over the summer break. This is especially noted in the area of mathematics. Low-income students tend to lose skills in reading, referred to as Summer Reading Loss, while middle-class students tend to make gains on reading skills (Cooper et al., 1996).

Modified School Calendar: Some type of change is made to the traditional calendar to allow for a variation in the length of summer vacation and/or increase in additional breaks during the school year. Number of days of students attendance is different from the traditional school calendar depending on the reason for the modification (e.g., to accommodate a shortage of physical space, to increase learning time, to reduce days due to budget constraints).

Traditional School Calendar: Typically includes 180 days of student attendance followed by a 10-12 week summer vacation.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Introduction

Reading literacy is a complex set of skills essential to learning. The elementary years serve as the critical period when students "learn to read", usually by Grade 3, and then typically by Grade 4 begin to "read to learn" (Chall, 1983). Many states across the United States have embraced a fairly new set of research and evidenced based Standards to guide the development of a challenging curriculum across content areas (Common Core, 2010, p. 3). The intention of this major educational reform is to stimulate and engage our students in a highly interactive learning environment with the hope of shaping them into thoughtful and articulate and, most importantly, literate individuals by the time they graduate high school, ready to pursue college or a career (Common Core, 2010).

Decades of educational research has provided a plethora of information on effective instructional practices, the role of the teacher and multi-tier interventions and supports for struggling readers and students at risk (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007; Gersten et al., 2008; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; IRA, 2000; Johnston, 2004; NRP, 2000; Schmoker, 2007). In addition, guidelines have been provided on recommended components of effective reading programs in general and directed specifically for students at risk and experiencing difficulty learning to read (Connor et al., 2014; Diamond, 2006; Torgeson, 2004).

Despite a well-researched field of recommended instructional practices and resources, national and state-wide reports on student achievement in Reading and Math have and continue to present very disturbing news about student performance (ISBE State Report Card, 2012; NAEP 2011). The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results reported an alarming number of students are performing below proficiency in Reading and Math, particularly those from families of low socioeconomic status and of certain racial/ethnic groups (ISBE State Report Card, 2012; NAEP, 2011).

Effective reading instruction, reading program design, reading interventions, income-base achievement gap and engaged academic learning time; summer learning loss, effective summer reading programs form the conceptual framework for this review of literature. Vygotsky's (1978) Social Developmental Theory of Learning and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Chall's (1983) stages of reading development, and Clay's (2005) concept of students' construction of knowledge and development of self-mediating systems, serves as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of this research investigation. Together, the review of literature in these areas form the foundation for the present study, which is intended to examine the effectiveness of summer reading enrichment programs at the elementary level in preventing summer reading loss.

This study hopes to contribute knowledge on viable summer programming options to interested principals, teachers, superintendents, policy makers and parents so that the generous amount of time available during summer break can be transformed into a personally rewarding (i.e., filled with enrichment experiences and social opportunities) as well as academically profitable learning experience (i.e., with positive reading

achievement outcomes) for students most vulnerable, namely, those from low socioeconomic background with limited resources, and/or students who are experiencing difficulties developing their reading skills, both at-risk for future academic failure.

Vygotsky's theoretical framework involves aspects of the interaction between the mentor (adult or more skilled peer) and novice or the examination of one's instructional practices. With such a program as Marie Clay's Reading Recovery, for example, a child and expert teacher engage in shared activities to build the child's comprehension and ultimately develop effective reading strategies and self- mediation in the child reader. Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development can be applied to the instruction that is provided in Reading Recovery (Clay, 2005). Moll (1990) presented the words of Vygotsky himself as saying" the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it." (p. 220). Aligned with Vygotsky's view, the teacher serves as a mediator between the learner and the learning environment. Moreover, the learner is not viewed as a passive, weak individual but rather an active, interactive and capable learner (Moll, 1990).

## Effective Reading Instruction and Recommended Literacy Instructional Practices

The section on effective reading instruction will first present a brief review of historical perspective on reading research as it relates to trends in reading instruction. An overview of basic reading instructional practices in general will be presented followed by recommended instructional techniques for struggling readers. The section on the role of the reading teacher will examine a variety of teacher behaviors that contribute to a

responsive and supportive learning environment promoting student achievement and literacy development.

**Historical Perspective on Reading Research on Effective Reading Instructional Practices**

A review of reading research studies over the past half century such as that conducted by Pearson (2004), provides extensive evidence of the varied reading/literacy learning practices that enjoyed popularity over the past decades and how different theories and movements led to various approaches and models [i.e., Look-Say, Whole Word, Phonics, Whole Language, Language Experience, Discrete Instruction, Skills lessons, Linguistic Decodable Text (IRA Preparing Reading Professionals, 2004)]. Pearson pointed out two early research publications that proved to be extremely influential in the area of early literacy instruction: the Cooperative Research Branch of the United States Office of Education's First Grade Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967) and Jeanne Chall's seminal book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967). According to Pearson, one of the most significant findings of the "First Grade Studies was that basically any of the studied approaches (i.e., Basal plus Phonics, Initial Teaching Alphabet, Linguistic, Language Experience, and Phonic/Linguistic) was as good or better than the basal reader for first grade reading instruction." Pearson noted that "By accepting this message, the reading research community was free to turn its efforts to other, allegedly more fruitful, issues and questions- the importance of the teacher, quite irrespective of method, the significance of site, and the press of other aspects of the curriculum such as comprehension and writing" (Preparing Reading Professionals, p. 8).

From the words of Dykstra, of the First-Grade Studies:

> One of the most important implications of this study is that future research should center on teacher and learning situation characteristics rather than method and materials. The extensive range of classrooms within any given method points out the importance of elements in the learning situation over and above materials employed. The elements of the learning situation attributable to teachers, classrooms, schools, and school systems are obviously extremely important. Reading instruction is more likely to improve as a result of improved selection and training of teachers, improved in-service training programs, and improved school learning climates, rather than from minor changes in instructional materials. (Dykstra, 1968, p. 66, as cited in Pearson 1997, p. 431)

In retrospect, the most influential recommendation in Chall's classic book entitled *Learning to Read, the Great Debate* (1967) was for early reading instruction to have a code emphasis. Reading pedagogy was up until the early 1970's controlled by the teacher with the use of basal readers and skill management books. Reading was considered a primarily perceptual process and the student learner remained in a passive role.

In the historical perspective drawn by Pearson, the developments in reading curriculum and pedagogy over the last half of the 20th century were influenced by advances made related to cognition, philosophy and psycholinguistics. Reading became an area of interest by scholars across various fields of study. Two notable scholars recognized by Pearson for their critical influence on our understandings of reading were Kenneth Goodman (Educational Researcher) and Frank Smith. Goodman provided a focus on analyzing the mistakes that young readers make. In Understanding Reading, Smith (1971) revolutionized reading by describing it as not something to be taught but rather something one learns to do. Through reading, information is received through four sources: visual, orthographic, semantic and syntactic. Pearson (2007) offers the following reasons why the psycholinguistic perspective influenced reading pedagogy:

- It taught us to value literacy experiences that focus on making meaning rather than exercises that dealt with isolated skills.

- It helped us to value beginners' reading materials that utilize language patterns to allow beginning readers to make predictions.
- It helped us to understand the reading process and to appreciate the efforts put forth by beginning readers.
- It allowed a way to analyze reading (i.e., miscue analysis) regard it as a theory of constructive process.
- Redefined the role of the teacher to direct attention to find ways to help the child as a reader make progress in the process of reading. (pp. 13-14)

From the field of cognitive psychology, schema theory offered a perspective that would impact reading. That is, we construct meaning based on what we know and our interpretation of an event which may be very different depending on one's background knowledge and previous experiences. In some circumstances, it may be that an individual does not bring enough background information to understand the text. In Pearson's (2004) view of the ultimate impact that schema theory had on education, it led teachers to consider the background knowledge and experiences of their students and consider what they may need to know to connect to text and construct meaning and achieve comprehension.

Sociolinguistics expanded the view of context in reading from what was printed in text to now include other contexts including social and cultural influences (e.g., during instruction/non-instruction, home, and community). According to Pearson (2004), sociolinguistics should be given credit for our understanding of the role of community to learning.

In 1979, Researcher Dolores Durkin presented findings based on observations during Social Studies classes in Grades 3-6 that almost no classroom time was spent on comprehension instruction. Rather, a large amount of time was spent on assessments or assignments. The message during the 1980's was to read and literature took on an

important role in the classroom utilizing a small group instructional format (i.e., literature circles, reading workshop, and book clubs). Writing for a specific purpose also became recognized as a valuable tool to gain understanding of a student's thinking. As Pearson points out, "Finally, we began to see reading and writing as inherently intertwined, each supporting the other" (IRA, 2004, p. 20). More recently, Harvey and Goudvis (2007) noted how research has been influential in making reading comprehension become a regular part of classroom literacy instruction.

Another historical influence in reading research was through the message delivered by the Center for the Study of Reading, Becoming a Nation of Readers, which stressed the importance of actual reading for any reading program. Atwell (1987), a middle school teacher shared her experience of using carefully selected literature and a reading workshop format to teach reading skills and expand her middle school students' experiences.

The essential elements of effective reading instruction were identified through an extensive meta-analysis of high-quality reading research studies conducted by the National Reading Panel (NRP/the Panel) of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in 2000. The Panel considered the work completed by Snow, Burns, and Griffin of the National Research Council (NRC) in 1998, as well as the analyzed reading research findings to acknowledge that the following areas to be integral in the teaching of reading skills: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics/Alphabetic Principle, Fluency, Teaching Vocabulary Words and Reading Comprehension Strategies (2000).

The interactive role between the reader and more skilled reader (i.e., teacher) was recognized as instrumental in guiding and supporting the reader through the process of decoding and building fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (2000).

Through a joint effort between the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the following 13 core understandings about reading were described:

1. Reading is a construction of meaning from text. It is an active, cognitive and affective process.
2. Background knowledge and prior experience are critical to the reading process.
3. Social interaction is essential at all stages or reading development.
4. Reading and writing are reciprocal processes; development of one enhances the other.
5. Reading involves complex thinking.
6. Environments rich in literacy experiences, resources, and models facilitate reading development.
7. Engagement in the reading task is key in successfully learning to read and developing as a reader.
8. Children's understandings of print are not the same as adults' understandings.
9. Children develop phonemic awareness and knowledge of phonics through a variety of literacy opportunities, models, and demonstrations.
10. Readers learn productive strategies in the context of real reading.
11. Students learn best when teachers employ a variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge, strategy, and skills.
12. Students need many opportunities to read, read, read.
13. Monitoring the development of reading processes is vital to student success. (Braunger & Lewis, 2006, p. 8)

As noted in the position statement presented by IRA (2002), no one method should be regarded as the "right" approach for all learners. P. David Pearson suggests that a worthwhile position related to a model of reading is one of a "balanced approach" to literacy instruction. As Pearson noted, "Teachers who are faced with variations in achievement, experience, and aptitude found in today's classrooms apparently need and

deserve a full tool box of pedagogical practices" (Preparing Reading Professionals, p. 32).

Reading research studies have provided a wealth of suggestions of effective literacy instructional practices for teachers to use to promote student reading and writing achievement (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-MacDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001). From a decade of studies involving observations of elementary classrooms, Allington (2002) concluded that exemplary teaching has the greatest impact on student reading proficiency. Key elements of the instruction provided by these responsive teachers, according to Allington (2002), are defined as Time, Texts, Teaching, Talk, Tasks and Testing.

## Effective Teacher Practices

Recognizing that extensive reading is important to develop strong reading skills, Allington (2002) noted that the most effective teachers provided their students with more **time** to engage in actual reading (e.g., in guided reading, reading in content areas) than other teachers whose classrooms were regarded as less effective. A wide range of **texts** with varying levels of complexity was also necessary to allow each student to be matched with the appropriate level of text to foster fluent, accurate reading with good comprehension. Direct **teaching** and modeling of effective thinking that readers engage in was also demonstrated by exemplary teachers. Finally, t**alk** within the classroom was noted to be "conversational" and "purposeful and relevant to the curriculum." Allington noted:

> The nature of classroom talk is complicated and too little understood. While there is evidence that more "thoughtful" classroom talk leads to improved reading comprehension, especially in high-poverty schools, we still have few

> interventions available that focus on helping teachers develop the instructional skill to create such classrooms, and few of the packaged programs offer teachers any support along this line. (p. 745)

To support the importance of "teacher talk," Johnston (2004) points out that through classroom discourse, ideas and experiences are shared, thereby shaping students' learning and understanding of the world around them.

**Tasks** were more involved and required extensive work and allowed for students' choice within teacher's management. As Allington (2002) pointed out, allowing students to make choices tends to lead to more engagement. **Tests** by the observed exemplary teachers were based on effort and improvement.

Teaching comprehension strategies is undoubtedly a critical component of reading instruction. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) described how reading researchers Fielding and Pearson (1994) described the change in our thinking about the process of comprehension "Once thought of as the natural result of decoding plus oral language, comprehension is now viewed as a much more complex process involving knowledge, experience, thinking, and teaching" (p. 14). Comprehension strategies involve the use of thinking strategies that can be explicitly taught to students to enhance their understanding and engagement with text (Harvey et al., 2007).

Previous research studies have identified numerous strategies that proficient readers use to construct meaning from text including Activating Background Knowledge & Making Connections, Questioning, Making Inferences, Determining Importance, Visualizing, Summarizing & Synthesizing information, Monitor understanding (Pearson, Dole, Duffy, & Roehler,1992), sensory imaging (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

Most recently, the Institute of Education Sciences provided a comprehensive guide on research-based, best evidenced practices to improve reading comprehension skills for your readers from kindergarten through Grade 3 (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgesen, 2010). Through an exhaustive review of studies investigating effective comprehension practices and strategies utilizing experimental and quasi-experimental research methods as well as others of a qualitative approach from the past 20 years and some additional selections spanning further back in time, the panel of expert reading researchers made recommendations to increase reading comprehension in young readers. The following practices were described as worthwhile in promoting reading comprehension in students from kindergarten through third grade. They include: (1) Teaching a variety of strategies to aid students in understanding and retaining what they read, (2) Teaching students to recognize text structure to improve their ability to understand and recall what they read, (3) Discussing text with students to help them to explore the ideas presented and aid in purposeful, independent reading, (4) Selecting appropriate text to teach and support reading comprehension skills, and (5) Engaging students and holding their interest while constructing meaning from text may encourage their use of effective reading comprehension strategies (Shanahan et al., 2010).

## Effective Reading Program Design

The Consortium on Reading Excellence released a paper highlighting recommended practices toward the implementation and sustainment of effective reading programs (Diamond, 2006). With the aim designing an effective reading program to build competent, independent readers, three key recommendations are made based on practices that have proven effective. These three practices include professional development to

ensure teachers have a solid knowledge base on effective differentiated instructional practices, access to effective materials and resources aligned with best instructional practices, and a supportive school system and leadership that ensures proper implementation (Diamond, 2006).

An extensive review of research on effective reading programs at the elementary level was conducted by Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung and Davis (2009). Professional development was recommended to provide teachers with effective strategies to impact their daily instructional practices to help students build comprehension and decoding skills. Utilization of cooperative learning groups with small groups of students was also found to be effective in positively impacting student outcomes in reading (Slavin et al., 2009). The effect of reading achievement outcomes from use of programs that focus on enhancing daily instructional practice was stronger than that from either use of technology or a specific curriculum (Slavin et al., 2009).

Inclusion in a reading instructional program providing explicit instruction in alphabetic principles proved to be advantageous to a group of first and second graders at risk for reading difficulties (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998). The results were based on a study by Foorman et al., 1998) that provided three different kinds of programming options to a group of first and second graders at-risk for reading difficulties.

## Reading Interventions

Reading proficiently by third grade is considered a critical indicator for a student's educational development and future academic as well as economic success (2010 KIDS COUNT Special Report, by Annie E. Casey Foundation). For students

struggling with the process of reading, a more intensive, personalized instruction may be necessary compared to their typically developing classmates. Within the classroom, additional guided reading sessions may be recommended as well as the availability of multilevel texts so that the students can be matched with text at the appropriate reading level so that they can read fluently, accurately and with understanding (Baker & Allington, 2003). Through a response to intervention approach and multi-tier interventions, teachers, reading specialists, special educators and other additional staff members may be utilized to provide specific intervention to those students identified with reading difficulties (Baker et al., 2003; What Works Clearinghouse, 2009).

