Dissertations   Theses and Dissertations

2017

Wilson Fundations Program Evaluation for an Urban Kindergarten Setting

Tonika Rene' Terrell
Loyola University Chicago

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

WILSON FUNDATIONS PROGRAM EVALUATION

FOR AN URBAN KINDERGARTEN SETTING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BY

TONIKA R. TERRELL

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge and thank my first teachers, my parents, Edna Mae Coats-Terrell and Hosea Terrell, Jr. for always encouraging me to strive for success and believing in my ability to achieve whatever I so desired, from a very young age. There is not a day that goes by without me thinking about my mother. She was an exceptional woman, who possessed one of the most compassionate hearts of all time. She was the fourth oldest of 16 children and was among the first two of her family members to attend and graduate from college. She encouraged her your younger siblings to attend as well. I am also thankful for the unwavering support I received from both of my brothers, Frederick Z. Terrell and Dr. Antuan Y. Terrell, who thought and treated me as if I were God's gift to this universe. Though my immediate family members are now all deceased, I would not have been able to pursue this intellectual journey without the constant reminder of their inspiration to keep pushing forward.

My extended family members have also provided stanch support to me from the beginning to the end of this academic pursuit and achievement. My Uncle Thomas and Aunt Grace Coats were the first to rally their support and supplied me with an entire technology package to begin my studies. My cousin, Montrelle Baldwin, invited me to live with her in Michigan to be near Chicago for the weekly drive to class, until I decided to relocate to the Chicago area. My Uncle Arnold Coats was always willing to lend a helping hand, supporting me throughout the entire process without hesitation or

students was really an easy one. I really thank all members of this dissertation committee for the individual and collective roles you played in helping me to achieve this doctorate. The completion of this degree would not have been possible without all your encouragement, wisdom, and assistance. Thank you so very much for helping me to achieve this professional dream.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Camala L. Coats, who is my number one

supporter. The receipt of this doctorate degree is only possible due to her continuous

love and enduring support. She believed in me and my abilities, even when my medical

complications got the best of me and I wanted so desperately to throw in the towel and

just give up! She encouraged me to remain steadfast to the accomplishment of this

doctorate and vowed to help me every step of the way. Thanks to our Heavenly Father. I

made it! Love you much!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Many urban schools, throughout the United States of America, experience major academic challenges in preparing Kindergarten students to become proficient readers, to achieve academic success throughout the formal educational process. The purpose of this research study was to examine how the implementation of the Wilson Fundations Program, in an urban Kindergarten setting, impacted student literacy achievement and growth. The Wilson Fundations Program is a systematic, explicit, and highly structured multi-sensory language program for students in K-3 grade. The Wilson Fundations is based on principles of the Wilson Reading System which provides instruction for a comprehensive reading, spelling, and handwriting program. The Wilson Fundations Program is designed to complement existing literature-based instructional reading programs in various group settings: general education programs, small group instruction, or learning-disabled student populations for both prevention and early intervention strategies. The Wilson Fundations Program emphasize phonemic awareness, alphabet awareness, phonological awareness, decoding skills, spelling, and vocabulary development. The findings of this study suggest the Wilson Fundations Program is an effective instructional resource to use with urban kindergarten students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the United States of America (U.S.A.), kindergarten marks the beginning of

most five-year-old children's first formal year of academic instruction (Hollowell, 2017;

Snow, 2012). During kindergarten, "children acquire the reading knowledge needed to

prepare them for the future of schooling" (Denton, West & Watson, 2003). Many

researchers contend that the skills taught in kindergarten today look more like the skills

taught in first grade a decade or two ago, especially when it comes to reading (Allphin,

2016). Several researchers now contend that the American kindergarten experience has

become much more rigorous and academic – at the expense of a traditional play-based

instructional environment (Walker, 2015, p. 1). A literal interpretation of the word play

is often misinterpreted by individuals with less knowledge in early childhood

development because many educational experts challenge that play is more than just fun

– as child development and play are connected. Many pediatricians, psychiatrists, and

educators would agree that play is an essential and integral component of child

development, essentially, because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and

emotional well-being of a child (Ginsburg, 2007). Many Early Childhood reading

experts assert that young children are meant to play and that literacy and play do not have

to be mutually exclusive, because literacy-learning naturally supports and promotes

creative and inventive play. Unfortunately, "the pressures on schools to prepare children

for testing in third grade has helped to eradicate the block area and dress up center from the kindergarten classroom" (Curwood, 2007, p. 1). Skepticism about play is compounded by the widespread assumption that the earlier children begin to master the basic elements of reading, such as phonics and letter recognition, the more likely they are to succeed in school (Miller & Almon, 2009). Time for free play has been markedly reduced for many children because schools insist there is plenty of time for children to play at home (Ginsburg, 2007). The huge debate of whether "an academic-based" or "play-based" kindergarten is more appropriate continues to mount (Miller & Almon, 2009). Some experts suggest that good kindergarten teachers can overlap and combine both approaches across subject and content areas. The consensus of these advanced kindergarten classes suggest that the instructions offer highly prescriptive curricula which is geared to be aligned with the new state standards in states and districts. Therefore, the kindergarten curriculum is commonly linked to the selected standardized tests utilized in the school district. But other researchers claim that by beginning the first-grade reading curriculum in kindergarten, schools will effectively gain an extra year of instruction which stands to narrow the achievement gap between kindergarten students from lower socioeconomic environments with peers from more affluent backgrounds (Curwood, 2007).