One-on-one tutoring has proven to be an extremely effective form of intervention for students who require the most intensive support particularly when the services are provided by a certified teacher (D'Agostino & Murphy, 2004; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). The U.S. Department of Education (2003) has identified one-on-one tutoring by qualified tutors for at-risk first through third grader as an effective, "gold standard" research-based intervention.

While some children who appear to be at risk require help specifically with word reading skills, a second group may require more intensive support as they present with more significant challenges including weaker vocabulary and general knowledge base and understanding of syntax (Torgeson, 2004). Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are likely to fall in this group requiring more intensive support (Torgeson, 2004).

For students who are at risk or experiencing difficulty learning to read, a more intensive, personalized instruction may be necessary compared to their typically

developing classmates (Connor et al., 2014; Torgeson, 2004). A synthesis of reading research was conducted by a team of selected researchers through the Institute of Education Sciences which culminated in a resource guide in the area of assessment, cognitive and language processing, interventions and recommended professional development and training to build a knowledge base on effective teaching instruction (Connor et al., 2014).

Connor et al. (2014) offer a summary for each of the investigated areas related to improving reading outcomes: Among the concluding statements made in the area of assessment, the universal screening has set the conditions for early identification of students at the first grade level who may be potentially at-risk for reading difficulties and therefore require intervention services. Connor et al. concluded that continued work in this area is needed to better refine identification of students at the kindergarten level or earlier. Tools are becoming more increasingly sensitive to monitoring a student's reading progress and response to a particular intervention to help determine the effectiveness of that intervention. In terms of Cognitive and Language Processing, gains in the areas of cognitive and linguistic processes appear to impact reading skills as well. Furthermore, each student brings his or her unique profile based on cognitive and linguistic processes and therefore, may respond differently to a particular lesson from another child.

In terms of interventions, students who are at-risk or having difficulty with reading can benefit from "systematic and intensive interventions that may be integrated with classroom instruction or are supplemental to classroom instruction" (Connor et al., 2014, p. 49). Differentiated, targeted instruction is encouraged to impact a student's reading achievement. With regards to professional development, Connor et al.

summarized that a variety of professional development options may be used to build a teacher's understanding and use of reading instruction and interventions have proven effective in providing support and practice to students to improve their reading outcomes.

Based on a synthesis of available research on fluency interventions, suggested interventions directed at building fluency for students at-risk of reading difficulties incorporate multiple components (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002). Daily repeated reading of text at a student's independent level along with feedback provided on the student's reading, having opportunity to hear model fluent reading and gradually increasing the level of difficulty of the text when set criteria are met are recommended practices for building fluency for at-risk or struggling readers (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002).

Turning to out-of-school-time programming for students at risk in reading and and/or other academic areas (e.g., math), Lauer et al. (2006) completed a meta-analysis of previously conducted research analyzing after-school, and Saturday and summer programs. Only two-group designs were reviewed, comparing posttest reading scores of participants and nonparticipants. A small but statistically significant positive effect was noted on out-of-school-time programming, with larger effects reportedly found with programs offering reading tutoring on student achievement. No difference in effectiveness was reportedly noted in mean effects for programs implemented in the summer or after school (Lauer et al., 2006).

## Summer Vacation and Effects on Achievement

Summer vacation is a designated period of time when school is not in session. For schools following a traditional 180 day calendar, the break from formal learning typically

lasts between 10-12 weeks in duration. Summer vacation may offer rich learning and enrichment opportunities to students through available resources and supports provided by their families and communities. Unfortunately, for students from such disadvantaged backgrounds, such opportunities and available resources are often limited, at best, or even nonexistent. Based on recent figures, approximately 45% of children under the age of 18 are living in low-income families (Addy et al., 2013).

Investigation of the effects of summer vacation on student achievement has been of interest to educational researchers and policy makers for over a century. Based on a review of 39 studies conducted as early as 1906, Cooper et al. (1996) found that standardized achievement test scores showed either no academic growth or dropped over summer break. Through a meta-analysis, Cooper et al. indicated that students experienced a decline in achievement test scores of approximately one month of a grade equivalency score over the summer break. The effect on math was reportedly more pronounced than on reading. While no moderating effect was noted by gender or race, differences in effect were indicated based on family income. Students described as middle class showed increases in reading recognition scores while those from lower income families demonstrated a decrease in reading scores. A possible explanation for the differences in scores based on family income was related to the differences in opportunities afforded students to practice and learn during summer break (Cooper et al., 1996).

In a revealing landmark study on summer learning conducted in Atlanta Public Schools, Heyns (1978) found that achievement discrepancies based on socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity were the result of learning loss from the summer months

rather than during the school year. Looking at student learning during the school year and during the summer, students of varying socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic background made similar gains during the school year but fell behind during the summer break. Similar patterns were found related to academic achievement gap based on family socioeconomic status (Alexander et al., 2007).

Using longitudinal data of achievement scores, the Baltimore Studies found that while similar gains in learning were made during the school year, a large achievement gap was noted based on socioeconomic status favoring students from families of high socioeconomic status. These results were felt to be the result of a cumulative effect from different "out of school learning" opportunities offered to students during summer vacation based on social and economic factors (Alexander et al., 2007).

Based on an analysis of a longitudinal study following Baltimore students starting at first grade for five school years, the reading skills of boys who received meal subsidies were found to be lower than those of girls with similar eligibility (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson, 2007). No difference was noted based on gender for students who were not eligible for meal subsidies.

## Summer Learning Loss

Skills need to be practiced to avoid decay or forgetting (Carroll, 1989). Summer learning loss is a serious concern particularly as it can have a cumulative effect on student achievement, particularly for those from low income families (Cooper et al., 1996; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997). An explanation of the seasonality of learning offered by Entwisle, Alexander and Olson is that learning occurs for all students during the school year when the "faucet" is turned on. In contrast, when school is not in

session, the learning "faucet" is turned off for students from low-income families while the learning continues for their higher income peers who make gains in achievement from their summer experiences.

Limited access to books and print at home and in the community is an unfortunate environmental reality for students living in poverty (Neuman & Celano, 2012). The limited access to books can lead to limited reading which directly impacts reading skills is offered as a possible explanation for the rich/poor reading achievement gap (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003). Furthermore, low-achieving students who are continually faced with difficult to read text are likely to be less motivated to read voluntarily. As a result, low-achieving students with poor reading skills, also referred to as struggling readers, tend to spend less time practicing reading during their free time compared to more successful readers (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003). In describing "the Matthew Effect," Stanovich (1986) noted, "The very children who are reading well and who have good vocabularies will read more, learn more word meanings, and hence read even better. Children with inadequate vocabularies – who read slowly and without enjoyment- read less and as a result have slower development of vocabulary which inhibits further growth in reading ability" (p. 381). With this notion of "the rich-get – richer" (Stanovich, 1986, p. 381), those who read, get stronger and those who do not get weaker, differences in reading experiences and the quality of the interactions between the student and the environment can serve as other factors contributing to the reading achievement disparities that exist across socioeconomic lines (Stanovich, 1986).

In an effort to improve student achievement, one idea shared by top educational leaders is to extend the school year (Stengel, 2009). While this ideal solution may be

feasible in some specific situations, the fact that many districts are being confronted by serious fiscal challenges (*Chicago Tribune,* June 2013) requires consideration of other, perhaps more promising options.

Despite strong research-based evidence supporting summer learning programming for students from low-income status to prevent summer learning loss, there continues to be a need to develop such programs in districts across the United States. As poignantly noted by Fairchild, Smink, and Stewart (2009) of the National Summer Learning Association, "For all of its focus on the achievement gap, the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) was strikingly silent on the impact of summer learning loss on the achievement trajectories of young people" (p. 11).

The urgency of developing policies and funding to support summer learning for students of low income should be clear. "In the end we can continue to ignore summer reading setback and continue to observe the rich/poor reading achievement gap. Or we could decide to attend to the problems that summer setback creates" (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013, p. 11).

## Summer Learning Programs

Summer learning programs vary depending on a number of defining features such as the nature of student participation (i.e., mandatory or voluntary), the type of instruction (e.g., remedial or acceleration; academic or enrichment); the type of services (e.g., district or private), setting (e.g., home, district/classroom or community-based); the credentials of the instructor (i.e., certified/non-certified; adult /youth); and the duration of the program in terms of number of days/hours of operation (McCombs et al., 2011).

Through research conducted by RAND Education and the Wallace Foundation, a review of the literature on summer learning loss and the effectiveness of summer programming led to the following summary of key components of summer learning programs that were considered "high-quality" and effective:

> Smaller Class Sizes and Differentiated Instruction
> High-Quality Instruction supported by professional development, hiring highly qualified teachers and supporting the teachers through coaching
> Aligned School-Year and Summer Curricula
> Engaging and Rigorous Programming
> Maximized Participation and Attendance
> Sufficient Duration Referenced: 80-hour recommendation (McLaughlin & Pitcock, 2009); eight weeks for five days per week; nine hours a day (Winship, Hollistser, Howich, Sharkey, & Wimer, 2005)
> Involved Parents
> Evaluation of Effectiveness with reference made to National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards, posted on website, undated. (McCombs, 2011, pp. 32-34; 64-66)

The Quality Standards, referenced by McCombs et al. (2011), serve as the key components utilized by the National Summer Learning Association for their Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (see Table 1).

Through interviews conducted from their research, McCombs et al. (2011), discovered that district provider were confronted with the challenge of demonstrating achievement gains from summer programming beyond spring to fall; pre- to post- test results (p. 66). Acknowledging the findings purporting short-term effects of summer programming, McCombs entertains the question of the feasibility of creating a "voluntary, classroom-based summer program that sustains high attendance levels to increase the possibility of cumulative effects" (p. 36). Hence, the need to study the long term effects (i.e., over two years) of summer learning programming was identified.

Table 1

*National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards*

| **Category**<br>**Program Infrastructure** | **Quality Standards** |
|---|---|
| Purpose | Program has mission and vision statements that are grounded in the needs of its community.<br>Program sets annual goals for youth and for the organization that drive a continuous cycle of data collection, evaluation and quality improvement.<br>Program has evidence that it is meeting its goals and the needs of stakeholders. |
| Finance and Sustainability | Program develops and implements a clear strategic plan and aligned fundraising plan.<br>Program shares information about the program with key stakeholders to promote sustainability. |
| Planning | Program is designed to allocate enough time, staff and resources to promote positive academic and developmental youth outcomes.<br>Program has a proactive summer program planning process that is inclusive of all key stakeholders and connected to the goals of the program.<br>Program has a comprehensive structure in place for all programming throughout the summer, in advance of the session. |
| Staff | Program's recruitment and staffing process intentionally yields culturally competent staff with relevant skills.<br>Program staff is empowered to manage the program and has a voice in organizational decisions.<br>Program provides extensive opportunities for staff development and advancement before, during and after the session. |
| Partnerships | Program builds and maintains strong linkages with partners, including community organizations, the public school system and government agencies, that are supportive of its mission and have a vested interest in the program's success.<br>Program has a formal structure for communication and data sharing with all key external partners.<br>Program builds and maintains strong linkages with families. |
| **Points of Service** | |
| Individualized | Program assesses young people's needs early in the program and develops individualized strategies for meeting program goals. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Intentional | Activity planning and execution shows intentional focus on meeting learning goals and use of research-based instructional methods. |
| Integrated | Programming builds skills, knowledge and behaviors that promote academic success and healthy development.<br>Activities show a blend of academic strategies and social/emotional development strategies throughout the entire day. |
| Unique Program Culture | Program creates a "summer culture" that is different from the school year and promotes a sense of community. |

Source: Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs, National Summer Learning Association, posted on website, as of August 8, 2013.

Studies examining voluntary summer programming suggest positive effects on student reading outcomes (Allington et al., 2010; Kim & White, 2008; Schacter & Jo, 2005). In a longitudinal study involving a randomly assigned group of exiting first graders from what was described as disadvantaged homes to participate in a voluntary summer reading camp, the results were favorable for the experimental group in terms of gains in reading comprehension when compared to the control group (Schacter & Jo, 2005). In an experiment involving voluntary summer reading intervention with parent and teacher scaffolding, third to fifth grade subjects were randomly assigned to one of four groups: Books only, Books with oral reading scaffolding, Books with oral reading and comprehension scaffolding and Control (Kim & White, 2008). The children in the experimental groups offering scaffolding scored higher on a measure of reading than the control and books only groups combined. Another study reported prevention of reading loss from summer reading of 4-6 books (Kim, 2004). In the case of another research study involving low-income minority students, Kim and Guryan (2010) reported that there was no overall significant effect on the comprehension or vocabulary scores of student participants in a voluntary summer reading intervention with one treatment group

receiving 10 self-selected books and another receiving the 10 self-selected books and being part of literacy events. A possible explanation was provided by the researchers that may explain at least in part is that the book selections were not carefully matched to students' reading levels (Kim & Guryan, 2010).

A longitudinal experimental study was conducted by Allington et al. (2010) whereby randomly assigned students from low-income families received ready access to a collection of self-selected books to read over the summer for three consecutive years. The study intended to prevent summer reading setback by providing students in a treatment group with access to books over the summer months and to allow them to self-select their books for each of the three summer periods. The student participants were originally first and second graders and of low-income status. Based on state reading assessment outcomes, a statistically significant effect ($p=.015$) was noted for the students in the treatment group who received self-selected books over the three year period. Upon closer examination of the assessment outcomes of those students considered most economically disadvantaged, an even more significant effect was reported when comparing the achievement of the treatment and control groups (Allington et al., 2010).

A recently published meta-analysis reviewed 41 summer reading interventions offered to children from Kindergarten to Grade 8 (Kim & Quinn, 2013). All the interventions examined were conducted either in the United States or Canada between the years of 1998 to 2011. Intervention services were provided either within the classroom or home setting. Kim and Quinn (2013) reported significant results on reading outcomes for children who participated in the classroom-based interventions, or who received home-based interventions compared to their control group counterparts. Furthermore, the

treatment effects were reportedly positive for summer reading interventions utilizing research-based practices in reading with a majority of the participants from low-income backgrounds. The authors noted that the interventions, both in the home and classroom, suggested favorable impact on reading comprehension skills of low-income children (Kim & Quinn, 2013).

# CHAPTER III

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

The intent of the present chapter is to describe the methodology used for this research study. This chapter will include the purpose of the study, the setting and participants, features of the program, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, research measures, study design, and data analysis methods associated with the research. The name of the program, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participating district and participants. Finally, threats to internal validity, limitations to the study and bias of the researcher will be discussed.

## Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to gain knowledge on effective literacy practices and key factors that promote reading achievement for students during the summer months while school is not in session. The specific focus of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a six-week summer reading enrichment experience offered to elementary age children of low-income families in one district's effort to prevent summer reading loss (Alexander et al., 2007). The students involved in this study were identified through district assessment measures as reading at grade level and were not considered struggling readers. The study sought to respond to the following research questions:

1. What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?
2. Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance (as measured by the total number of days present) in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?
3. What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

## Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was in a rural Midwestern school district. Approximately 4,200 students are enrolled in the school district serving pre-kindergarten through high school. The school district has ten schools, six of which are elementary, two at the middle school level, one traditional high school and an alternative high school program.

Based on the district's 2012 School Report Card, the racial make-up of the overall student population is 56% White, 23% Black, 8% Hispanic and 11% two or more races. The overall 2012 attendance rate of the district was 93.3%. Sixty-six percent of the student body was reported to be from families of low-income status. Per the definition provided by the Illinois State Board of Education, "Low-income students come from families receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches" (2012 Illinois District Report Card, p. 1).

The district under study offered a six-week summer reading enrichment program during the summer of 2013 to selected group of elementary students from low income

families. The program, referred to as the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (a pseudonym), was designed to offer reading and enrichment activities to low-income students to prevent summer reading loss and increase their access to books during summer break (Director of Equity report, July 2008). More specifically, the district wished to target exiting second graders who were reading at their grade level expectancy. The program was designed recognizing the importance of students reading proficiently by the end of third grade to ensure future academic success (Feister, 2010). The district sought to recruit 40 exiting second graders to participate in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience for the summer of 2013.

During the month of April 2013, potential student candidates for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience were identified based on their meeting the following specific criteria: They (1) qualified for free or reduced school meals; (2) considered to be reading at grade level expectancy, as noted on the Winter 2013 Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (i.e., NWEA MAP) Reading Rasch (RIT) score; and (3) had only minor or no office discipline offenses on record during the 2012-2013 School Year.

A total of 71 elementary students from within the district were selected as candidates for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. The pool of potential student participants represented each of the six elementary schools. While the majority of student recruits were exiting second graders, some additional students at the third and fourth grade level were recommended to participate in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and an invitation was extended to them as well.

Invitations were sent to the parents/guardians of the 71 selected students to offer them the opportunity to register their child to participate in the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience because "summer reading counts!" (Program director's correspondence to parent, June 3, 2013). For those parents or legal guardians interested in enrolling their child in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, they were required to return a completed application and signed permission form to the district office by May 10, 2013. Forty two students enrolled in the program however, only 32 of them actually participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

The majority of the 32 student participants (i.e., 72%) were exiting second graders while the remaining were either exiting third (i.e., 6%) or fourth (i.e., 22%) graders. Each classroom had an enrollment of 16 students. One classroom was comprised entirely of exiting second graders while the other classroom consisted of exiting second, third and fourth graders. The 32 students who received the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention served as the experimental group for this study (refer to Table 2 for a list of experimental group demographics by classroom).

From the original group of 71 students who qualified for the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, 39 of them were not registered and therefore did not participate. Thirty six of these non-participating students formed the control group since the necessary archived school assessment data were retrievable for each of them. Table 3 provides a description of the demographics of the control group subjects.

Table 2

*Demographic Information of Experimental Group: Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Student Participants*

| Racial/Ethnic Background: | Classroom #1 | Classroom #2 | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 7 | 7 | 14 | 44% |
| Black | 4 | 4 | 8 | 25% |
| Hispanic | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander or American Indian | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% |
| Two or more Races | 5 | 3 | 8 | 25% |
| Total of Student Participants | 16 | 16 | 32 | 100% |
| | | | | |
| Income Status: | | | | |
| Low-Income | 16 | 16 | 32 | 100% |
| Non Low-Income | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Gender: | | | | |
| Female | 14 | 11 | 25 | 78% |
| Male | 2 | 5 | 7 | 22% |
| Total of Student Participants | 16 | 16 | 32 | 100% |
| | | | | |
| Grade level: | | | | |
| Participants Exiting Grade 2 | 16 | 7 | 23 | 72% |
| Participants Exiting Grade 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6% |
| Participants Exiting Grade 4 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 22% |
| Total of Student Participants | 16 | 16 | 32 | 100% |

Table 3

*Demographic Information of the Control Group*

| Racial/Ethnic Background: | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| White | 20 | 56% |
| Black | 8 | 22% |
| Hispanic | 1 | 3% |
| Asian | 0 | 0% |
| Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander | 0 | 0% |
| American Indian | 0 | 0% |
| Two or more Races | 7 | 19 % |
| | | |
| Income Status: | | |
| Low-Income | 36 | 100% |
| Non-Low-Income | 0 | 0% |
| | | |
| Gender: | Number | Percent |
| Female | 24 | 67% |
| Male | 12 | 33% |
| Total of Control Group | 36 | 100% |
| | | |
| Grade level: | | |
| Participants Exiting Grade 2 | 36 | 100% |
| Participants Exiting Grade 3 & 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Total of Control Group | 36 | 100% |

## Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Program

The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was conducted over a six week period from June 17 to July 25, 2013. Sessions were held Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was in session for a total of 92 hours. Sessions were not held on Fridays or on the fourth of July since the entire district was closed on those specific days of the summer schedule. There were no enrollment fees associated with a student's participation in the program. Complimentary breakfast and lunch were provided to all student participants on a daily

basis due to their free or reduced meal status. Transportation was free of charge for those students who required bus service to attend the summer program.

Two teachers were employed for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. One teacher was an experienced special education instructor who carries a certification as a reading specialist and the other teacher was an experienced reading teacher who also spent numerous years as a general education elementary teacher. They were assigned separate classrooms housed in the same school building within the district. They each had a class enrollment of 16 students. The classrooms were each equipped with a Promethean Board and set of nine I-pads. The teachers supplied their designated classroom with a collection of books at varying grade levels and other reading materials (e.g., poems, Reader's Theater scripts, vocabulary, song lyrics). Classroom sets of leveled books were also available for instructional use.

The goal of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was to provide the participating students with effective literacy activities and enriching experiences during summer vacation. The purpose of the program was to prevent summer reading loss for the participating students who come from families of low-income. Each teacher planned a variety of literacy-related activities (i.e., oral or silent reading, writing, listening and speaking). The student participants completed the various literacy-related activities either independently or with others (e.g., in pairs, small groups or whole class). On occasion, the two classrooms combined for student performances or presentations. Reading comprehension was an area in which both teachers provided instruction and guidance to students. A fuller description of the nature of the effective instructional

practices utilized by the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers will be discussed in Chapter IV.

For enrichment purposes, joint field trips were planned for the two Summer Reading Experience classrooms. Each week the two classes visited the local public library together. In addition to the library visits, they also went on another weekly trip. Such enrichment experiences entailed trips to local venues such as a nature center, a steam engine museum, an art museum and a park/recreational facility. The final culminating activity involved a trip to a Barnes and Noble book store located in a large metropolitan area approximately 30 miles from the school district location.

Regarding the weekly library visits, students were given an opportunity to apply for a library card if they did not already possess one. This allowed all participating students to check out a maximum of three books to read weekly.

The library director planned for "celebrity readers" to address the group of student participants by sharing their personal experiences as readers and how reading has impacted their careers. Each week, a different local dignitary (i.e., mayor, business executive, public housing authority figure) would serve as the "celebrity reader" and read an excerpt from a book and talk about reading from their own perspective.

After the celebrity reader presentation, the students formed groups and rotated accordingly to various literacy-related centers located throughout the public library to read to a therapy dog through the Paws for Reading Program, work on an I-Pad or computer, play a board game and check out books.

Through the local public library, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience students were able to participate in the Summer Library Passport Program. The public

library program also promoted summer reading. By registering with their library card, students were able to create their very own "passport" to log the number of minutes spent reading for each designated week. For every 20 minutes of reading logged, the student was able to earn stamps to place in the passport. After a passport page was filled, the student was permitted to select a reward (e.g., McDonald's gift certificate). When a student registered with the Summer Library Passport Program, he or she received the opportunity to self-select a book provided by the public library.

Students were encouraged to prepare for upcoming field trips by researching the places they were going to visit or the famous figures or topics associated with the location. Instructions were also given on appropriate behavioral expectations while out in the community. Students were reminded to use their manners and be polite while out in public. They also received lessons on being responsible and returning their library books by the posted date to avoid overdue fines.

During the trip to the Barnes and Noble book store, the participating students attended a book talk, toured the warehouse, ate lunch together in the café and shopped for books. Students were each granted up to $50.00 to purchase books at Barnes and Noble. The actual amount a student earned was contingent on their summer program attendance record. To promote consistent attendance during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, the student earned the highest amount possible for book purchases (i.e., a $50.00 Barnes and Noble gift card) for perfect or near perfect attendance (i.e., maximum of one day absent).

An additional resource incorporated into the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience included an electronic library resource, the myON Reader, a Capstone digital

system. This electronic library system was intended to be a regularly accessible resource during the entire summer program however the district did not gain access to the electronic system until midway through the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Since teacher training was necessary to properly guide students for home and school use, the myON Reader system was not used by the participating students until week 4 of the six-week Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Each participating student completed the myON placement exam and interest inventory independently during week 4 of the summer program. The myON placement exam was reportedly designed to be administered to children in grades 2 through 7. The interest inventory comprised of 16 different categories (myOn user guide, 2013). From the myON placement test and interest inventory, a lexile measure was generated and personalized book recommendations were provided to the students based on their designated reading level and suggested topics of interest.

The myON reader offered quizzes and benchmark tests to participating students to measure reading comprehension of text and monitor their reading progress. A dashboard of the total number of books opened, read and amount of time spent reading was created for each individual participating student along with a collective total number of minutes spent reading by classroom for week 5 and 6 of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Collected data regarding myON use by classroom will be discussed in Chapter IV.

During the final week of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, participating students completed the NWEA MAP Reading assessment on a computer under the supervision of their teacher. Students were allowed unlimited time to complete

the required assessment. Two students were absent on the day of the NWEA MAP assessment and therefore, no scores are available for them. The resulting scores from this summer assessment (i.e., Summer 2013 NWEA MAP RIT Reading scores) were analyzed by the district to measure student reading achievement growth and then archived.

## Research Measures

For the present study, specific assessment measures utilized by the district were selected to provide data on student achievement gain of the participating students and their control group counterparts. Additional measures used for the purpose of this research included the 2013 summer attendance records of the students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, i.e., the experimental group, teacher interview responses and classroom and program artifacts associated with the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Upon obtaining permission to conduct the research from the district superintendent and receiving approval from the Loyola University Chicago's Institutional Review Board (IRB), archived program data and student achievement data were requested from the district, including assessment results for the students involved in the study from the 2012- 2013 administration of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading and the 2013-2014 administration of Illinois Acuity Predictive Assessment English Language Arts (ELA) Form A. Informed consent was secured from each of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers prior to conducting a structured interview with each one.

To ensure confidentiality of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers' transcribed interview responses and materials and participants' test data, a coding system was utilized to protect the personal identities and related assessment information of both students and teachers. The collected data were maintained in a locked file accessible only to this researcher. The coded data will be maintained for two years after the completion of this research study for future reference if required. After the two year period has expired, the data and coding system will be destroyed.

Common practice among school districts is to conduct tri-annual assessments of elementary age students to measure their achievement and growth in content areas (National Center for Response to Intervention, 2011). The selected district created a specific assessment schedule to administer Reading/ELA and Math assessments for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the period in which data was collected for this study. Assessment dates were determined for the beginning of the school year in the fall/August-September, the middle of the year in the winter/January-February and the end of year in the spring/April-May (refer to Table 4). To ensure consistency across the district, the participating school district adhered to the specified assessment schedule and students were administered tests under close supervision and controlled conditions.

Table 4

*District Assessment Schedule for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 School Year for Grades 2-8*

| School Year/Grades Assessed | Fall/Aug-Sept | Winter/Jan-Feb | Spring/April-May | Summer/July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2012-2013/ Grades 2-8 | MAP Reading & Math | MAP Reading & Math | MAP Reading & Math | MAP Reading only Administered only to Summer Reading Enrich Exp participants |
| 2013-2014/ Grades 3 - 8 (excludes Grade 2) | Acuity Predictive ELA & Math | Acuity Predictive ELA & Math | Acuity Predictive A ELA & Math | |

For the district under study, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) was the selected assessment tool for the 2012-2013 School Year. Specifically, the reading and mathematics tests on the NWEA MAP assessment were administered to students in Grades 2-10 at their respective grade levels. NWEA MAP is a computerized adaptive universal screening assessment system that can be administered either individually or by group in an untimed manner. Administration of each selected MAP assessment required approximately 40 minutes for completion and scoring was automatic and immediate (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011). Each student was required to complete the assessment by selecting the correct response from a set of possible options. NWEA MAP has an adaptive nature to the design of the assessments as the selection of questions for each MAP assessment is generated automatically from a pool of questions and each presented question is based on how the student responded to the previous question (NWEA, 2013).

According to NWEA, the academic content included in NWEA MAP is aligned to the Illinois State Standards as assessed on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (2011). NWEA MAP assessments are based on a theory of measurement referred to as Item Response Theory (IRT) where the level of test item difficulty and a subject's achievement level are measured using the same scale (NWEA, 2013). An analysis was conducted by NWEA on a collected sample of over 83,000 Illinois students from over 290 schools who completed the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the NWEA MAP in Spring 2010. NWEA (2011) measured the predictive validity between MAP RIT scale and the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for each grade level between 3-8 and test subjects, using a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.

Based on a 2011 linking study, a positive linear correlation was reported between MAP and the Illinois State Assessment Test in Reading. Correlations range from 0 which represents no correlation and 1.0 representing a perfect correlation between the state test and NWEA MAP assessment scores (NWEA, 2011). Based on the reported Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), reading correlations ranged from .797 in Grade 3 to a .809 in Grade 4 (NWEA, 2011).

Based on a summary of available validity data of NWEA MAP, the Reading assessments for Grades 2-10 were positively correlated to State accountability tests which resulted in concurrent and predictive validity coefficients ranging from .578-.832 and .631-.815, respectively (Center on Response to Intervention, 2011). In terms of the summary from test-retest reliability data of MAP Reading assessments for Grades 2-10 from Spring 2008 to Fall 2008 with content aligned to state standards and common tem pool design, the correlational coefficients ranged from .703-.856 (2011).

The percentage of students whose MAP scores accurately predicted that they would meet expected standards on the ISAT Reading assessment was reported by grade level: 87.0% at Grade 3, 86.8% at Grade 4 and 86.1% at Grade 5 (NWEA, 2011, p. 9). Reliability across time for MAP was calculated using the test-retest reliability and marginal reliability (2004). NWEA MAP results have a moderate to high generalizability based on a large representative national sample. In 2008, NWEA MAP norming studies reportedly involved 2,914,096 students from 6,905 schools located in 1,123 districts from 42 states (NWEA, 2008). More recently, in 2011, the NWEA RIT Scale Norms Study utilized samples drawn from 5.1 million students from over 13,000 schools in more than 2,700 school districts in 50 states (NWEA, 2011).

In summary, based on the above reported summaries of NWEA MAP Reading Assessment, it served as a valid and reliable tool for this study. Furthermore, the content of NWEA MAP Reading Assessments were aligned with various skills associated with the reading process and measured in state measures (i.e., comprehension, analysis and evaluation of literature and informational text and vocabulary) (NWEA, 2005).

The NWEA MAP RIT (Rasch Unit) score is based on an equal-interval scale used as a reliable indicator of student achievement (NWEA, 2001a). For the district under study, the Spring 2013 administration of MAP Reading, Language Usage and Mathematics was conducted between April -May, 2013. The 2013 Spring RIT scores on the NWEA MAP Reading assessments were collected for those students comprising the experimental and control groups which will serve as pre-test measures for the present study.

For the 2013-2014 School Year, the district under study chose to discontinue use of NWEA MAP as their assessment tool. Instead, the Acuity InFormative Assessment System from CTB/McGraw-Hill was selected as the assessment tool for the 2013-2014 School Year. Acuity InFormative Assessment System was identified as offering the participating district interim and formative assessments aligned to state standards. The interim forms of Acuity, referred to as the Acuity Predictive Assessments were selected by the district as the assessment tool for Grades 3-8 to measure student achievement and growth toward grade level standards. In addition to the Predictive Assessment administered tri-annually, additional assessments are available through Acuity in the form of diagnostic assessments and through the use of a large test item bank including questions aligned to state standards; custom assessments can be created by the district for pre- and post-measures. Along with the available reports that can be created, Acuity has the capability to provide instructional resources aligned to state standards that can be accessed from home. Acuity assessments are described as being rigorous and aligned to the Common Core State Standards. It is possible to report out on Acuity results based on demonstrating qualities of those standards or by the attained score (Acuity, 2010).

Similar to NWEA MAP, Acuity has the option to be administered in a computerized format individually to students in an untimed manner. Acuity assessments require approximately 50 minutes for administration (National Center for Response to Intervention, 2011). Acuity Predictive tests utilize a fixed set of questions at each grade level from third through eighth grade with items developmentally appropriate for each of the three assessments periods (Acuity, 2010). Acuity's fixed set of questions differs from the adaptive format of MAP assessment. Acuity's format was designed to be in alignment

with the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) test at each grade level supporting its content and construct validity. The reliability coefficients were acceptable for the Acuity Assessments with reliability coefficient ranges of 0.82 to 0.90 for the Predictive English Language Arts tests and 0.83 to 0.88 for the Predictive Mathematics tests (Illinois Acuity Technical Summary, 2013).