In response to critics who maintain play is not a vital part of the kindergarten curriculum, educators from the American Montessori Society target their line of reasoning. The Montessori Method "of classroom instruction has been time tested, for over one hundred years of success, in diverse cultures throughout the world" (American

Montessori Society, 2016, p. 1). Maria Montessori was an internationally known Italian physician and educator whose philosophy of education built on the many ways children naturally learn. The "Montessori method of education is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood" (p. 1). Research shows that "children who engage in complex forms of socio-dramatic play have greater language skills than non-players, better social skills, more empathy, more imagination, and more of subtle capacity to know more self-control and higher levels of thinking" (p. 1). The American Montessori Society offers six benefits associated with the Montessori approach to education:

> each child is valued as a unique individual; Montessori students develop order, coordination, concentration, and independence at an early age; students are part of a close caring community; Montessori students enjoy freedom with limits; students are supported in becoming active seekers of knowledge, and self-correction and self-assessment are an integral part of the Montessori classroom approach. (p. 2)

The Montessori classroom is "composed of students whose ages typically span over three years which explains why it is common to see students of different ages working together" (p. 3). The teacher thoughtfully prepares a classroom environment with materials and activities that entice her students to learn. The "teacher serves as a guide to student learning, but the children's interaction with what the environment should offer is what enables learning to occur" (p. 6). In the Montessori classroom, there are well-defined spaces for each subject and each part of the curriculum. The "child learning

materials are displayed on accessible shelves, fostering independence as students go about their work" (p. 5). Many classrooms have areas in the class that are devoted to peace and reflection, as well. Essentially, the Montessori classroom creates a learning environment that accommodates choice. The Montessori classroom environment is a stellar example of how some educators ensure that play is respected and utilized as the instructors seek to promote balance in their student's lives to create a learning environment that promotes optimal cognitive developmental milestones. Table 1 shows the comparison of the Montessori Method of instruction versus Traditional Education. This table provides a thorough laydown of the more diversified and stimulating advantages offered to students through the Montessori Method of instructions (A Child's Place Montessori School, 2016). Consequently, many scholars are concerned about how rapidly play is disappearing from kindergarten and early childhood education, which they feel violates long-established principles of child development. No matter which side of the play-based or academic-based educational controversy is victorious, the ultimate winner or loser of this debate are the students in which the education system serves, especially America's most vulnerable students who the results will affect the most, many whom are children of color from lower socioeconomic environments.

Table 1

Comparison of Montessori vs Traditional Education

Montessori	Traditional
1.Emphasis on cognitive structures and social development	1. Emphasis on rote knowledge and social development.
2. Teacher's role is unobtrusive; child actively participates in learning.	2. Teacher's role is dominant, active; child is a passive participant.
3. Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline.	3. Teacher is primary enforcer of external discipline.
4. Individual and group instruction adapts to each student's learning style.	4. Individual and group instruction conforms to the adult's teaching style.
5. Mixed age grouping.	5. Same age grouping.
6. Children encouraged to teach, collaborate, and help each other.	6. Most teaching done by teacher and collaboration is discouraged.
7. Child chooses own work from interests, abilities.	7. Curriculum structured with little regard for child's interests.
8. Child formulates concepts from self-teaching materials.	8. Child is guided to concepts by teacher.
9. Child works as long as she/he wants on chosen projects.	9. Child usually given specific time for work.
10. Child sets own learning pace to internalize information.	10. Instruction pace set by group norm or teacher.
11. Child spots own errors through feedback from material.	11. Errors corrected by teacher.
12. Learning is reinforced internally through child's own repetition of activity, internal feelings of success repetition.	12. Learning is reinforced externally by rewards, discouragements.
13. Multi-sensory materials for physical exploration development.	13. Few materials for sensory, concrete manipulation.
14. Organized program for learning care of self and self-care environment (shoe polishing, sink washing, etc.)	14. Little emphasis on instruction or classroom maintenance.

15. Child can work where she/he is comfortable, moves and talks at will (yet doesn't disturb others); group work is voluntary	15. Child assigned seat; encouraged to sit still and listen during group sessions.
16. Organized program for parents to understand the Montessori philosophy and participate in the learning process.	16. Voluntary parent involvement, often only as fundraisers, not participants in understanding the learning process

The consensus about kindergarten instruction in today's academic arena suggests that the "kindergarten curriculum picked up the academic pace when states adopted more rigorous expectations with Common Core State Standards" (Linnell-Olsen, 2016, p. 1). This advanced shift in academic instruction is perceived by educators as America's major push to make children more globally and academically competitive. Beginning reading instruction is an essential part of the kindergarten classroom experience. Though some students enter schools with some basic reading skills, this is an ideal time in a child's academic development to build the foundation for reading because early childhood education is crucial to later success in school and life in general. The general outlook in the kindergarten world is that while the age timetable has not changed significantly, legislative expectations of what children should achieve academically in kindergarten have (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Most progressive education researchers emphasize that by the end of the kindergarten school year, most students should be able to read grade-level books with fluency and understanding (Snow et al., 1998). The kindergarten teacher's main objective is to build reading skills and abilities to promote the process to comprehend the written word. Students can meet the reading goals set by the teacher, especially when

they are on track as they enter kindergarten. The state education department and individual school districts have their own set of prerequisite skills that are set for general reading expectations that most teachers share when it comes to kids entering and exiting kindergarten. Research studies have shown that students who learned to read in kindergarten were found to be superior in reading skills and all other educational indicators as measured later in their educational life.

Reading is a process that entails getting the meaning from print and developing knowledge (Snow et al., 1998). Before entering kindergarten, a student who is well prepared for the subject area reading should be able to do a number of academic activities: read his own name; recite all 26 letters of the alphabet; recognize some or all letters in the alphabet and produce the correct sound with accuracy; make words that rhyme; hold a book right side up with the spine on the left, front cover showing, recognize that the progression of text is left to right, top to bottom; echo simple text that is read to him; recognize that text holds meaning; and retell a favorite story (Allpin, 2016).

Unfortunately, not all children in society automatically achieves developmental milestones at the exact same time. Every child enters kindergarten at different academic levels and teachers expect a huge variation in the skills each student brings to the classroom. Some researchers maintain that many children are not developmentally ready to read in kindergarten (Snow et al., 1998; Straus, 2015). Thus, the continuous pressure of implementing the forever developing and rigorous standards lead many kindergarten teachers to resort to inappropriate didactic methods combined with frequent testing

(Carlsson-Paige, Bywater-McLaughlin, & Wolfsheimer-Almon, 2015). However, some scholars would argue that these "explicit and didactic instructional techniques provide the optimal learning opportunities for students to acquire sound mastery in reading," as well as, other subject content (Archer & Hughes, 2011, p. 1).

　　　　Researchers have found that the home environment is the biggest and most influential contributor to many children's kindergarten readiness skills and enables them to learn to read before entering kindergarten (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Kim, 2008; Snow et al., 1998). These home literacy experiences include, but are not limited to, frequent read-alouds and discussions; teaching alphabet letters and sounds; teaching sight or high-frequency words; making rhymes with words; listening to the child read; and engaging literacy learning activities (Rodriquez et al. 2009). "Families differ enormously in the level to which they provide a supportive environment for a child's literacy development" (Snow et al., p. 121). Researchers contend that reading opportunities provided at home coupled with early childhood teachers' instruction can provide a dynamic duo to optimize a child's reading experiences. Teachers should also provide a plethora of intentional literacy experiences in the classroom such as, reading to the students and discussing what is read, proving various shared reading experiences, listening to students read books, and supporting creative play in the educational environment (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Collaborative efforts of working on reading development at home and school often maximize and optimize student learning success in school and beyond. As a matter of fact, research and statistics have ironically demonstrated a strong correlation between education and salary attainment; higher educational levels yield higher monetary incomes

(Strauss, 2015, p. 1; Vilorio, 2016, p. 1). The salary differentiation between individuals who are and are not well educated appears to dictate the standard of life and living in adulthood.

Reading is foundational to all avenues of life and living, from both an academic and recreational perspective. The ultimate aspiration, in the academic arena throughout the world, entails everyone reading at an accomplished and proficient level. Reading, however, is often a major academic impediment, and is not easily attained by all. Research indicates that large numbers of inner-city children arrive in kindergarten behind before they even start (Center for Public Education, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Dufour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010; Payne, 2008; Snow et al., 1998). The research indicates that children who are most likely to have difficulty with literacy are those who begin school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas such as, oral language and background knowledge, phonological awareness and alphabet letter knowledge, and print awareness, and writing. Research asserts that what is most important for all children is that schools provide strong kindergarten literacy programs and effective intervention programs in kindergarten (Slavin, Lake, Davis & Madden, 2009). Reading is the single most important subject that influences the progression in other academic subject content areas, as well. Therefore, effective reading instruction and activities are paramount in the academic arena, as they are the gateway to all other academic subjects and essential for daily preservation and existence in today's modern society.

Unfortunately, individuals who are unable to read, often fail to perform well in other academic areas" as well (Rosenburg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2013). Even more astonishing, research has shown that, "two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare" (Gaille, 2017). It appears a more concerted effort needs to be implemented to promote accomplished learning and provide a world-class education for all children attending school in the U.S. The repercussion behind the inability to read proficiently by adulthood has debilitating consequences for struggling readers, as it relates to maintenance of daily existence in both professional and personal endeavors.

Illiteracy and U.S. Public Schools

Currently, public schools in America theoretically exist to help all children in grades K-12 – regardless of their financial, ethnic, or parent's political background – acquire the necessary skills and abilities to eventually become productive and independent citizens in adulthood. Darling-Hammond (1999) contends that "relatively few schools," in the U.S. "offer all their students a rich, active curriculum that teaches for understanding" (p. 7). This is especially the case with students who attend urban schools. Many students in low-income urban public schools encounter many notable long-term obstacles academically. Urban educational environments, in comparison to suburban schools, have a reputation for hiring unqualified and inexperienced teaching staffs (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2010; Howard, 2010; Payne, 2011). Subsequently, the lack of experience and the lack of instructional expertise are two major contributing factors to the instability of academic achievement among urban student populations. Many of these

academic challenges stem from consecutive years of inattentive and neglectful educational practices (Banks & Banks, 2010; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Noguera (2008) echoes a similar sentiment related to urban school age children – "poor students generally receive inferior services from schools and agencies that are in the inner city and poor children generally often have many unmet needs" (p. 11). Nieto (2011) agrees and insists that "biases and discrimination are manifested in schools is at the root of the history of inequality in the United States (U.S.) in general, and in U. S. schools in particular" (p. 51). She further contends that these biases are also manifested in other ways such as "in unequal funding, inadequate or stereotypical depictions of diversity in the curriculum and low expectations of students who embody differences" (p. 51).

Kindergarten Reading Assessments

"Kindergarten Readiness Assessments or Testing are given when a child is between the ages of four to six" (Linnell-Olsen, 2016, p.1). The tests are given before or within the first few weeks of a child starting school. The tests are used to measure how academically, socially, and developmentally ready a child is for kindergarten. Kindergarten Readiness Assessments are not the typical fill in the bubbles type of questions, but often asking the student a question or observing the child complete a task. The purpose of the assessment is to see "how well the child is prepared for kindergarten" (p. 3). Tests that are given in the first few weeks of school and their results are most likely used by the teacher for lesson planning for the remainder of the year. By giving

the readiness assessment, a kindergarten teacher can meet children where they are and tailor academic instruction to guide students through the kindergarten curriculum (p. 5).

Research has proven that students who enter kindergarten with limited exposure to the written word or poor literacy skills face long prospects against graduating and going on to postsecondary education or satisfying careers (Snow et al., 1998). This delayed development is reflected in low achievement across content and skill areas, as well as, substantial lower score on measures of intelligence when compared with students who are not identified with intellectual deficiencies. The creation of small intimate and compact settings of small group reading instruction in the classroom perceivably allows the students the opportunity to receive lots of individual and remedial academic instruction.

Explanations for early childhood reading delays are attributed to many factors. Struggling kindergarten readers often experience delays in the following literacy areas: decoding words, comprehension of text, reading fluency, and/or lack of interest in reading (Snow et al., 1998). Kindergarten students with reading performance significantly below grade level require more intense intervention and academic support than their conventional peers. Some possible solutions to these deficiencies entail tailoring the instruction and program instruction to match the students' areas of weakness. Specifically, at the elementary levels, a screening system that identifies struggling students, determine the nature of their problems, and is embedded in a comprehensive literacy program can help provide support to these students.

Implementation of Literacy Programs in U.S. Public Elementary Schools

Elementary schools across the nation have begun to put forth a more assertive, aggressive, and conscientious efforts to combat illiteracy among their student population. Currently, there are a significant number of reading intervention programs specifically tailored for elementary school students that have been identified to effectively aid beginning readers. Johns Hopkins University School of Education Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education reports there are three reading programs that have proven or demonstrated "strong evidence" of effectiveness for elementary school-aged students. The three reading programs that the Best Evidence Encyclopedia (BEE) educational researchers (Slavin et al., 2009) have identified as exemplar reading programs to advance students' literacy skills are: (a) Peer Assisted Learning Strategies, an Instructional Process Program, (b) Reading Reels, an Instructional Process Program, and (c) Success for All, Combined Curriculum and Integrated Process Program.