The Acuity Predictive Assessments provide three predictive forms (A, B, and C) that are aligned to state standards at each grade level and assessed content area. The design of the assessments requires test administration to be approximately six to eight weeks apart from each other. Each assessment form is designed utilizing the Item Response Theory (IRT) so that it includes specific content that is developmentally appropriate for that specific time period (Acuity, 2010). Acuity Predictive Assessments provide a scaled score on a common scale to allow comparisons of scores and monitor progress over time.

In terms of validity of Acuity ELA, studies on Acuity Grade 3 ELA construct validity indicated a Median Coefficient of .74, supporting Acuity's positive correlation with state accountability assessments. In terms of predictive validity, a Median Coefficient range of .70 -.73 based on the correlation of the Acuity Grade 4 ELA and the state accountability test. Feldt-Raju Reliability measures were collected on Grade 3 and Grade 4 in Language Arts which resulted in a Coefficient median of .90 and .89, respectively (National Center on Reponse to Intervention, 2011).

To ensure Acuity's reliability and validity, Acuity reports indicated that questions are generated using the Classical Test Theory (i.e., p-values, distractor analyses, point

biserial correlations, Mantel-Haenszel differential item functioning) and test reliability coefficients (Acuity, 2010).

Both NWEA MAP and Acuity Predictive report to be aligned with the key goals and objective set for all students as identified in the Illinois Learning Standards in English/Language Arts and Reading (1997) and the more recent version that incorporates the Common Core (2010) [CTB McGraw-Hill, 2009]. NWEA MAP Assessments provide measures of student performance in the following areas: Literature, Informational and Vocabulary (NWEA MAP Spring 2013 Reading Report).

Acuity's alignment to the State Standards and Common Core is indicated on each of the Test Map documents associated with the predictive assessments. Specifically for the Fall 2013 Acuity Predictive Assessment Form A in Illinois Language Arts, the key objectives and standards are identified for each formulated question by grade levels. For example, all questions on the Grade 3 Predictive Assessment of Form A focus on the following Illinois Learning Standards Goals 1and 2 in Reading and Literature: "Read with understanding and fluency" and "Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras and ideas." Similarly, another Test Map shows the same Grade 3 assessment as aligned with the Common Core Standards in Reading Literature, Informational Text and Foundation Skills assessing: "Key ideas and details," "craft and structure in knowledge and skills," "read and comprehend literary and informational text" (2013 Acuity Illinois LA Grade 3 Predictive From A).

The NWEA MAP Reading assessments and the Acuity English Language Arts Predictive assessments are both designed so that they serve as predictors of student achievement levels across grade levels on state assessment measures. Therefore, these

two measures serve as appropriate reading achievement measures to address the research questions associated with the present study.

The standards set forth by the State under study for students in K-12 are essentially for students to read with understanding and fluency, understand literature, write, listen and speak in a variety of settings (Illinois Learning Standards English Language Arts, 1997). The current State Standards incorporating the Common Core were designed to intentionally raise the rigor of student learning and specifically relate to key ideas and details, craft and structure, reading and comprehending literary and informational text as well as foundational skills, writing, speaking, and listening (2010).

To summarize, for the purpose of this study, archived scores from the Spring 2013 NWEA MAP Reading assessments and Fall 2013 Acuity Predictive Assessments in English Language Arts were collected for all participating students of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their control counterparts. The Acuity English Language Arts scores served as the post intervention measure of reading achievement gain for all students involved in this study.

Research Question #1: What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?

To address research question 1, the following archived data were provided upon request by the participating district: reading achievement scores from the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 School Years for all of the participating students of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their control group counterparts. More specifically, the students' archived Reading/Language Arts scores were requested from the completed

administration of NWEA MAP in 2012-2013 and Acuity Predictive assessment in 2013-2014 completed thus far (i.e., fall administration of Form A).

The achievement scores of the students involved in this study were based on the administration of assessment tools at their respective grade levels (Grades 2-4). At the time of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, the majority of the students involved in this study were of second grade status; however, there were some additional students who were exiting third or fourth graders.

The student achievement data provided by the participating district for this study consisted of scores from an assessment tool used during the 2012-20103 School Year (i.e., NWEA MAP Reading) along with scores from a different tool used the fall of the following school year (i.e., Acuity English Language Arts) in Fall 2013. Consequently, each of the students were administered the NWEA MAP Reading assessment at their respective grade level in Spring 2013, and then, the subsequent fall, those same students were assessed with Acuity English Language Arts form A. To illustrate this point, the majority of students selected for this study were completing second grade when they were invited to participate in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. The assessment data the district provided of those students included Grade 2 NWEA MAP scores from the 2012-2013 School Year along with Grade 3 Acuity English Language Arts scores since those same students had transitioned to the next grade level when Acuity was administered in the Fall 2013.

Based on the alignment of MAP and Acuity to State Standards in Reading/ Language Arts and their incorporation of the standards in the Common Core and their employment of scores that allow comparison across grade levels, it was felt that the use

of the two assessments was appropriate. Furthermore, student scores resulting from the administration of the MAP Reading and Acuity English Language Arts at their respective grade levels were used to respond to research question 1. These two measures are felt to be appropriate based on the particular statistical tools that were utilized to conduct the analysis. Refer to the Quantitative Analysis section for further discussion of how the scores were utilized to answer research question 1.

Research Question #2: Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance (as measured by the total number of days present) in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?

To address research question 2, the following archived data retrieved from the participating district were utilized: Summer 2013 attendance records and NWEA MAP Reading scores from Spring 2013 prior to the intervention (i.e., pretest measure) and Summer 2013 (i.e., posttest measure), following the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention for the participating students.

Research Question #3: What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

To address research question #3, qualitative data were collected from the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers on the nature of their instructional practices. Utilizing a structured interview format, a set of specific questions were presented to each of the teachers to seek information regarding the students' literacy experiences and the teachers' instructional practices during the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Informed consent was secured from each of the teachers prior to conducting their interviews. For one teacher, the interview consisted of a single face-to-face audiotaped session conducted at the local public library. The session, which was audio-taped with permission, lasted approximately one hour and recorded responses were transcribed by this researcher for data analysis purposes. At the time of the interview, the teacher provided a copy of various instructional materials, student work samples, assessment data and program artifacts to this researcher along with an explanation of how each was collected during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Included in these materials were students' writing responses from all participating students in both classrooms when asked to reflect upon their Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. A master schedule of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience field trips was shared as well as copies of a welcoming letter sent home to parents/guardians of the participating students from the program director.

The second teacher preferred to provide written responses to the set of questions on the structured teacher interview protocol which were then submitted to this researcher along with samples of instructional materials prepared for students and images of actual student work products (i.e., photo of decorated poster, copy of student-composed poems).

The interview responses along with collected artifacts were analyzed for evidence of the following specific areas of concentration associated with teaching reading skills as recommended by the National Reading Panel (NRP/the Panel) of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: Phonemic awareness, Phonics/alphabetic principle, Fluency, Teaching vocabulary words and Reading comprehension strategies (NRP 2000). In addition, information was also categorized to gain insight into student

literacy activities related to their ability to access print, self-select books, interact with the teacher and time spent reading, writing, and speaking- all factors identified in the literature review as being influential in preventing summer reading loss and summer learning loss (Alexander et al., 2007; Allington et al., 2010). Researched-based instructional practices identified from a meta-analysis, namely, identifying similarities & differences, summarizing & note taking, reinforcing effort & providing recognition, homework & practice, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, setting objectives & providing feedback, generating & testing hypotheses, cues, questions & advanced organizers, were also used as reference for the qualitative analysis (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

A set of quality standards provided by the National Summer Learning Association served as a critical resource of recommended features of quality summer learning programs. An examination will be made as to whether the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience met the recommended standards relating to Program Infrastructure, and Points of Service (refer to Table 1, Source: National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards, referenced in McCombs et al., 2011).

## Study Design

In this study, a mixed methods quasi-experimental design was used to conduct the research associated with the presenting questions. The intervention identified in this study was the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. The study was interested in determining the mean achievement gain of students who participated in the study. The experimental group involved in this study consisted of those students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience while their non-participating counterparts

comprised of the control group. Since enrollment in the intervention was voluntary, the selection of the two groups was not randomized. Therefore, the description of this study is considered quasi-experimental in nature (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

In terms of mixed methodology, both quantitative and qualitative data were utilized to address the research questions associated with this study. More specifically, the quantitative portion of this study involved analysis of archived assessment data of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience participating students (i.e., the experimental group) and that of their non-participating counterparts (i.e., the control group). The qualitative portion of the study involved analysis of transcribed teacher interview responses, as well as classroom and program artifact to gain insight into the nature of the instructional practices utilized by the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers.

To study research question #1, a quasi-experimental design was used to determine the mean reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. More specifically, quantitative data involving the Fall 2013 Acuity Predictive Language Arts assessment scores will provide the mean achievement gain in reading for each of the two groups. The Spring 2013 NWEA MAP RIT scores in Reading will serve as the covariate.

The intervention identified in this study is the Summer Reading Experience and the outcome measures are the Acuity post-intervention scores. Because the groups were already intact based on whether the students voluntarily participated in the intervention or chose not to participate, the use of randomly assigned groups to treatment was not feasible. Since this study lacked random assignments, it is understood that threats to

internal validity may exist and confounding variables may have affected the outcome (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979).

To address research question 2, a one-group non-experimental design was used to determine if a relationship existed between the attendance rate and reading achievement gain of participating students (i.e., the experimental group). Quantitatively, data collected of this one group, i.e., the participating students, consisted of their Summer Reading Enrichment Experience attendance records (i.e., total number of days present) and achievement scores from NWEA MAP reading assessments administered prior to the intervention (pre-test measure) and then again at the conclusion of the intervention (i.e., post-test measure). Because this design did not utilize a control group, it poses serious threats to validity and no claim to causation will be made. Of interest was whether any relationship existed between the two different variables (i.e., rate of attendance & reading achievement gain).

Use of the NWEA MAP RIT reading scores allowed for the ability to evaluate the group of participating students who ranged in different grade levels (Grade 2-4) and measure their growth in reading achievement. The student participants' rate of attendance was calculated based on totaling the number of days present for each Summer Reading Enrichment Experience participating student with a highest possible total of 23 days. The next section will discuss how the quantitative data will be analyzed to determine if there was a correlation between student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement.

The qualitative data will entail transcribed responses from the individual structured interviews conducted with each of the participating teachers regarding the

nature of their instructional practices utilized during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Each teacher was given the opportunity to respond to a set of six questions related to the literacy activities and instructional methods utilized with the students during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (see Appendix D). Additional qualitative data which was provided by the participating teachers included pieces of student writing and an array of instructional materials and program artifacts.

The qualitative data was organized according to categories and themes including recommended instructional strategies, effective reading instruction and literacy teaching strategies (Allington, 2002; Marzano et al., 2001; NRP, 2000) as well as student access to print, self-selection of books, interaction with the teacher and actual time spent reading and writing (Allington, 2002; Kim & Quinn, 2013; McCombs, et al, 2011).

A set of quality summer learning standards provided by the National Summer Learning Association served as an additional reference for the purpose of the qualitative analysis (Source: National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards, based on McCombs et al., 2011).

Prior to the start of this study, an invitation to participate in research was sent to the office of the superintendent and informed consent was secured indicating the district's agreement to participate in this study (see Appendices A and B). Upon receipt of district consent, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured to proceed with the intended research. Then, with IRB approval, following the conclusion of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, written informed consent was obtained from the two Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers to participate in this study (see Appendix C).

A description of the purpose of this study was included in both the district and teacher version of the consent form (see Appendices B and C). The district superintendent and 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers were provided with a copy of the teacher interview questions for review (see Appendix D). The teachers were informed that their interview responses would be transcribed and categorized by themes and their identities would remain anonymous.

## Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses used in this study will be presented as they addressed each of the three research questions associated with this study:

1. What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized to determine if there was a significant difference between the mean Acuity reading scores of the experimental group (i.e., participating students) and control group (i.e., non-participating students) while controlling for the between group differences of the covariate (i.e., MAP Spring scores). This study was interested in testing for between group differences in mean achievement gain of the experimental and control groups while controlling for an extraneous variable, namely, the MAP Spring scores. Therefore, ANCOVA was selected as the appropriate procedure since it provided a statistical technique to control for the variance of the MAP Spring scores, the extraneous variable (Vogt, 1999). More specifically, ANCOVA was used to determine if there was a significant mean gain in the Acuity English Language Arts score, i.e., the dependent variable, of the experimental group while controlling the

mean MAP Spring scores (Creswell, 2003). A significance level of .05 was considered the point at which statistical significance would be reached.

Fall 2013 Acuity English Language Arts scores were retrieved for the participating students who comprised the experimental group and their control group counterparts to conduct this statistical analysis. In addition, the Spring 2013 NWEA MAP mean Reading score of the experimental and control groups was considered the covariate. The collected Acuity and MAP scores for both groups were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (i.e., SPSS 22) to determine if a mean gain existed for the experimental group.

2. Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?

To determine if a relationship exists between the student participants' rate of attendance and their gain in reading achievement, both types of quantitative data (i.e., attendance data and MAP Reading assessment data) were examined. The rate of attendance was measured by calculating the participating students' total number of days present. The gain in reading achievement of the participating students was determined by using a paired sample t-test subtracting the summer MAP Reading scores from the spring scores of the same measure. Since there are two measurement variables involved in this research question, i.e., rate of attendance and gain in MAP Reading achievement, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient will be utilized to determine if a positive correlation exists between the students' attendance rate and gain in reading achievement.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis was selected since this test statistic is used to measure the strength of the linear relationship between two normally distributed variables. In this study, the two variables, i.e., rate of attendance and gain in MAP Reading achievement, are both normally distributed. While the Spearman Correlation is another test statistics used to measure the relationship between two variables, that statistical measure was not selected since it is non-parametric in nature.

3. What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

The qualitative data (i.e., teacher interview responses and classroom and program artifacts) were categorized by relevant themes related to students' literacy activities and the instructional practices incorporated into the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience by the teachers to gain a richer and fuller description of the different classroom and community activities engaged in by the student participants and their teachers. Coding of data will be completed based on themes related to specific areas of concentration associated with effective literacy practices as recommended by the National Reading Panel (NRP/the Panel) of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: Phonemic awareness, Phonics/alphabetic principle, Fluency, Teaching vocabulary words and Reading comprehension strategies (NRP 2000) In addition, access to print, self-selection of books, interactions with the teacher and time spent reading, writing, and other literacy activities were identified as additional themes of interest to the present study focused on preventing summer reading loss (Alexander et al., 2007; Vygotsky, 1978).

Finally, a set of quality standards provided by the National Summer Learning Association will serve as a reference of recommended features of quality summer learning programs. The findings of this study will reveal which of the recommended standards were met by the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (Source: National Summer Learning Association, based on McCombs et al., 2011).

## Threats to Internal Validity

The internal validity of a research study may be threatened by any of the following variables: history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, selection, experimental mortality, and selection-maturation interaction (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Several factors were recognized as threatening the internal validity of this study. Testing may pose a threat to internal validity. That is, the use of two different assessment measurement tools may threaten internal validity of this study. The district made the decision to change to Acuity InFormative Assessment Systems for the 2013-2014 School Year from the one used the previous school year, namely, NWEA MAP.

History may be a threat to the internal validity of the experimental one group design utilized to answer research question 2. Utilizing a one group pre- post-experimental group design raises the possibilities of a possible threat to internal validity. That is, the effect that is attributed to the intervention (i.e., Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention) may in fact be due to some unanticipated event rather than the intervention which is unknown since there is no control group (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Another threat to the internal validity may be due to the experimental design since it utilizes an intervention of short duration (23 days). With a longer duration, the effects

of the intervention may become more apparent and reach a level of significance. Sample size may also pose a threat to the internal validity. That is, had a larger sample size been utilized, it is possible that effect may have reached a level of significance.