While more comprehensive reading evaluations are warranted in the U.S., the goal of this study is to conduct a program evaluation investigating the use of the Wilson Fundations at Grant Elementary School to help improve its implementation and ultimate benefits to the kindergarten students enrolled in this class. This evaluation process will help to the program evaluator and stakeholders "identify students meeting, exceeding, and falling below the target proficiency score on each skill or concept being assessed" in Reading, for the kindergarten student, as indicated by the Georgia States Standards in English Language Arts (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 71).

This study will encompass a program evaluation of an urban public elementary school. The general problem of interest for this evaluation is to determine the suitability of the adopted Wilson Fundations for the students enrolled in a kindergarten classroom in a lower income urban neighborhood school, located on the northeastern coast of Georgia. The underlying evidence in the literature recommending ways educators can support beginning readers is defensible, abundant and tremendously divergent. However, there is limited evidence that the Wilson Fundations is advantageous in improving reading skills and performance of beginning readers and struggling students. The evaluation process and outcomes will afford the stakeholders an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of the program for the subset of students enrolled in this kindergarten class.

This dissertation's program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations presents an optimal opportunity to investigate the effectiveness and value of this program to produce better academic outcomes for kindergarten student readers. This evaluation will further contribute to the existing local literature and information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the Wilson Fundations for kindergarten grade students in this urban elementary school. The information and data obtained from the evaluation of the Wilson Fundations will further assist the school administrators and classroom teacher to continuously investigate ways to improve reading instruction for the students enrolled in the kindergarten class. The results of this evaluation will also serve to provide relevant information on the Wilson Fundations and participating students' areas of strengths and weaknesses around reading.

Research Questions

1. To what extent was the Wilson Fundations implemented appropriately as designed by the author?

2. In what ways, could the implementation of the Wilson Fundations be improved at Grant Elementary School to derive the most benefit for the kindergarten students who participate in this program?

3. What was the overall academic effect of the Wilson Fundations on student learning in this kindergarten class?

Significance of the Study

This program evaluation is significant because it will enable the program evaluator and stakeholders to make a formative assessment regarding the components of the program which subsequently, may necessitate improvement modifications for ongoing program development (Patton, 2010). The collected and relevant data will also help the program administrators make the best use of the limited resources for this reading program's need to optimize benefits to the participating students. From the onset, the evaluator will use Daniel Stufflebeam's CIPP Model of Evaluation design to guide the formative and summative evaluations of the process and ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the evaluation process as active participants.

The Wilson Language Training Corporation (2015) claims to be a highly effective system for helping students acquire and improve "better reading competences, aptitudes, and abilities" (p. 1). These overall academic improvement skills can easily help extrapolate or encourage better attitudes toward academic achievement. This program

evaluation will examine aspects of the program's "multisensory structured language program and strategies" for teaching reading and spelling to the targeted kindergarten population (p. 1). The evaluation will further examine features of the program implementation and delivery (design, impact, and outcomes) that are optimal in helping students achieve the desired academic achievement in language and spelling outcomes. Simultaneously, the program managers and evaluator will also attempt to identify elements of the program that appear less than optimal for supporting students to achieve the desired reading and spelling goals.

Limitations

One overarching limitation to this evaluation is the use of a small convenient sample enrolled in a kindergarten grade class at Grant Elementary School. This small sample will make the evaluation results far less generalizable and replicable (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011, p. 251). Second, "feasibility or manageability of implementing a successful participative study" presents another prevalent limitation to the use of the CIPP Model evaluation (p. 224). Another overarching area of concern with the CIPP Model evaluation is the "credibility of the results to those who do not participate in the study" (p. 225). Last, but not least, is the "concern with whether" the "stakeholders can refrain from bias when they are heavily involved in the evaluation of their own program," as it "is difficult to judge one's own work objectively" (p. 225).

Reading Vocabulary Terms

Vocabulary terms and definitions have been provided to ensure readers accurately understand specific verbiage utilized in the text. This comprehensive list of terms has

been provided to ultimately facilitate appropriate interpretation of this program

evaluation.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) – an approach to teaching grounded

in research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about

effective early childhood education. Its framework is designed to promote young

children's optimal learning development (National Association for the Education of

Young Children, 2017, p. 1).

Finger Tapping – break down and blend word sound by tapping out each sound

with their fingers and thumb (Wilson Fundations Teacher's Manual, 2015, p. 4)

High-needs Student – Students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need

of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend

high-minority schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2012).

Low-performing Schools – Schools that are in the bottom 10% of performance in

the State, or who have significant achievement gaps, based on student academic

performance in reading/language arts and mathematics on the assessments (U.S.

Department of Education, 2012).

Skywriting – writing letters and words in the air (Wilson Fundations Teacher's

Manual Level K, 2015, p. 40).

Trick Words – high frequency words that cannot be sounded or tapped out

(Wilson Fundations Teacher's Manual Level K, 2015, p. 5).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many academic and personal advantages associated with the ability to

read. Reading is perhaps one of the most essential skills an individual can possess for

adequate survival in today's knowledge-based world. Over the years, scholars have

highly recommended that individuals need to be at least proficient readers, writers, and

thinkers to compete and succeed in this contemporary global economy. Many

educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and

achievement from both an academic and personal perspective (Darling-Hammond, 2010;

Gay, 2000; Howard, 2010; Payne, 2011). The traditional interpretation of most

researchers on intellectual pursuits have consistently emphasized that reading is the first

skill an individual must master to achieve success in grade school, postsecondary

education, employment, citizenship, and ultimately, lifelong learning (Nieto, 2011).

The focus of this literature review is to examine suitable reading programs that

have been scientifically reviewed and identified to support and advance reading skills for

kindergarten elementary students. First, this review will examine and expound upon the

basic reading skills for proficient readers. Second, it will explain why so many

elementary school students frequently struggle with literacy difficulties. Third, it will

review effective reading programs for elementary school student populations evaluated

by the Johns Hopkins University School of Education and Center for Data-Driven

Reform in Education and, reported by the BEE to demonstrate strong evidence that said

programs enhance and advance reading skills for elementary students. Last, but not least,

this review will provide a summary of the existing literature on the Wilson Fundations,

the focus of this program evaluation, which observes a kindergarten student population.

Basic Reading Skills for Proficient Readers

The act of becoming a proficient reader requires mastery of several skills that

need to be applied simultaneously (Snow et al., 1999). The mastery of proficient reading

skills is a progressive process and not something that is obtained overnight. There are

basic reading skills that should be taught and learned first in isolation, then as readers

become more adept at each one, they can progress and combine until they can read

independently with full comprehension. Basic reading skills encompass a range of skills

from phonics to comprehension.

The Proficient Elementary School Reader

One of the most important goals in all areas of education is to develop skills and

attitudes within students to be lifelong learners (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2012).

Proficient literacy skills in the 21st century is more necessary, than ever before, for

ultimate success in education, work, and citizenship. Researchers contend, "literacy is

the ability to access, evaluate and integrate information from a wide range of textual

sources and is a prerequisite not only for individual educational success, but for upward

mobility, both socially and economically" (Reardon, Valentino, & Shores, 2012, p. 18).

Numerous research studies have maintained over the years that students who read more

typically read better (Routman, 2002). The ability to read proficiently is a fundamental skill that affects the learning experiences and school performance of all students.

Historically, the elementary school reading population has encompassed students enrolled in grades, K-3. Students, who are competent and proficient readers, as measured by their performance on formal and/or informal reading assessments, are more likely to perform well academically in virtually all subject areas (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2010). It is common knowledge that many K-12 educational reading experts advocate that from kindergarten through third grade, students are "learning to read" but transitioning to the fourth grade, students begin to shift their academic literacy focus to "reading to learn" (Zakariya, 2015). The shift from simple word recognition during the formative years to more complex comprehension of content, in various discipline areas, increases as the child matures from both a chronological and cognitive perspective (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Educational experts have wholeheartedly established that as a student progress upwardly through the academic arena and enters the secondary grades, the demands on reading ability, simultaneously, increases as well. Consequently, research denotes "as students advance through the grades, they are expected to learn and develop effective cognitive strategies that facilitate their comprehension of text and their use of reading as a tool for learning" (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2010, p. 3).

The Five Pillars of Literacy

Shanahan (2003) reported on five essential literacy skills the National Reading Panel identified students must embrace proficiently to become efficient readers. These skills encompass phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

Reading skills begin by developing through talk and conversation (Snow et al., 1998).

Many reading experts suggest a strong reading program provides explicit instruction and

practice within all five pillars.

Researchers contend that effective reading instruction starts by confirming that

students have mastered Phonemic Awareness (Snow et al., 1998). Phonemic awareness

is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken

words. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. Phonemic awareness is the

knowledge that words are made up of a combination of individual sounds. Phonemic

awareness is more than recognizing sounds, Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2001) claim

that it the ability to hold on to these sounds, blend them successfully into words, and take

them apart again. Research contends that some children have a good sense of phonemic

awareness, but to differing degrees. It is important to determine the child's level before

beginning instruction. Phonemic awareness is usually acquired naturally through

exposure to print (Snow et al., 1998).

Phonics is an instructional method that associates written letters and letter

combinations with the sound spoken (Snow et al., 1998). The instruction of reading

actual begins with using phonics, decodable text, and then move to contextual and

enrichment reading skills as the students gain competency and confidence (Sousa, 2005).

Therefore, phonics is a system of letter-sound relationships that is the foundation for

decoding words. Research contends that sstudents' who receive systematic and explicit

phonics instruction are more likely to experience reading success, than students receiving

non-systematic phonics instruction or no phonics instruction.

According to reading experts a fluent reader is one who can read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression (Snow et al., 1998). Some researchers contend that fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Armbruster et al., 2001). When fluent readers read aloud, their expression, intonation, and pacing sound natural much like speaking. Fluency naturally occurs and develops from reading practice. Students who are fluent readers have the tendency to focus on meaning of the text, while less fluent readers must devote more attention and time to the act of reading (Ambruster et al., 2001; Torgesen & Hudson, 2006).

Comprehension is the active and cognitive process that involves the intentional interaction between the reader and text to convey meaning. Text comprehension is the interaction that happens between a reader and the text. Comprehension is considered to be the intentional thinking process that occurs as one reads and is tied closely to children's vocabulary knowledge and skills (National Institute of Child Health and Development, 2000). Research contends that comprehension instructions should begin in early educational programs by building linguistic and conceptual knowledge.

Vocabulary is an expandable stored set of words that students know the meaning of and use. Students skilled in phonics will read with reduced comprehension unless they acquire a wide range of vocabulary words (Bertin, Perlman, & Wood, 2004). When children learn to read, they begin to understand that the words on the page correspond to the words they encounter every day in spoken English. Research contends that students who are good readers use a variety of strategies to establish meaning from text. Some of these strategies include monitoring comprehension, using prior knowledge, making

predictions, questioning, recognizing story structure, and summarizing. Research

contends that the rapid, automatic decoding skills of knowing vocabulary makes it easier

for the reader to make sense of the text (Snow et al., 1998).

 Reading and writing are intertwined processes and both have foundations in oral

language development. When students learn the fundamentals of reading, their writing

improves and vice versa. Research has shown that in order for children to become

successful readers and writers they must have an understanding and proficiencies in oral

language, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, concepts about print, and

comprehension (Duffy, 2003).

Stages of Reading Development and Developmental Milestones

In addition to the Five Pillars of Literacy, it is imperative that parents and teachers

are aware of the developmental milestones appropriate for students in reading

development by the child's age and grade level. Most children learn to read by age 6 or

7. Literacy learning requires instruction and practice and this learning occurs across

discrete stages. Children reach literacy milestones along the way typically by the third

grade. The Stages of Reading Development is a continuum that explains how students'

progress as readers (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2012). These stages

are based on students' experience and not their age or grade level, however, there are

suggested typical age ranges for each milestone. Knowing these stages is helpful when

developing materials for specific ages of readers.

The emergent readers (6 months-6 years) "need enriching and enjoyable

experiences with books, especially picture books" (Pacific Resources for Education and

Learning, 2012, p. 1). Children in this category can work with concepts of print and are

at the beginning stages of developing the ability to focus attention on letter-sound

relationships. The activities frequently utilized in this stage include the sharing of books

repeatedly, storytelling, and connecting personal experiences to both print and pictures.

In the second category, early readers (6-7 years old) are typically "able to use

several strategies to predict words, often using pictures to confirm predictions."