This study was conducted utilizing an established district program with a particular schedule in place and intact groups already formed. In fact, participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention was entirely voluntary and families determined whether the invitation for their child to participate was accepted or not. Therefore, the size of student enrolment and the self-selection of participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Schedule were determined in advance of the conception of this study (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). It is possible that there was a difference in the two groups based on their interest in joining the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. One possibility is that those students who chose to participate, and their parents/guardians, were more motivated as well as interested in reading and/or learning.

## Limitations of the Study

Due to constraints related to the research design and time factors, this study was subject to certain limitations. These limitations include:

1. The duration of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was limited to 23 days of intervention.
2. The size of the experimental and control groups was limited to 32 and 36 students, respectively.

3. 2013 Spring and Summer NWEA MAP Reading RIT scores were used as pre-intervention and post-intervention measures of the one-group non-experimental design.
4. The number of teachers interviewed is recognized as being small due to the natural limit of two teachers employed for the implementation of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.
5. Differences may exist from one teacher's instructional practices to the other thereby affecting the actual amount of time spent on specific literacy activities and the participating students' experiences.

## Bias of the Researcher

This researcher did not have any involvement with the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience while it was in progress and only became involved after its completion. Upon securing IRB approval, each of the two teachers associated with the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was interviewed with each of the teachers utilizing a structured interview protocol. The structured nature of the interview questioning was intended to control for any bias of this researcher during the actual interview process. The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers provided this researcher with their own collection of available classroom and program artifacts associated with the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Established qualities of standard of summer learning programs (National Summer Learning Association, from McComb et al., 2011) and research-based instructional practices in reading (NRP, 2001) and in general (Marzano et al., 2001) were utilized by this researcher for purposes of analysis.

## Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the purpose of this study, research questions, setting and participants, description of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, methods of measurement, study design and data analysis. Finally, threats to internal validity, limitations to the study and consideration of bias of the researcher were addressed in this chapter. Chapter IV presents a full report of the data analysis and summary of the findings.

# CHAPTER IV

# RESULTS

## Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the effectiveness of a six-week reading enrichment experience offered to elementary age children in an effort to prevent summer reading loss (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007). The students involved in this study were from families of low-income status and all were considered to have average or higher reading ability based on grade level assessments. This study sought to determine what the reading achievement gain was for those students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (a pseudonym). In addition, this study investigated whether there was a correlation between the attendance rate of the student participants and their gain in reading achievement. Also under investigation was the nature of effective instructional practices utilized by the teachers of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Over summer break children from low-income families are particularly vulnerable to summer learning loss compared to their middle to higher-income peers (Cooper et al., 1996; Entwisle et al., 2007). In an effort to combat learning loss and summer reading setback, research has supported providing low-income children with summer learning opportunities to promote reading with increased access to print and enrichment activities (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Cooper et al.,

1996; Heyns, 1978; Kim & Quinn, 2013; McCombs et al., 2011; Neuman & Celano, 2012). The selected district's Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and the participating students and the teachers associated with the program were the foci of this study.

The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was conducted over a six week period during the summer of 2013. Thirty two elementary age students participated in this district's Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, the majority of whom were exiting second graders. The remaining participating students were existing third and fourth graders who had attended the reading enrichment program the previous summer and/or school year. All participating students were from families of low income status (i.e., having free or reduced school meal plans), were reading at their respective grade level as noted by their reported reading achievement scores and had no significant discipline issues.

Each of the six elementary schools within the selected district had student representation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. The 32 children formed two classrooms. One classroom was filled entirely of exiting second graders while the other had a mix of exiting second through fourth graders. Both classrooms were led by a certified teacher. One of the assigned teachers was an experienced reading teacher who spent numerous years as a classroom teacher and the other was an experienced special education teacher who also had a reading specialist certification. Both teachers had experienced serving the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience in past summers.

To ensure confidentiality, the identity of the district and the names of student and teacher participants remain anonymous. For this study, the two instructors of the

Summer Reading Enrichment Experience are referred to as Teacher A and B and the two classrooms as Classroom 1 and 2. The results from this study will be presented as they relate to each of the three research questions.

## Research Questions

1. What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?

   Ho: There is no difference in the mean reading achievement gain as measured by the Acuity scores of the students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (i.e., the experimental group) than those who were invited but did not participate (i.e., the control group).

   Ha: The students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (i.e., the experimental group) have a higher mean reading achievement gain as measured by their Acuity scores than those who were invited but did not participate (i.e., the control group).

2. Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance (as measured by the total number of days present) in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?

   Ho: There is no relationship between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement.

   Ha: There is a relationship between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement.

3. What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

## Presentation of Results

The National Reading Panel (NRP/the Panel) of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development considered the work completed by Snow, Burns, and Griffin of the National Research Council (NRC) in 1998, as well as the analyzed reading research findings to acknowledge that the following areas to be integral in the teaching of reading skills: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics/Alphabetic Principle, Fluency, Teaching Vocabulary Words and Reading Comprehension Strategies (2000).

The employment of research-based classroom instructional strategies was identified through meta-analyses as recommended practice to ensure student engagement and promote achievement (Marzano et al., 2001). The interactive role between the reader and more skilled reader (i.e., teacher) was recognized as instrumental in guiding and supporting the reader through the process of decoding and building fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills (2000). Increased access to print, self-selection of books, interactions with the teacher and time spent on reading, writing and other literacy activities have been identified as measures to prevent summer reading loss (Alexander et al., 2007; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Cooper et al., 1996; Neuman & Celano, 2012).

Research on voluntary summer reading programs suggest that it is becoming evident that providing books that are at the student's appropriate reading level and interest areas and offering teacher scaffolding may be effective in reducing or eliminating summer reading loss (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013; White & Kim, 2008). The

National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards provided recommended features of quality summer learning programs which were used to further analyze the collected data of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (Source: National Summer Learning Association, referenced in McCombs et al., 2011).

For several years, the participating district has been conducting tri-annual assessments during each school year to periodically measure student skills and growth in various content areas including Reading/English Language Arts. For the 2012-2013 School Year, the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) was the participating district's choice of assessment tool. Each student in Grades 2 through 8 were assessed in Reading and Math three times during the academic year (refer to the District Assessment Schedule). However, the following year, the district discontinued using NWEA MAP and changed the assessment tool to the Acuity Predictive Assessment.

Commencing in the fall of the 2013-2014 School Year, Acuity Predictive Assessments in Math and English Language Arts were administered to students in Grades 3 through 8 in the participating district under study. Acuity was selected as the assessment tool system for the district for several reasons. First, the Acuity Predictive Assessment is regarded as being a reliable and valid measure that is standards-based and provides information on student performance to inform instructional decisions. The Acuity Assessment System also offers diagnostic assessments and a large item bank to craft custom assessments aligned to state standards incorporating the Common Core (Acuity, 2009).

For the purpose of conducting the quantitative analysis of research questions 1 and 2, it was necessary to request archived MAP and Acuity scores of the participating students and their control group counterparts from the selected district. More specifically, the 2012-2013 NWEA MAP Reading scores and the Fall 2013 Acuity English Language Arts scores were requested of the students involved in this study to address the questions related to their reading achievement gain.

To address research question 1, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized to determine the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (i.e., the experimental group). The ANCOVA was conducted using the mean reading achievement gain for the experimental and control groups from the post-intervention measure, i.e., the 2013 Fall Acuity English Language Arts scaled scores, while controlling for their covariate, the 2013 Spring MAP Reading RIT scores, the pre-intervention measure. The covariate is used to control for initial group differences on the pre-summer reading scores.

Ho: There is no difference in the mean reading achievement gain as measured by the Acuity scores of the students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (i.e., the experimental group) than those who were invited but did not participate (i.e., the control group).

Ha: The students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (i.e., the experimental group) have a higher mean reading achievement gain as measured by their Acuity scores than those who were invited but did not participate (i.e., the control group).

The results presented in Table 5 show the between-subjects effects with the dependent variable identified as the Acuity ELA post-test measure. The results of the analysis of covariance indicate a between-group variance in the post Acuity measure with a F value=.381, p value= .539. The reported difference in the mean gain of the Acuity English Language Arts scores between the two groups is not considered statistically significant at the .05 level. Therefore, since p is greater than .05, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is determined that there is not a statistically significant difference between the group mean gains.

Table 5

*Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Dependent Variable: Acuity English/Language Arts post-test measure

| Source | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Group | 1035.850 | .381 | .539 |

Given the results of this analysis of covariance, there is the possibility of a type II error. That is, a significant difference in mean gains may indeed exist between the experimental group that received the intervention and the control group but it is possible that the test was not sensitive enough to identify that significance. One explanation may be that the sample size was not large enough to identify the difference. Perhaps, the utilization of a larger intervention group would lead to a more significant gain in reading scores. Another explanation may be that the length of the intervention was not long

enough which raises the possibility that an intervention of longer duration would have a stronger or more significant impact on the achievement gain of the experimental group.

Research question 2 was created to determine if there was a correlation between the attendance rate of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student participants (i.e., number of days present) and their gain in reading achievement. The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was conducted over a total of 23 days. Student participants' rate of attendance ranged from a low of 16 days to a maximum of 23 days reflecting perfect attendance (refer to Table 6). Based on a review of student attendance records, 18 of the 32 participating students (i.e., 78% of participants), achieved perfect attendance.

Table 6

*2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Attendance Report (number of days present) for Each Participating Student by Classroom*

| Total number of days present: Possible 23 days | Classroom 1<br>N=16 students | Classroom 2<br>N=16 students |
|---|---|---|
| | 23<br>23<br>18<br>21<br>22<br>23<br>23<br>23<br>22<br>18<br>22<br>21<br>21<br>23<br>23<br>21 | 23<br>23<br>20<br>22<br>23<br>23<br>23<br>23<br>16<br>22<br>23<br>22<br>23<br>23<br>23<br>23 |

To determine the gain in reading achievement for the experimental group, MAP reading measures were analyzed. Two students were absent when the MAP Reading post-testing was conducted and one outlier was removed. Therefore, the adjusted experimental group sample size was 29. As noted in Table 7, the average gain in reading achievement from the MAP Reading pre to MAP Reading post scores of the experimental group is a M= 1.41, SD=6.61.

Table 7

*Gain from MAP Pre- to Post-Measure of Experimental Group*

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gain | 29 | -10.00 | 19.00 | 1.4138 | 6.60907 |

To determine if there was a correlation between the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student participants' rate of attendance as measured by student number of days present and mean gain in reading achievement as measured from 2013 Spring (pre-test) to Summer (post-test) MAP reading scores, the Pearson Correlation was utilized. This researcher was interested to know: As a student's rate of attendance increased, did the student's MAP reading score also increase?

Ho: There is no relationship between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement.

Ha: There is a relationship between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement.

Based on the statistical analysis, a Pearson's Correlation coefficient=.058; p-value=.384, a low correlation was revealed. Since p is greater than .05, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is determined that there is not a statistically significant relationship between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their mean gain in reading achievement.

The probability that a positive relationship exists between students' rate of attendance and their gain in MAP reading score is weak at best. While the analysis revealed a slight positive correlation, the results show that the level did not reach statistical significance. Possible explanations for this weak correlation may relate to the low sample size of the experimental group or the short duration of the intervention. That is, a larger sample size or longer intervention may have positively impacted the results and led to a stronger relationship between student attendance and gain in reading achievement score. Also, the small difference in attendance days may not be strong enough to affect reading level. Another consideration is that students may continue to read even if they are not in attendance.

The statistical analyses to address research questions 1 and 2 utilized an analysis of covariance and Pearson correlation, respectively. Through analysis of the related quantitative data, the results revealed that there was not a significant gain in the reading achievement of the experimental group (i.e., Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student participants) when controlling the covariant MAP pre score. In addition, a low correlation existed between the experimental group's rate of attendance and average gain in reading achievement and it was determined that this relationship was not statistically significant.

There may be a possibility that a positive correlation in fact existed between student participants' rate of Summer Reading Enrichment Experience attendance and their gain in reading achievement which may have been revealed had a larger sample size been used. Another factor to consider that may have led to different outcomes is the length of the intervention. The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was in session for a total of 23 days over summer break. The range of attendance for the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student participants was from 16 -23 total days. Hence, only a seven day difference existed between the lowest attended and highest attended total for a student participant. Had the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience been offered for a longer duration, the intervention may have led to a stronger relationship between attendance and achievement.

This study was conducted utilizing an established district program and schedule of events serving an intact group already formed. Participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention was entirely voluntary and it was the sole decision of the families to determine whether or not they accepted the invitation for their child to participate. Therefore, the size and composition of the group of student participants (i.e., the experimental group) and their non-participating counterparts (i.e., control group) were determined prior to the conception of this study. Discussion of the design of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention and limitations of the quantitative data involved in this research study will be addressed in Chapter V.

The following section will present the analysis of the qualitative data associated with research question 3 of this study. Research question 3 was created to gain insight into the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment

Experience teachers. The transcribed responses from teacher interviews and the content of available classroom and program artifacts comprised the qualitative data that was collected to respond to this question.

An examination was conducted of the collected qualitative data provided to this researcher in a deliberate effort to find relevant categories related to the topics of teaching reading skills and utilizing effective instructional practices (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; NRP, 2000). The process used to analyze the qualitative data was to review the content of transcribed teacher interviews, classrooms artifacts and program documents and then categorize each coded item into common them by breaking down the content into key components and determining the frequency by which each one was represented (Sorenson, 2008).

The Structured Interview Protocol consisted of questions intended to gather information on each of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teacher's use of effective instructional practices (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001), particularly as it related to the key areas of reading instruction, namely, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics/Alphabetic Principle, Fluency, Teaching Vocabulary Words and Reading Comprehension Strategies (NRP, 2000). Also of interest was the interaction between the reader and more skilled reader (i.e., teacher or other adult) since this type of guidance was recognized as being instrumental in supporting the reader through the process of building decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills (NRP 2000). Other interview questions were built around recommended practices that promote reading achievement including access to print, self-selection of books, and actual time spent reading or being actively engaged in other literacy and enrichment activities (Alexander,

et al., 2007; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Cooper et al., 1996; Neuman & Celano, 2012).

Based upon a thorough analysis of available classroom and program schedules, as well as teacher interview responses, details of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience emerged that illustrated services afforded to all participating students (refer to Table 8). For each of the 23 days that the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was in session, breakfast and lunch were provided to all student participants, with a daily average of 40 minutes total to serve both meals. All participating students engaged in the weekly visit to the local public library. Each library visit lasted over two hours.

Table 8

*Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Schedule and Shared Activities*

| Summer Reading Enrichment Experience<br>June 17 – July 25, 2013; Mondays –Thursdays<br>Total number of sessions: 23<br>(no school on July 4 Holiday)<br>Total number of hours: 92<br>Instructional time: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.<br>7:40 – 8:00 a.m. Student arrival/breakfast provided<br>12:00 – 12:25 p.m. – Lunch provided/Student dismissal immediately following lunch<br><br>Total cost of the program: approximately$300.00 per student* ($9600.00/32 students)<br>* this figure did not include food costs (i.e., breakfast & lunch) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Breakfast and Lunch Served | Library Visits | Enrichment Field Trips |
| Dates: | All 23 days in session | 6/18, 6/25, 7/2, 7/9, 7/16, 7/23 | 6/20, 6/27, 7/11, 7/18, 7/25 |
| Amount of Time: | 40 minutes per day for both meals | 135 minutes per visit | 165 minutes per trip except 325 minutes for 7/25 |

Additional trips were scheduled to specially selected destinations within the local community (i.e., art museum, nature preserve, a local park, & river/steam engine museum). Each week, the students engaged in one of these specially selected field trips lasting approximately three hours. The final culminating trip to a Barnes and Nobles book store in a nearby urban location extended well beyond the allotted four hours, requiring approximately six hours total with special permission received from the families. Transportation was provided by the district for all field trips at no cost to the families.

According to information shared by the director of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, the total cost of the program was approximately $9600. Serving 32 students, the cost was approximately $300 per student which included teachers' salaries, the Barnes & Noble book store field trip and transportation. Food costs for daily breakfast and lunch provided to the participating students were not included in this figure.

A set of quality standards provided by the National Summer Learning Association served as a reference of recommended features of quality summer learning programs. The findings of this study revealed that the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience met numerous aspects of the recommended National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards relating to Program Purpose, Finance & Sustainability, Planning, Staff, Partnerships, Points of Service (Source: National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards, as referenced by McCombs et al., 2011). To support this finding, a review of collected information related to program planning and implementation indicated that the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience had an identified mission to promote summer reading and increase access to text of students from low-income families. Goals of the

program were aligned with the district's plan related to student achievement and equity which was shared with key stakeholders (i.e., parents, administrators, Board of Education officials),

A sufficient amount of time was devoted to the academic and developmental outcomes based on McCombs et al. (2011) in reference to McLaughlin and Pitcock's (2009) 80-hour program recommendation. More specifically, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience utilized 92 hours of programming time. Experienced certified teachers were recruited who were knowledgeable of district curriculum and instructional expectations related to State Reading and Language Arts Standards incorporating the Common Core. Program planning was conducted in advance of the start of the summer session and promoted partnerships with key organizations (i.e., public library, local museums/centers, and book store).

The plan for the summer programming was to promote reading and offer interesting enrichment activities that were both informative and enjoyable. The following description of the amount of class time allocated for specific activities was made possible because Teacher A voluntarily shared a copy of her daily schedule with this researcher. Based on the reported activities along with allotted time, Classroom 1 expended an average of 35 minutes daily to complete basic routines and procedures (e.g., attendance, bathroom break). The majority of class time, up to two hours, was reportedly spent on reading activities.

Technology was used to access some of the reading activities (i.e., myON reader, I-Pad apps, Promethean Board online reading presentations). An additional 30 minutes was spent on other related literacy activities involving writing, speaking and/or listening

to the teacher conduct read alouds. Occasionally, a lesson included a brief period (i.e., 15 minutes) for student presentations addressing topics related to their readings. Approximately 30 minutes were built into the daily schedule for socializing (i.e., interacting during recess, playing board games).

Both classrooms gained access to an electronic library system, myON Reader, for the last two weeks of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. A report was generated for each classroom on the total amount of time students spent reading on myON for week 5: 1,100 and 700 minutes for Classroom 1 and 2, respectively and for week 6: 1,450 and 1,000 minutes for Classroom 1 and 2, respectively, as illustrated in the following table, i.e., Table 9.

Table 9

*Total Amount of Time Spent Reading on myON Reader by Classroom (in and outside of classroom)*

| Week of Session | Classroom 1 | Classroom 2 |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | 1,100 minutes | 700 minutes |
| 6 | 1,450 minutes | 1,000 minutes |

Note: myON data was only available for Week 5 & 6 of Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

The main objective of the content analysis from the qualitative aspect of this research was to determine the nature of a teacher's use of effective literacy practices. Through analysis of the interview responses collected from each of the two teachers of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, themes emerged that related to research question 3. The analysis of the process consisted of categorizing responses by defined themes and calculating the frequency of responses per category. Consequently, this

analysis will concentrate on the following identified thematic categories: (1) Using effective literacy instructional practices, (2) Encouraging students to read, (3) Interacting with students, and (4) Using effective instructional strategies (refer to Table 10). The thematic categories along with the quantity of items associated with each theme, were based upon teacher responses to each of the interview questions (see Appendix D) and the associated materials to address research question 3.

Table 10

*Thematic Categories and Associated Items from Teacher Interview Responses*

| Thematic Categories | # of associated items from Teacher responses |
|---|---|
| 1) Using effective literacy instructional practices | 8 |
| 2) Encouraging students to read | 9 |
| 3) Interacting with students | 6 |
| 4) Using effective instructional strategies a la Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) | 9 |

Recognizing recommended practices (NRP, 2000), both classrooms incorporated instruction on various reading comprehension strategies, provided exposure to a variety of literature and offered students choice in their reading selection.

Theme 1: According to the data (see Table 11), both Summer Reading Enrichment teachers identified literacy instructional practices that they used with their students in their responses to the interview questions. As noted in Table 11, both teachers indicated that their students received opportunities to work on reading comprehension, writing and speaking skills. Teacher A gave specific examples of speaking exercises utilized with her students including when they engaged in small book

talks sharing their favorite stories with one another. In terms of comprehension, Teacher A shared examples of graphic organizers used by the students to record the most important parts of a story and interesting facts from reading non-fiction text.

Table 11

*Theme 1: Use of Effective Literacy Instructional Practices*

| Types of Effective Literacy Instructional Practices | # of Teachers who employed this practice |
|---|---|
| Phonics/Alphabetic Principles | 0 |
| Word Work | |
| Fluency | 1 |
| Vocabulary | 1 |
| Reading comprehension | 2 |
| Writing | 2 |
| Discussion/Speaking | 2 |
| Providing exposure to wide variety of literature | 2 |
| Offering student choice in reading activity | 2 |

Teacher A indicated that she also provided instruction in fluency and vocabulary, including modeling of fluent reading and strategic thinking during the reading process. An average of 30 minutes per day was devoted to reading in Teacher A's classroom.

Teacher B indicated that she engaged her students in discussions and activities based on comprehension strategies during their literature circles. Greek Mythology was used by Teacher B to discuss character traits as well as locating evidence in text. Teacher B's students were also guided to activate their prior knowledge, identify fact vs. opinion and make predictions.

Both Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers indicated that their goal was to expose their students to a wide variety of literature and offer them choice in reading activities. Writing was also identified by both teachers as a practice they

incorporated in their classroom. Teacher A indicated that her students were provided with a journal to write a response about their reading and generate questions about the story they were reading. Teacher A's lesson plans revealed that approximately 30 minutes of instructional time was spent on writing.

Teacher B provided her students with writing prompts and wrote on topics individually and in small groups. Students from both classes wrote a reflection about the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience which will be examined later in this section.

As Table 11 shows, neither teacher focused on phonics/alphabetic principles or word work during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Since the students were exiting second graders or older, this is not surprising since decoding skills should be developed in students by that point (NPR, 2000). Teacher A indicated that she worked on fluency and vocabulary. In terms of fluency, she engaged the students in choral reading of many different poems and songs, including those with patriotic themes. Students in Teacher A's classroom also spent time in small groups practicing fluency with their choice of Reader's Theater script to prepare for their group's performance. Vocabulary instruction was embedded in read alouds and think alouds. Teacher A shared an example, "I would stop during the reading and say, "Oh, I wonder what this word 'pensive' means. Turn to your neighbour and talk about what you think that might mean."

Theme 2: The second thematic category, encouraging students to read at school and home, was determined based on analysis of the qualitative data (see Table 12). Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers encouraged their students to read through a variety of methods. While traditional homework was not employed by either

of the teachers during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, students were encouraged to read at home and complete a daily log. Teacher A shared that she encouraged her students to read and offered them suggestions of fun places to read during the summer (e.g., at a picnic table or under a tree).

Table 12

*Theme 2: Encourage Students to Read at School and Home*

| Methods to Encourage Student Reading | # of Teachers who employed this method |
|---|---|
| Checking out books at library | 2 |
| Assigning homework | 0 |
| Gaining insight into students' feelings about reading and interests | 2 |
| Promoting home reading activities | 2 |
| Communicating with Parents | 2 |
| Reading in class | 2 |
| Allowing self-selection of text | 2 |
| Using technology for reading | 2 |
| Researching topics | 2 |

Both teachers used class time for students to research topics and famous historical figures. Teacher A indicated that she would share selected books with her class on a topic or person pertaining to an upcoming field trip to "whet their appetites" and afterwards, students would want to find another book to learn more.

While Teacher B did not respond to the question pertaining to the average number of books each student read per week, program data indicated that all participating students were encouraged to check out three books each week during the library visit and keep a reading log. Teacher A indicated that students in her class, on average, read five books per week and added that some of those books were novels. Students in both

classes spent time reading in class on a daily basis except for days they were on field trips.

The director of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience sent a letter home to the parents/guardians of all participating students. In that communication, the director stressed the importance of reading over the summer months to prevent summer learning loss as well as consistent attendance. The teachers also sent a brochure home to all parents/guardians of the participating students entitled, "Summer Reading: An Informational Guide for Parents." The brochure contained information on summer reading loss and encouraged parents to make sure their child reads to prevent this loss. Summer reading resources and a list of suggested authors and book titles/series were also shared along with the brochure to promoter summer reading (2013).

At the beginning of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, Teacher A had her students form small groups to discuss with one another how they felt about reading and what they liked to read about. This information provided Teacher A with some insight into her students' thoughts and feelings about reading. Students in Teacher A's class also completed another reading inventory entitled, "Here's How I Feel about Reading" (McKenna & Stahl, 2009). Based on responses to interview question 4, both teachers allowed their students to self-select books. Teacher B noted, "If a student asked for suggestions I was there to offer assistance. I would ask what they liked to read about-what some of their other favorites are – to try to assist them in their selections."

All students completed an interest inventory through myON (Brekhus, 2011), and had access to technology to engage in reading (i.e., myON Reader, I-Pads, Promethean Board).

"The main goal of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience," noted Teacher A, "was to keep students reading over the summer." She also indicated that class time was intended to "make reading an enjoyable experience." As she stated, "That was what our mission was – to turn (students) on to reading and make it fun!" Teacher A indicated that the exiting second graders who participated in the Summer Reading Experience were invited to be part of the Reading Enrichment Experience (pseudonym) for the upcoming school year and would have the opportunity to continue to carry over their skills.

The third thematic category, interacting with students, was defined by six key methods. According to Table 13, both teachers discussed informational topics with students, formally tracked student progress through post-test of MAP and informally tracked student progress from conversations with students about their reading. Toward the end of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, both teachers had the capacity to monitor student progress through the use of myON Reader System. Students' reading of the electronic MyON books and their performance on related comprehension tests were tracked along with the amount of time they spent reading while logged on to the myON Reader System. Students in both classrooms were encouraged to log their summer reading as part of the local public library summer reading program.

Both teachers interacted with their students through shared participation in the scheduled enrichment activities during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Teacher A indicated that she regularly modeled reading for her students through daily read alouds. Looking at her daily lesson plans, she spent approximately 30 minutes per day on read alouds on days that were spent in the classroom (as opposed to field trips). Teacher A also engaged in think alouds while reading to her students. She indicated that

she would stop at key points and raise questions or wonder about what would happen next to model her active thinking during the reading process.

Table 13

*Theme 3: Interact with Students*

| Types of Interactions with Students | # of Teachers who employed this method |
|---|---|
| Discussing informational topics with students | 2 |
| Modeling reading | 1 |
| Modeled thinking about reading | 1 |
| Offer guidance to students to select appropriate leveled text | 2 |
| Tracking student progress/time spent reading | 2 |
| Shared enrichment activities | 2 |

During the interview, Teacher A described the special attention that was given to certain students who needed help in the selection of books. She stated, "Many times they would want to pick books that were too easy or were picture books or were way too hard and way too long." She indicated that such students were offered some guidance of appropriate leveled selections or series that they might find interesting.

Finally, theme 4 focused on uncovering additional uses of effective teaching strategies by the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers based on the nine instructional strategies identified by Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001) from their meta-analysis (refer to Table 14). Both teachers engaged their students in discussion which included comparing and contrasting, identifying cause and effect, note taking, working on synonyms and antonyms, summarizing and identifying the main ideas. Likewise, students in both classrooms were encouraged to share their ideas and express

their thoughts, showing evidence of the component focused on reinforcing effort and providing recognition. Additional strategies utilized during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experiences included completing analogies (Teacher A) and using Greek Mythology to identify character traits and finding proof in writing (Teacher B) (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

Table 14

*Theme 4: Use of Effective Instructional Strategies (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001)*

| Types of Instructional Strategies | # of Teachers who employed this strategy |
|---|---|
| Identifying similarities and differences | 2 |
| Summarizing and note taking | 2 |
| Reinforcing effort and providing recognition | 2 |
| Homework and practice | 2 |
| Nonlinguistic representations | 2 |
| Cooperative learning | 2 |
| Setting objectives and providing feedback | 0 |
| Generating and testing hypotheses | 1 |
| Cues, questions and advance organizers | 2 |

Using non-linguistic representations was a strategy used by both teachers. Teacher B shared that students decorated bottles to create three-dimensional representation of famous characters and engaged in scavenger hunts to find the important parts of a non-fiction text. She also shared a photo of a poster entitled "All About Me" created by a student which displayed illustrations and self-describing words. Teacher B also indicated that picture prompts were used to activate student thinking, predicting and writing about various topics. Teacher A shared how her students created acrostic poems

describing themselves, composed poetry, and experimented with decoding brailed writing.

While no homework was assigned, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience participating students were encouraged to practice reading on a regular basis. During the interview, Teacher A indicated that students were permitted to take home all of their finished work to provide feedback to parents on student progress. In terms of practice, Teacher A indicated that she incorporated the following additional strategies to provide students with regular practice building their reading fluency: choral reading, singing songs and reciting poetry, referencing Timothy Rasinski's work as an influence on these fluency-building exercises.

Through the analysis of teacher interview responses and available classroom materials, the teachers did not report using student-friendly objectives or setting goals with their students.

Cooperative learning was incorporated into both classrooms. Teacher B used literature circles for students to read a book and engage in discussion together about elements of the story and characters. Students were asked to rank four books in terms of the one they would most like to read to the one they least preferred and then Teacher B formed groups based on the students' reading preferences. Teacher A incorporated think-pair-share activities to encourage students to think about a situation described in the text and become "more metacognitive about the reading process." Teacher A also described mini-book reviews that were conducted by the students. They would form small groups and share with one another their favorite part of a book or recommend books to one another.

From the content analysis of collected student reflection pieces, themes were generated related to student perceptions of the benefits afforded them from their participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (refer to Table 15). Those themes included providing students the opportunity to access print, read and find enjoyment in the literacy activities. Sixty percent of the student participants expressed enjoyment engaging in reading and fluency activities (i.e., choral reading of poetry, singing songs, performing plays, on-line reading). One student commented. "We really had fun reading." Similarly, other participants expressed the following sentiments: "I read lots of books. I even got to sing poetry in music form," "I thought the reading was fun to do," and "My favorite thing to do was check out books from the library."

Table 15

*Students' Reflections on the Perceived Benefits of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience*

| Perceived Benefit of the Experience | # of student participants to offer this experience | % of student participants to offer this experience |
|---|---|---|
| Spending time reading/ Visiting the library/Reading To therapy dogs | 16 | 50% |
| Getting to go on fieldtrips | 30 | 94% |
| Having time to play/engage in physical activity | 11 | 34% |
| Making new friends | 6 | 19% |
| Having a nice teacher | 7 | 22% |
| Being able to use technology | 13 | 41% |
| Writing about reading | 4 | 13% |
| Gaining access to text | 7 | 22% |

Going on field trips was the most frequently mentioned response by students in their reflections of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Ninety-four percent (30 of 32) of the participating students shared positive comments about their experience on one or more of the field trips they participated in during their involvement in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. One student commented, "I liked going to the art museum because I learned about people who lived before me."

Based on frequency count, students also identified enjoying the following activities with high frequency (i.e., over 50%): visiting the library and reading to therapy dogs, having time to play (e.g., checkers, outdoor, I Pads) and making new friends. As one student noted, "I feel great about the program because I get to read a lot more."

Feedback from Classroom 2 student reflections included complaints from eleven students that they were required to get up very early in the morning (e.g., 6:00-6:30 a.m.). Six students from Classroom 2 did not enjoy those activities that required them to engage in physical activity and exert themselves outside in the heat. Feedback from Classroom 1 did not include any complaints or negative statements.

The findings from the qualitative analysis through content analysis revealed a variety of effective instructional practices utilized within the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience classrooms to build skills, promote reading and ensure increased access to print for the student participants.

Upon closer examination, some differences were noted in the interview responses of the two teachers. Notably, Teacher A voluntarily shared considerable details of her daily schedule and provided rich evidence of the specific instructional methods she employed and the various literacy activities assigned to the students. Teacher A's

responses were provided verbally. She offered detailed descriptions of parts of her lessons that involved direct interaction with her students. For instance, she offered examples of how she modeled active thinking and wondered out loud what was going to happen next in a story during a read aloud. Teacher B provided actual examples of finished student work products and classroom activities which aided in coding of certain components. The interview responses from Teacher B were provided in written form and offered limited details.