"Students can discuss the background of the story to better understand the actions in the

story" (7-9 years old) often like to read books in a series as a comprehension strategy; the

shared characters, settings and events support their reading development" (Pacific

Resources for Education and Learning, 2012, p. 1). Children in the final stage are

identified as fluent readers (9 years and older). Fluent readers are defined as "children

who are confident in their understanding of text and how text works, and are reading

independently" (p. 1).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

To assess students reading skills and abilities, there are multiple assessments

educators use to gauge the skill level of their students' reading abilities. One very

popular and highly utilized assessment tool utilized throughout America is DIBELS Next

because of its simplicity of use, rapid implementation, and immediate test results.

DIBELS benchmark assessment has become a highly and effectively utilized reading

assessment over the past thirty years and today is referred to, in the educational

community, as DIBELS Next. DIBELS was created by Deno and colleagues through the

Institute of Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota. "DIBELS

is a set of procedures for measuring and assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade" (Good & Kaminski, 2002, p. 1).

DIBELS was first designed to identify children who were having trouble in acquisition of basic early reading skills and to prevent the occurrence of later reading difficulty. DIBELS are comprised of seven measures of function as indicators of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. The assessment at grade K is in the areas of first sound fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency. These assessments are short one- minute fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. DIBELS Next helps to provide teachers with a snapshot of the students' areas of strength and weakness for instruction and remediation as it is administered three times yearly (beginning, middle and end) to help with progress monitoring for each individual student, as well as, the entire class in Reading.

Sight Words

One strategy that a reading expert has developed to assist student mastery and accelerate basic reading skills is to teach students sight words. Sight words are words that are not sounded out in the traditional and customary way. Learning these words can enable a student to recognize frequent words when they are encountered. Sight words help students to pronounce a word upon first sight. Memorization of these terms really help a child with reading fluency, as it allows automaticity of pronunciation of common words.

Dr. Edward B. Fry created a comprehensive list with the most common words used in the English Language for teaching, reading, writing, and spelling from grades kindergarten to twelfth in the 1950s. The words are ranked in order of frequency and is expanded upon the Dolch Sight Word. There is a total of 1,000 words on the Fry Sight Word List. These sight words are equipped to help students read 90% of words in a typical book, newspaper, or website. Many researchers assert that sight words instruction is an excellent and practical supplement to phonics instruction (Duffy, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). Students should be able to read at first sight, as students are not able to sound out the sight words phonetically. Reading experts also assert that it is important to have young readers to instantly recognize this list of words by sight, in order, to build up their reading fluency. Reading experts provide multiple strategies to teach the sight words to students for memorization. Three of the most common approaches include: (a) *See and Say* were the student sees the word on a flash card and says the word; (b) *Spell Reading* where the child says the word and spells out the letters, then reads the word again; and (c) *Arm Tapping* where the child says the word and then spells out the letters while tapping them on her arm (Snow et al., 1998).

Elementary School Students' Frequent Struggle with Literacy Difficulties

There are many factors that contribute to students' delay in literacy development. Many researchers contend that before a child can read and write, he or she needs to learn and be exposed to a host of informational skills such as sounds, words, language, books, and stories. Building a solid literacy foundation is imperative to build strong developmental skills in reading. Many researchers argue that the earlier a child is

introduced to the written word, the better. Some mothers even try to obtain a jump start on their child's education by exposing the child to the written word in the womb before birth. This is a practice that is very prevalent among woman in the middle to upper socioeconomic populations. Some researchers claim there are multiple benefits to reading to a baby prenatally in utero. Some of these advantages include bonding with the baby, familiarity with the mother's voice, and strong influence on the language sensors in the baby's brain (Mann, 2013).

Urban Education Academic Challenges

Lower reading proficiency is especially prevalent among urban, lower-income students, who are eligible and receive free and reduced-price lunches (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2010). Many researchers acknowledge there are a variety of factors that contribute to reading difficulties in urban centers nationwide. Some of the most noted explanations include poor acquisition of fundamental reading skills, prolonged and inadequate academic instruction, low socioeconomic backgrounds, and the lack of parental or guardian assistance with reading skills in the home environment (Snow et al., 1998).

Unfortunately, the Committee on Preventing Reading Difficulties, National Research Council (1998), asserts, "the educational careers of 25 to 40 percent of children in the U.S. are imperiled because they do not read well enough, quickly enough, or easily enough" (p. 1). Nevertheless, other researchers have found that "virtually all students can make tremendous growth in their literacy…though they may never be fabulous readers, they can all get dramatically better and, therefore, become more independent and have

more choice and agency in their lives" (Feldman, 2004, p. 1). The implementation of the Common Core Standards at the federal, state, and local levels is one strategy the U.S. utilizes to reach the goal to improve education for all American students.

Common Core State Standards

The U.S. Department of Education has made a concerted effort over the past 50 years by passing many legislative Educational Acts to close academic achievement gaps among various ethnic groups to promote rigorous accountability standards for teachers and students, and to ensure all students are on track to graduate college and/or be career-ready. In 2010, the U.S. educational arm extended the rigors of academic instruction even wider to embrace and increase higher scholastic achievement for all students in the K-12 educational sector. The adoption of the Common Core Standards is a major strategy the National Governor's Association implemented, as an attempt to create and develop competitive students in adulthood within the global labor force.

There has been an increased level of attention dedicated to raise academic standards across the board for general and special education student populations in the U.S. and a state-led effort by the National Governors Association for Best Practices. Additionally, the Council of Chief State Schools Officers has created Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS have significantly placed more attention on educating students in elementary, middle, and high school in reading proficiencies and competences. The U.S. has 42 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity who have adopted the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Alaska, Indiana, Minnesota,

Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas are the only seven areas that have not adopted the standards. The increase in academic standards is now all inclusive, meaning, students enrolled in special education programs with learning disabilities, are no longer an exception to this rule. This contradicts the long history of past voluntary parental exclusionary practices of special education student populations from standardized tests mandates. Special education students "too are expected to be challenged to excel within the general education curriculum based on the Common Core Standards" (McNulty & Gloeckler, 2011, p. 4). The overarching goal of the CCSS is to focus on the knowledge and skills needed by all students. The primary purpose of these new "standards is to ensure a clear and consistent framework to prepare all students for college and the workforce" (p. 3). These standards address what students are expected to know and be able to do. Furthermore, "they are also designed to be robust and relevant and to reflect the knowledge and skills that all young people will need for success in college and careers" (p. 3).

Although there is a growing demand for increased student academic proficiency, simultaneously, there is an equally growing group of individuals who are in opposition to the CCSS. Ravitch's (2013), an educational historian and leading voice in the opposition movement to the adoption of the CCSS, greatest criticism of the adaptation is the fact that there was no field test conducted prior to implementation. Ravitch explains the CCSS "are being imposed on the children of the nation, even though the fact that no one has any idea how they affect students, teachers, or schools" and especially, "how they affect our most vulnerable students" (p. 1). Per Ravitch, there is potential that the CCSS may

"cause a precipitous decline in test scores, based on arbitrary cut scores, and this will have a disparate impact on students who are English language learners, students with disabilities, and students who are poor and low-performers" (p. 2). Ravitch has conveyed, that the "Common Core Standards are fundamentally flawed by the process with which they have been foisted upon the nation" (p. 1). Other critics have objected to CCSS because they establish four disadvantages to the educational system: one-size-fits-all approach, creation of a de facto national curriculum, too much emphasis on standardized tests, and undermine teacher autonomy.

The increased CCSS accountability measures place an additional burden of academic achievement on both the teachers and general educational communities. Hence, proficient reading skills have become even more essential for improving all students' academic progress. Urban education students' academic achievement is typically and reportedly significantly below that of their peers and academic counterparts. The urgency to find effective reading programs for urban general education students and others who are considered struggling readers is now even more paramount, than ever before.

Enhancing Reading Outcomes for Struggling Urban Elementary School Students

Notably, Stanberry and Swanson (2009) asserts there are two instructional methods that seem superior to others when teaching young children and students with academic deficiencies – direct instruction and strategy instruction. The direct instruction technique is a teacher-directed lecture, discussion, and learning from books and strategy instruction, encompasses teaching ways to learn such as memorization techniques and

study skills. Stanberry and Swanson also assert that the main instruction components of this combined model include: drill-repetition-practice (e.g., daily testing, repeated practice, sequenced review); segmentation (e.g., breaking down skills into parts and then synthesizing the parts into a whole); directed questioning and responses (e.g., teacher asks process or content questions of students).

Even instructional grouping has a significant role to play in struggling readers' development. Educational researchers, Archer and Hughes (2011), contend that students with enhanced learning needs find that instruction in groups of 6-8 is generally more effective instruction, than smaller or larger groups or one-to-one instruction. They further suggest that "grouping students by academic skill level allow them to learn the skills most appropriate for individual learning" and highly recommend that this form of grouping should be used flexibly and always based on individual student's needs, which may change over time (p. 10).

There is extensive research throughout the academic arena to support the premise that the best way for a student to become a better reader is to read more. However, many educational researchers claim, "outside of school, struggling students generally do not read for pleasure" (Boardman, Roberts, Wexler, Murray, & Kosanovich, 2008, p. 27). Building independent reading skills among students in general and, especially students who are deemed at-risk with learning challenges, can be an arduous task.

Effective Reading Programs for Elementary School Student Population

Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase of attention dedicated to the study of U.S. urban school literacy. Current literacy literature highlights the need

for the extension of literacy instruction beyond the years of elementary school in third grade (Rhoads, 2015). The increased focus on literacy is an extension of efforts to improve literacy and overall academic skills for all students in kindergarten to the third grade, especially students experiencing academic delays in reading. Many scholars contend that school students who struggle with reading do not need a dramatically or categorically different approach to reading instruction but rather, more opportunities to perfect reading skills with more precision and more careful adjustment to instruction (Feldman, 2004). The additional instructional support and patience for struggling students is attributed to the fact that they find reading far more complicated and problematic than non-struggling readers.

Johns Hopkins University School of Education, Center for Data Driven Reform in Education, conducted program evaluations to identify the top-rated reading programs to best support and improve struggling literacy for emergent readers. A full and detailed analysis of the study results were submitted and published by several educational publications. The BEE and the Johns Hopkins University School of Education provide one of the most condense yet comprehensive reports of the data analysis on effective programs for elementary school students. The program evaluation ratings identified three reading programs that showed strong evidence of effectiveness. These reading programs are: Peer Assisted Learning Strategies, Reading Reels, and Success for All.

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

The Peer Assisted Learning Strategies Instructional Process Program is a technique in which children work in pairs, taking turns as teacher and learners, to learn a

structured sequence of literacy skills, such as phonetic awareness, phonics, sound

blending, passage reading, and story retelling (Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung & Davis,

2009).

Reading Reels

The Reading Reels Instructional Process Program, "is form of multimedia used

within the Success for All program, in which video content is embedded within teachers'

lessons. Brief animation, puppet skits, and live-action segments, about five minutes daily

in total, model beginning reading strategies for children and teachers" (Slavin et al.,

2009).

Success for All

The Success for All Combined Curriculum and Instructional Process Program

provides schools with a K-5 reading curriculum that focuses on phonetic awareness,

phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary development, beginning with phonetically

controlled mini books in grades K-1 (Slavin et al., 2009). Cooperative learning is

extremely useful at all grade levels. Tutoring is provided for struggling readers, and

parent involvement is encouraged.

Similarities of all Reading Programs

The commonalities among all the reading programs include the following: target

student populations (elementary), research-basis, two or three-day professional

development training for teachers and other designated instructional users, continual

follow-up professional development sessions, and available inquiries about program by

phone after implementation. An overall analysis of all the reading programs, Peer

Assisted Learning Strategies, Reading Reels, and Success for All were decidedly

pronounced to have strong evidence of effectiveness.

The reading evaluation results reported in the BEE study are alarming and signal

a definite need to create and develop other reading programs that will demonstrate

stronger evidence of effectiveness for kindergarten students. The need to promote and

build stronger literacy skills and abilities for kindergartners essentially necessitates the

need for more efficient and effective reading programs. Seemingly, the limited research

on the availability of effective reading programs for struggling kindergarten students has

yielded marginal academic results. However, per recent literature on elementary reading,

optimism has begun to emerge for one comprehensive transformational Reading model,

Response to Intervention.