Based on the analysis of the student reflections, many students found the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience to be beneficial in providing them ample opportunity to read and gain access to books. Based on their comments, many students indicated that they particularly enjoyed the variety of reading activities and projects, the enrichment experiences as well as the opportunity to interact with their teachers and fellow classmates.

In her concluding remarks, Teacher A summed up her thoughts about the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience with the following statement:

> I just think it was a positive experience and these students were lucky. In fact, I think one student said it best, '"We were so lucky to be a part of this program because we got to do things that other kids didn't."' . . . They really had some wonderful experiences and some wonderful perks and I think it will be a summer they will always remember!

## Summary

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the impact of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience on the gain in reading achievement of student participants. This researcher analyzed quantitative data collected from archived student achievement scores, demographic information and qualitative data from transcribed

teacher interview responses and classroom and program artifacts to answer the three research questions. The findings revealed that a gain was made in the reading achievement by the participating students. However, when the difference between the experimental group mean gain in reading achievement was compared to that of the control group, while controlling for the covariate, i.e., MAP Spring Reading score, the difference in achievement was not considered statistically significant. Moreover, when examining the relationship between the students' rate of attendance and their gain in reading achievement, a low correlation was revealed and it was determined that there is not a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

The qualitative data analysis suggested that additional program variables, such as the quality of the literacy instruction and the enrichment experiences afforded these students a summer learning environment that provided practice of literacy skills and promoted practical academic and social emotional learning opportunities. The qualitative analysis provided a more detailed picture of the type of instruction that was offered in each of the two classrooms. Although there were differences in instructional areas addressed by each teacher, both classrooms provided practice in reading and other literacy skills and incorporated other key elements of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience that contributed to preventing summer reading loss (McCombs et al., 2011). In Chapter V, a discussion of the findings as well as implications of the study and recommendations for future research will be presented.

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION

## Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods quasi-experimental study was to investigate the impact of a six-week summer reading enrichment intervention on the reading achievement of a group of elementary age students from low income families in an effort to prevent summer reading loss (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007). The program involved in this study was referred to as the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (a pseudonym). The study also investigated whether there was a correlation between the attendance rate of the student participants and their gain in reading achievement. This study also examined the nature of effective instructional practices utilized by the teachers of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. This summer program targeted primarily second graders, along with some returning third and fourth graders who had previously attended the program the previous school year and/or summer. All participating students were reading at their respective grade level expectancy.

This study sought to respond to the following research questions:

1. What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?

2. Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance (as measured by the total number of days present) in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?
3. What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

The quantitative data associated with this study involved the retrieval of archived NWEA MAP Reading scores and Acuity Predictive English Language Arts scores of the participating students in the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience (i.e., the experimental group) and their counterparts who qualified but chose not to participate (i.e., the control group). The scores were analyzed to determine if there was a gain in reading achievement for students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Moreover, the difference between the mean in reading achievement of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student participants was compared to that of the group of non-participating students (i.e., control group) to determine if a statistical significance existed.

Additional quantitative analysis involved the collection of student attendance records from the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. More specifically, of interest to this researcher was the total number of days each student was present from the possible 23 days that the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was in session. The collected data was utilized to determine if there was a relationship between the students' rate of attendance (i.e., total number of days present at the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience) and gain in reading achievement.

Qualitative data collected for this study involved teacher interview transcripts and archived classroom and program artifacts provided by the teachers of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. The responses from each of the structured teacher interviews and the content of the submitted classroom and program artifacts were analyzed to gain insight into the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers. More specifically, the collected data was organized along themes related to each teacher's use of effective instructional practices and the literacy activities they provided to their students along with student access to print and selection of books, monitoring of student progress, literacy home practices, classroom procedures/routines and enrichment activities. The National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards were utilized as a reference to analyze the effectiveness of the summer programming features (Source: National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards, referenced by McCombs et al., 2011).

## Discussion of Findings

Research studies have revealed the harsh realities of the cumulative impact of summer break on the reading/learning loss of children, particularly those from low income families (Alexander et al., 2007; Cooper et al., 1996) and their limited access to print (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Heyns, 1978; Neuman & Celano, 2001). Inequities in enrichment experiences and learning opportunities available for children living in poverty further impacts the effect of summer learning loss and widens the income achievement gap (Alexander et al., 2007; Alexander et al., 2001; Cooper et al., 1996; Entwisle et al., 1997).

The findings of several studies including a recent meta-analysis of research on home and school summer reading interventions from 1998 to 2011 suggest that summer reading interventions are more likely to have positive effects on the reading skills of children of low-income status than their middle or higher income peers (Kim & White, 2008; Kim & Quinn, 2013). An earlier meta-analysis indicated that middle-income students had stronger effects from summer school participation than their lower-income counterparts (Cooper et al., 2000).

The findings of this study revealed that the student participants of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience made gains in their reading achievement as measured from Spring MAP (pretest) to Summer MAP (posttest) Reading RIT scores. However, since the MAP assessment was discontinued by the participating district at the end of the summer 2013, it was not possible to re-administer the MAP to the control group to use as a posttest measure to compare the mean gain of the two groups. Instead, it was necessary to select a different type of statistical analysis, an analysis of covariance, using the Fall 2013 assessment data from the Acuity English Language Arts scores of the two groups to address research question 1.

Through an analysis of covariance, the difference between their average mean in reading achievement of the experimental group, as measured by the Fall 2013 Acuity English Language Arts score collected following the intervention, was compared to that of the control group, while controlling for a covariate, MAP Spring 2013 Reading RIT score, the difference was not statistically significant.

Focusing only on the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience participating students (i.e., the experimental group), an additional analysis was conducted using a

Pearson Correlation to determine if a relationship existed between the students' rate of attendance and their mean gain in reading achievement as measured by the difference from the MAP pre to post Reading RIT scores. The results of that statistical analysis indicated that a low correlation was revealed between the students' rate of attendance and their gain in reading achievement and it was determined that there was not a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

The results from the qualitative data provided insight into the nature of the effective instructional practices utilized by the teachers and the type of literacy activities the students were engaged in during their participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. A set of quality standards were provided by the National Summer Learning Association to serve as a reference of recommended features of quality summer learning programs (National Summer Learning Association, referenced by McCombs et al., 2011).

## Quantitative Analysis Findings

An analysis of covariance was utilized to determine if the difference between the group mean of the Acuity English Language Arts scores of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience participating students (i.e., the experimental group) and that of the non-participating students (i.e., control group) was statistically significant, while controlling for the covariant, the Spring 2013 MAP Reading RIT scores. The covariant was used to control for initial group differences on the MAP Reading RIT scores measured before the intervention.

While the mean Acuity score of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience experimental group was greater than that of the control group, 424.94 and 388.53,

respectively, the reported difference in the mean Acuity reading scores between the two groups, when controlling for initial differences of the covariant MAP Reading RIT scores, was not considered statistically significant at the .05 level. The results from the analysis of covariance revealed a between-group variance in the Acuity score with a F value=.381, p value=.539.

Upon closer examination of the covariant, the Spring MAP Reading RIT scores for the two groups, a significant difference was noted between the mean between the two groups before the intervention was conducted. That is, while the control group MAP reading scores indicated a M=191.5, SD=9.7, the experimental group MAP Reading RIT scores resulted in a M=197.7, SD=12.8). The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was a voluntary program offered to selected students. The difference in the group means prior to the intervention may be indicative of some distinguishing characteristics of those who chose to participate in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience, such as being more conscientious and committed learners and readers.

Since the effects of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience on the reading achievement of the participating students were not considered statistically significant, consideration should be given to the possibility that the intervention indeed could have had a statistically significant effect had it been of longer duration. The 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience was offered for a period of 23 days.

Another possible factor to consider is the sample size. It is possible that the mean difference would have reached a level of significance with the utilization of a larger sample size. There is a possibility that a large sample size would have been more

sensitive in detecting a statistically significant gain in reading scores for the participating students.

To determine if there was a relationship between the attendance rate of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student participants (i.e., number of days present) and their gain in reading achievement, a Pearson Correlation was conducted. The results of the statistical analysis revealed a Pearson Correlation coefficient=.058; p-value=.384, which did not reveal a positive correlation between the two variables of attendance and gain in reading achievement.

Similar to the previous discussion of the experimental possibilities to consider, it is also possible that sample size and intervention duration affected the second set of statistical analyses. While the Pearson Correlation results were not considered statistically significant, a positive correlation may indeed be revealed between attendance and mean achievement gain from this intervention had it been offered for a longer duration. That is, a positive relationship between student attendance and gain in reading achievement may indeed have become evident by extending the length of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience beyond the current total of 23 sessions. There was only a seven day range from the highest to the lowest total days of student attendance at the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

## Qualitative Analysis Findings

To shed light on the nature of the instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers, a qualitative analysis was conducted on the data collected which revealed four thematic categories: (1) using effective literacy

instructional practices, (2) encouraging students to read at school and home, (3) interacting with students, and (4) using effective instructional practices.

**Effective Literacy Instructional Practices**

Theme 1 revealed evidence that both teachers provided opportunities for their students to read, write and engage in discussion through a variety of classroom literacy activities which are recognized as recommended practices to build reading skills (NRP, 2000). The National Reading Panel's review of research indicated support of repeated reading and guided oral reading as ways to improve fluency and overall reading achievement (NRP, 2000). Teacher A indicated that she provided time for students to practice reading passages and poems and singing patriotic songs fluently. Teacher A also modeled fluent reading and strategic thinking during whole class think alouds and read alouds on average of 30 minutes per day.

Both classrooms incorporated instruction on various reading comprehension strategies, provided exposure to a variety of literature and offered students choice in their reading selection. Teacher A worked on building comprehension and vocabulary skills. Teacher B guided her students to activate their prior knowledge, identify fact vs. opinion and make predictions about what would happen next to the characters in the story.

**Encouraging Students to Read at School and Home**

Theme 2 provided a description of how students were encouraged to read at school and home. Reading was promoted in a variety of ways during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Participating students made weekly visits to the library, had reading assignments in class, and utilized available technology to enhance literacy activities. Students were permitted to check out three books each week from the local

library to read at home and school. Both teachers showed an interest in getting to know about their students' interests and feelings about reading from administering reading interest inventories to them. Homework was not assigned but reading was encouraged of the students. Both Teacher A and B used class time to read for pleasure, to research topics discussed in class and to learn about subjects and historical figures to prepare for upcoming field trips.

**Interacting with Students**

Theme 3 detailed how the teachers interacted with their students. They engaged their students in classroom discussions on various topics, shared in the enrichment experiences and guided students to select books at the appropriate level of text. Teachers were able to track student progress and the amount of time spent reading on the myON reader system. Teacher A indicated that she monitored what her students were reading and the amount of reading they engaged in by reviewing their completed reading logs. Teacher A also interacted with her students through read alouds and think alouds.

Both teachers encouraged students to read at home. Communication was sent home to parents to offer suggestions of ways to promote reading in fun ways. Teacher A also promoted reading by discussing with her class fun places to read during the summer.

**Using Effective Instructional Strategies**

Theme 4 provided evidence of research-based effective instructional strategies employed in both classrooms of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. From the list of recommended instructional practices that promote student achievement based on a meta-analysis of existing research in the field (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001), the participating students engaged in activities that involved comparing and contrasting,

identifying cause and effect, note taking, and working on synonyms and antonyms. Teacher A indicated that she generated hypotheses and made predictions with her students of what would happen next to the characters in the story through discussions and think alouds.

No homework was assigned to the students during the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. All students were encouraged to read and complete their reading logs from the library summer reading program. Teacher A also provided her students with a journal to keep track of their reading in addition to the library reading log. There was no apparent evidence of student objectives having been posted or goal setting having been conducted nor any feedback provided to the students. Progress monitoring entailed review of the myON data which was only available for the last two weeks of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Reading logs were reportedly reviewed by the teachers but records were not kept for this researcher to review the amount of reading or the number of books that were read by the students. Teacher A indicated that her students read five books per week and some were novels.

**National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards**

A set of quality standards were provided by the National Summer Learning Association to serve as a reference of recommended features of quality summer learning programs (National Summer Learning Association, referenced by McCombs et al., 2011). The first set of standards relate to the Program Infrastructure. Upon review of available information related to the planning and implementation of the program, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience had an identified mission to promote summer reading and increase access to text for students of low-income families. Goals of the program

were aligned with the district's plan related to Student Achievement and Equity which was shared with key stakeholders (i.e., parents, administrators, Board of Education officials),

The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience utilized 92 hours of programming time. This total would constitute a sufficient amount of time devoted to the academic and developmental outcomes based on a reference made to McLaughlin and Pitcock's (2009) who recommended a total of 80-hours minimum but did not reach the level recommended by Winship et al. (2005) of 360 hours, both noted by McCombs et al. (2011).

Experienced certified teachers were recruited who were knowledgeable of district curriculum and instructional expectations related to Reading and Language Arts Standards. Program planning was conducted in advance of the start of the summer session and promoted partnerships with key organizations (i.e., public library, local museums/centers, and bookstore). An integrated service plan was created that promoted academic achievement and social/emotional/healthy development as well as a "culture" that was aimed to be enjoyable and offer some exciting summer fun.

The Summer Reading Enrichment Experience offered a rich variety of opportunities for students not only to read, but also to visit and experience firsthand locations in the community that are of a historic, scientific, artistic/cultural or recreational nature. Ninety four percent of the participating student respondents shared positive comments about their experience on one or more of the field trips in their personal reflection. Over 50% of the students indicated their enjoyment in visiting the library and reading to therapy dogs, going on various field trips, having time to play (e.g., checkers, outdoor, I Pads) and making new friends.

**Student Reflections**

The results from the qualitative data provided insight into the nature of the effective instructional practices utilized by the teachers and the type of literacy activities the students were engaged in during their participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. Based on the analysis of the student reflections, many students found the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience to be beneficial in providing them ample opportunity to read and gain access to books. Based on their comments, many students indicated that they particularly enjoyed the variety of reading activities and projects, the enrichment experiences as well as the opportunity to interact with their teachers and fellow classmates.

The findings from the qualitative analysis of teacher interview responses and available program and classroom content revealed that a summer programming plan was developed and executed that promoted summer reading and offered enrichment experiences for the participating students through coordination of district services (i.e., daily food service of breakfast and lunch, daily transportation and special field trip requests, access to air-conditioned classrooms and technology) and in partnership with community organizations (i.e., public library, local museums).

From a review of the available data provided to this researcher and through the analysis of the collected responses and classroom and program artifacts, it was evident that a variety of effective instructional practices were utilized within the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience classrooms to build literacy skills, promote reading and ensure increased access to print for the student participants. Upon close examination, there appeared to be noted differences between the two classrooms in terms of the type of

instruction offered and the strategies used to promote literacy skills. The teachers were not required to submit lesson plans and programming details and, therefore, this researcher did not have full access to instructional information. One of the teachers provided a daily class schedule which provided some insight into how time was spent each day. Unfortunately, there was no way to confirm that the events were executed in the order in which they were intended. Actual observations and review of student reading logs and assignments and projects would have provided a fuller picture of the teachers' and students' perspective of their involvement in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

From this study's qualitative analysis, suggested opportunities for development and refinement of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience were identified from the following areas in alignment with the National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards:

> Staff development and advancement before, during and after the program
> Program assesses young people's needs early in the program and develops individualized strategies for meeting program goals
> Program builds and maintains strong linkages with families
> Activity planning and execution shows intentional focus on meeting learning goals and use of research-based instructional methods. (National Summer Learning Association Quality Standards, referenced in McCombs et al., 2011, p. 35)

By incorporating the above steps, the benefits of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience will likely be further reinforced. To summarize, the following steps may ensure a more coordinated effort in preventing reading and learning loss: engage in shared instructional planning between the two classrooms in terms of creating lesson plans, scaffolding support for students in their use of specific skills such as using multiple

comprehension strategies and making predictions (White & Kim, 2013), setting goals, monitoring student progress, and providing research-based instructional strategies (Marzano et al., 2001), meeting the needs of individual participating students and building partnership with families (McCombs et al., 2011).

## Ideas for Future Research

The results from this study are encouraging in promoting summer reading and offering enrichment experiences for students from low-income families and contributing in the effort to close the income achievement gap by combating the cumulative effects of summer reading/learning loss on students of low income status (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001). Participating students engaged in a variety of reading and other literacy activities and gained access to books throughout their involvement in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

From the results of this study, the participating district is strongly encouraged to extend the summer program for a longer duration and replicate the analysis to determine if lengthening the program will lead to a more significant impact on reading achievement gain. Moreover, this researcher encourages consideration of the suggested recommendations based on the quality standards provided by the National Summer Learning Association (referenced in McCombs et al., 2011). Use of a consistent assessment tool measuring reading achievement or specific targeted reading skills across time is also recommended to aid in progress monitoring and compare gains between the group receiving the intervention and the control group (i.e., those who chose not to participate).

While the mean reading achievement gain of the participating students was not considered statistically significant when compared to the control group, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study on those participating students who accepted the district's invitation to continue in the program and are presently attending the weekly after-school reading enrichment experience during the school year and even possibly into the summer of 2014. Similar to this study, data from a naturally-occurring control group would be available from that of qualifying students who were invited but chose to not participate. This would also allow the opportunity to determine if a reading achievement gain of the participating students was considered statistically significant from the intervention with a longer duration.

Finally, it may be worthwhile to investigate current recruiting practices utilized by the district and consider additional ways to increase the number of male enrollees. Perhaps, reexamining enrichment experiences and adding some options to appeal to young boys would prove worthwhile. Considering that low-income males are disproportionately vulnerable for future academic challenges (NAEP, 2011), a more deliberate effort to recruit male participants is encouraged.

Differences may exist from one teacher's instructional practices to the other thereby affecting the actual amount of time spent on specific literacy activities and the participating students' experiences. Future studies should attempt to quantify such practices and examine each individual classroom to examine the effectiveness of teacher style and choice of instructional practices on student achievement gain.

## Implications for Practice and Research

From this study, come implications for practice and research. For one, stronger efforts should be employed to preserve existing data that could be used for future research purposes. For example, in this study, participating students read books throughout the summer and maintained a record of their daily reading. This type of data could prove invaluable in better understanding the literacy habits of students and their choice of reading materials. Likewise, similar information could be requested from students in general over the summer to gain insight into the amount of reading that is completed naturally.

From recent research studying the effects of summer reading in the classroom and at home on low-income students' reading achievement, the importance of matching books to the appropriate reading level and interest of the reader has been suggested (White & Kim, 2008; White & Kim, 2013). It would behoove teachers and parents of elementary-age students, to acquire the necessary skills and tools to appropriately guide students to select text that are at the "just-right" level and interest area.

With the focus on summer learning, particularly as it impacts the achievement of students of low-income status, the discussion of extending the school year must be considered (McCombs et al., 2011). This researcher calls for a re-examination of the current traditional nine-month calendar to generate viable and economical options for districts to consider, particularly those serving a high percent of students living in poverty.

## Limitations

Several factors were recognized as threatening the internal validity of this study. The use of two different assessment measurement tools may threaten internal validity of this study. The district made the decision to change to Acuity InFormative Assessment Systems for the 2013-2014 School Year from the one used the previous school year, namely, NWEA MAP. 2013 Spring and Summer NWEA MAP Reading RIT scores were used as pre-ntervention and post-intervention measures of the one-group non-experimental design. The number of teachers interviewed is recognized as being small due to the natural limit of two teachers employed for the implementation of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

History may be a threat to the internal validity of the experimental one group design utilized to answer research question 2. Utilizing a one group pre- post-non-experimental group design raises the possibilities of a threat to internal validity. That is, the effect that is attributed to the intervention (i.e., Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention) may in fact be due to some unanticipated event rather than the intervention which is unknown since there is no control group (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Another threat to the internal validity may be due to the experimental design since it utilizes an intervention of short duration (23 days). With a longer duration, the effects of the intervention may become more apparent and reach a level of significance. Sample size may also pose a threat to the internal validity. That is, had a larger sample size been utilized, it is possible that effect may have reached a level of significance.

Maturation is another threat to the internal validity of the one group design. The change in the experimental group could be due to normal development with the passage of time.

Pre-intervention testing occurred at school as part of the normal district assessment schedule. In terms of instrumentation, the assessment tools used for this study were administered via the computer in a standardized manner. While the administration of the actual assessment measure was controlled, it is possible that threats to validity posed a threat in the variations in the testing conditions across the schools in the district in terms of extraneous noise, technology matters, style of test proctors and other distractors (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Selection is another possible threat to the internal validity of this study since it may be that the two groups were not equivalent at the beginning of the study. Participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience intervention was entirely voluntary and families decided whether or not to accept the invitation to participate. The size of the experimental and control groups was limited to 32 and 36 students, respectively. Therefore, the size of student enrolment and the self-selection of participation in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Schedule were determined in advance of the conception of this study (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

It is possible due to the lack of randomization of the design of the two groups there was a difference in the two groups based on whether or not they decided to enroll their child in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. One possibility is that the families of students who chose to participate were more interested in reading than those

who did not participate. It may be the students themselves enjoy reading more than the non-participants.

This study was conducted utilizing an established district program with a particular schedule in place and intact groups already formed.

Related to the qualitative aspect of this research, this researcher was not involved in the program while it was in session. Available data was requested from the teachers and the participating district. This researcher gained insight into each of the teacher's practice strictly from the transcribed responses to the structured interview responses and collected artifacts.

## Summary

In summary, the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience provided students of low-income status opportunities to read a variety of text, practice literacy skills and explore places of special significance within their local community to open up their minds to wonder and curiosity in far-reaching and long lasting ways. It is hoped that the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience led the participating students to embrace reading as an invaluable tool to connect with the world around them.

The implication of this study and review of available research supports the availability of programs such as the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience program to serve students of low-income to prevent summer reading loss (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2010; Kim & Quinn, 2013; McCombs et al., 2011). The district under study offers continuity of support to the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience participating students who choose to accept the invitation to continue in the reading

enrichment experience during the upcoming school year as well as the future summer break if there is availability of slots.

# APPENDIX A

## DISTRICT INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Date

Administrator Name
School District Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Administrator Name:

I am writing this letter to request permission to conduct a research study in your district and invite the participation of the district in this project. My name is Angela Sopko and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago. My strong interest is to conduct a research study to examine the summer literacy and learning opportunities offered through the district's 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and the impact that the program had on the reading achievement of students who participated in the program. By conducting this research, I hope to contribute knowledge on effective ways to extend reading and learning opportunities for students during the summer months to positively impact student reading achievement.

In terms of the district's participation in this research study, an examination of archived student assessment results, 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience student attendance records and Program artifacts would be required along with permitting this researcher to conduct interviews with the two district staff members who served as instructors for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. More specifically, the archived assessment data being requested will include Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) 2012 – 2013 Reading Assessment results, Acuity Fall 2013 Reading Assessment results; attendance records, student reading logs, lesson plans, student work products and other program artifacts related to the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

The following research questions that will be guiding this study are:

1. What is the reading achievement gain of students who participated in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience?
2. Is there a correlation between the student participants' rate of attendance in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and their gain in reading achievement?
3. What is the nature of effective instructional practices of the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers?

This research project is considered to be a mixed methods study. While data from the archived assessment scores will be used to calculate the reading gains of participating students of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and a group of non-participating students with similar backgrounds (racial/ethnic, gender, grade level, socioeconomic status and performing adequately academically for grade level based on assessment data); teacher interviews, attendance records and Program artifacts will be

used to answer research questions related to correlating the rate of attendance during the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience and gains in reading achievement as well as gaining information on the nature of effective instructional practices of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods will be important in gaining an understanding of the impact of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience on the reading gains of students who participated in the Program.

Please be reassured that no student or teacher names will be associated with the data set and a coding system will be used to assign random numbers to a class data set and each participant. A list of the students' and teachers' names will be kept in a secure locked filing cabinet in this researcher's office. All data will be maintained with the utmost confidentiality. Any identifying information that could reveal the school district, teachers, or students will be modified or removed from the data and any subsequent reporting of results.

Permission for this researcher to contact the two teachers involved in the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience is being requested of the district. Following securing the permission of the district, I will contact the two teachers who served as instructors for the Program and ask for their consent to participate in this study. However, individual teacher participation is completely voluntary, and teachers are free to take part or decline to participate without any penalty or prejudice from the researcher, building administrators, or district administrators.

If you should have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me at asopko@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Diane Morrison at dmorri@luc.edu.

Sincerely,

Angela Sopko
Doctoral Candidate
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX B

DISTRICT CONSENT FORM

Date:

DISTRICT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Your district has been requested to participate in a research project being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation study. As note in the content of the consent form, the purpose of the proposed investigation is to examine the effectiveness of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Program on students in preventing summer reading loss. The nature of the district's participation requires sharing archived student assessment results and Program artifacts as well as permitting this researcher to conduct an individually audiotaped interview with each teacher who served as instructor for the Summer Reading Enrichment Program this summer.

By granting approval, the district is authorizing Mrs. Sopko to access archived student assessment data for analysis in this study. More specifically, the archived assessment data being requested will include Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) 2012 – 2013 Reading Assessment results, Acuity Fall 2013 Reading Assessment results; attendance records, student reading logs, lesson plans, student work products and other program artifacts related to the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. I have been informed that the requested MAP Assessment data from the 2012-2013 and Acuity Assessment data from the 2013-2014 school year (Fall 2013 only) will be utilized for data analysis in the research study being conducted by Mrs. Sopko.

In addition, the district gives permission for the two district staff members who served as instructors for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Program to be contacted to request their participation in the study. Each of the two instructors from the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience will be requested to participate in an individual, structured interview with the researcher. In addition, any available program artifacts will be requested for review. However, the researcher is aware that individual teacher participation is completely voluntary, and teachers are free to take part or decline to participate without any penalty or prejudice from the researcher or the district. It was explained that the focus of the interviews will be to collect information on instructional practices utilized by the teachers during the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. The time required for each teacher to respond to the set of structured interview questions is expected to take approximately 45 minutes.

It has been explained that no student or teacher names will be associated with the data set and a coding system will be used to assign random numbers to a class data set and each participant. A list of the students' and teachers' names will be kept in a secure locked filing cabinet in this researcher's office. All data will be maintained with the utmost confidentiality. Any identifying information that could reveal the school district, teachers, or students will be modified or removed from the data and any subsequent reporting of results.

This letter serves as documentation that your school district agrees to provide student assessment data results for inclusion in dissertation research. In addition, the district will allow the researcher to learn more about the teachers' perceptions of the effects of the summer reading enrichment experience on the student participants' summer reading habits by conducting an individual interview with each the staff members who served as teachers for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Program. A copy of the Structured Teacher Interview Question Protocol is enclosed.

Sincerely,

Administrator Name
Official Administrator Title

Enclosure (Appendix D)

# APPENDIX C

# TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** A Summer Reading Enrichment Experience: One District's Effort to Prevent Summer Reading Loss
Researcher: Angela Sopko, Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Diane Morrison, Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Education Loyola University Chicago

**Introduction:**
You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Angela Sopko for a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Diane Morrison in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you served as an instructor for the 2013 Book Invaders Summer Reading Enrichment Experience. You are one of two teachers being requested to take part in the proposed study since you served as instructor for the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**
The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Program in preventing summer reading loss. The study will also examine the correlation between rate of student attendance and gain in reading achievement. Another aspect of this study is to explore the instructional practices of the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience teachers.

**Procedures:**
If you agree to participate in the study, you will give permission for the researcher to conduct a structured interview with you. The focus of the interview will be to collect information on the instructional practices utilized during the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Program. You will also be asked to share a copy of any available artifacts that you might have collected during the Program including a schedule of events, lesson plans, reflections/notes, student assignments or work products.

**Risks/Benefits:**
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond some possible stress involved in responding to question that the researcher asks of you and taking time out of your day to be interviewed. However, the interview should only take approximately 45 minutes to respond to the set of questions.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, however, it is hoped that this research will add to the body of knowledge on effective programming to prevent summer reading loss.

**Confidentiality:**
(1)You will be assigned a random participant number. After the interview is completed, your responses will be categorized and your name will no longer be connected to the interview responses or student data. The data collected from the interview or copies of teacher and/or student artifacts will only be identified with your randomly assigned number.
(2)The transcribed interview responses will remain confidential and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secured location. The researcher will be the only one with access to the information and it will be destroyed at the completion of this study, which will occur within the next year.
(3)The results of this research study will be published, but any information that could personally identify you or your school district will be changed or removed from the data.

**Voluntary Participation:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will be respected and will not affect your relationship with this researcher, your school district, or with Loyola University Chicago.

**Contacts and Questions:**
If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Angela Sopko at asopko@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Diane Morrison at dmorri@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:**
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

# APPENDIX D

# STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience
Structured Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Describe the different types of literacy activities that the students engaged in during the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Experience: In your response, please explain how students performed each task (i.e., independently, in small groups or as a whole class), what type of opportunities there were for **student choice**, and how you **interacted with the students during each type of activity:**

Reading Fluency:

Phonics:

Word work:

Vocabulary:

Reading comprehension:

Writing:

Discussion/Speaking:

2. Were the students instructed to complete any homework assignments during their participation in the Program? Yes/No. If yes, describe the type of homework assigned, how often was this type of assignment given (daily/weekly)? Do you have documentation of completed homework by each student?

3. How many books, on average, did each student read per week?

4. How were books selected for each student in your Summer Reading Enrichment Experience Classroom?

5. How did you track student progress in Reading?

6. Please share any additional information about your literacy instructional practices during the 2013 Summer Reading Enrichment Program that you feel made a difference for your students in their reading skills?

Available lesson plans, schedule of field trips and classroom events and other instructional artifacts, student work products or teacher notes/reflections from the Summer Reading Enrichment Experience are of interest to this researcher. Please share any available documents for review.

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# VITA

Angela R. Mennella Sopko is the daughter of John Salvatore and Rosaria Colletti Mennella. Angela was born in Chicago, Illinois where she resided with her parents and four siblings throughout her entire childhood. Angela attended Saint Peter Canisius Catholic Elementary School and Madonna Catholic High School for Girls, both located in Chicago. In 1980, she graduated from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Angela was the 1980 recipient of the Volturno Humanitarian Award at Bradley University. As an undergraduate student, Angela and a fellow classmate assisted Dr. Claire Etaugh, Professor of Psychology, in a research study which resulted in the following publication: Etaugh, C., Levine, D., & Mennella, A. (1984). Development of sex biases in children: 40 years later. *Sex Roles, 10*(11/12), 913-924.

In 1984, Angela earned a Master of Education degree in Foundations: School Psychology from Loyola University Chicago. As a graduate student, she served a graduate assistantship under Ronald Morgan, Ph.D. and Joy Rogers, Ph.D. In 1982, Angela was inducted as a member of both the Phi Delta Kappa Professional Fraternity in Education and the Alpha Sigma Nu National Jesuit Honor Society.

Angela has worked in the field of education for over 24 years. She began her career as a school psychologist, initially, at DuPage West Cook Regional Special Education District for the first four years of her career and then at Northern Suburban

Special Education District (NSSED) for over ten years. In 2000, she was the recipient of the Region 7 Practitioner of the Year Award from the Illinois School Psychologist Association.

Angela's interest in administration and educational leadership led to her enrollment in the School Administrative Certificate Program at Loyola University Chicago where she earned a Type 75 School Administration Certification. In 2005, she began her experience in administration serving as Assistant Principal/Student Services Coordinator at South Park Elementary School in Deerfield School District 109 in Lake County, Illinois. During her tenure in District 109, Angela served on several district-wide committees including the Literacy Committee, Curriculum Council, and the Social Emotional Learning Committee.

Since 2010, Angela has been Principal of Empire Elementary School in Freeport, Illinois. She has been active on several district-wide committees including the English Language Arts Committee, the New Generation Science Standards Committee, the Informal Joint Teacher Evaluation Committee and the Uniformity of Dress Committee. Her current professional affiliations include the Illinois Principals Association, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Angela is married to Michael and they have three children – Jessica, Caroline and Michael. She and her family reside in the Chicagoland area.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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