Popular School Transformation Model: Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RtI) has begun to demonstrate advantageous and

noteworthy academic results, especially for students in urban school systems, across the

kindergarten through grade 12 educational spectrums. RtI is a research-based

comprehensive intensive initiative that has begun to generate positive academic results

for all, including special education students. This program monitoring plan requires

grade level monitoring at a minimum of three times a year: beginning, middle, and end

for all students. The RtI model is modernizing educational reading practice for all

students to accentuate prevention strategies and more intense monitoring of academic

progress.

RtI is not just a school transformation model. It is also considered a policy that has been implemented in states to address the needs of all students with a specific focus on meeting the needs of diverse learners. RtI addresses how many academically struggling reading students may be identified and what the first level of intervention may be in addressing their instructional needs in terms of reading and other academic areas. There are three tiers of proficiency in this progressive model. In Tier I, core curriculum competencies are established at each grade level. These topics and benchmark scores are used to diagnose the specific areas of student reading difficulty and determine reading intervention placement. Students whose scores are in Tier I reading performance are proficient and therefore, at or above grade level. Students in Tiers II and III receive additional and frequent ongoing progress monitoring (Shapiro, 2014). The structure involves three different educational and research-based procedures: screening, diagnosis, and progress monitoring. These three ways of classifying students' needs help to better identify struggling readers at each grade level. Student assessment and placement generally takes place within the first two school days of the school year.

RtI includes both whole group instruction and small group differentiated instruction. The instructors are provided with a struggling reader chart, which identifies deficits in one or more areas of reading. Teachers identify student needs through ongoing process monitoring and program assessment. Informal and formal assessments are administered frequently to ensure student progress. Tier II, Strategic Intervention Instruction, is tailored for students with disabilities and in need of intensive reading intervention, based on the criteria in the appropriate placement charts. The student's

academic team may determine a more appropriate placement for any struggling student.

The student's placement is based on diagnostic data and the impact of the student's

disability in reading. Tier III, Intensive Intervention, is for students whose data indicate

they are not progressing adequately and for students who have severe deficits in reading

and need more, intensive instructional intervention. Students who need more explicit and

systematic instruction are provided extended learning opportunities. The additional

services may include: push-in and pullout tutoring services; change in the focus, format,

or frequency; or modification in instructional group size. Students with severe deficits in

all five areas of reading are placed in the Comprehensive Intensive Reading Program

(Shapiro, 2014).

Researchers have identified several overarching strengths of the RtI

comprehensive model. Wilmshurst and Brue (2011) maintain that the "RtI model is a

proactive approach, which allows students to be identified early as needing assistance"

(p. 1). The progressive academic data obtained around reading is collected routinely not

only for struggling students, but all children within the classroom to help reduce the

amount of time students must wait to receive academic intervention (p. 1). Resnick

(2009) contends that more children can immediately receive support, rather than wait for

a case-study evaluation to be completed (p. 2).

The weaknesses of RtI appear to be minimal. Nevertheless, the major reported

disadvantage of the "RtI model is that it is a discrepancy model; children performing at

grade level are not identified as struggling and are not referred to the school-based

support team" (Resnick, 2009, p. 2). Shores (2008) offers the following two

disadvantages of RTI: "educators must keep in mind that no single strategy can address all student deficits" and "standard protocol implementation often requires a restructuring of the school's schedule to provide time for intervention groups" (p. 1).

Wilson Fundations

The Wilson Language Training Corporation established by Barbara and Edward Wilson has three reading programs for various targeted reading audiences in the academic arena, including adults: Fundations, Just Words, and the Wilson Reading System. "Fundations provides a carefully structured reading and spelling curriculum using engaging multisensory techniques for grades K-3" (Wilson Fundations Teacher Manual, 2015, p. v). Fundations instruction aligns with states' rigorous college and career-ready standards, including the Common Core Standards" (p. 4). Fundations is implemented as a phonics and spelling or word-study supplement to the core literacy program (Wilson Fundations Teacher Manual Level K, 2015, p. 1). "Fundations is a prevention and early intervention reading program designed to reduce the number of children who later need intervention by giving all kids a solid foundation" and "this type of instruction research calls for when the core reading program is just not enough" (Wilson Language Training, 2016, p. 1). Wilson recommends that the Fundations reading program compliment a core reading program, not replace it. Contrary to widely consistent and reported utilization of this program, this is an element that is often overlooked.

One of the advantageous highlights of Wilson Fundations is that this program is intended for students in grades K-3 or at-risk readers who are in the lowest 30th percentile

level of reading. The duration of the lesson is approximately 30 minutes per day for general education students to prevent future reading delinquencies and/or 3-5 times a week for student needing additional reading support (Wilson Fundations Teachers Manual, 2015, p. 1). An issue that is frequently criticized about this reading program is "although Fundations includes comprehension strategies, it must be combined with a core/literature-based language arts program for an integrated and comprehensive approach to reading and spelling" (Wilson Fundations Teacher Manual Level K, p. 6). Fundations provides children of different learning ability with a foundation of reading and spelling. Through multisensory language program with tapping, skywriting, letter boards, dry erase, and hand movements with vowels, diagraphs and glued sounds (word families). The program highlights the teacher's model, directs students to repeat sounds, words, sentences, and then write "I do it", "We do it", "You do it together", and "You do it alone" (Wilson Fundations Teacher Manual, 2015, p. 10). Assessment monitor tools are provided to maintain records of students' performance throughout the program. Extensive practice is also provided to offer students multiple opportunities for skills application. Skill development is offered throughout the year to provide and present skills in a scope and sequence. These skills build on previously taught skills: from unit to unit and year to year as Fundations is not a spiral program. But this reading program does provide ample practice with phonological and phonemic awareness skills, sound mastery, and phonics.

Kindergarten skills focus on the segmenting of words into syllables and segmenting of syllables into sounds (phonemes up to three sounds, isolate phonemes

using tapping procedures for both blending and segmenting, know A-Z letter/sound

relationships (letter to sound and sound to letter). Fundations provides reading and

spelling of approximately 200 words consisting of consonant-vowel-consonant

combinations and introduces diagraphs. Instruction is appropriate for the lowest 30th

percentile or at-risk students so that they can be given small group instruction and

provided a double dose of skill instruction and practice (Wilson Fundations Teacher

Manual, 2015, p. 4).

The handwriting component of Fundations gives students the opportunity to

improve their writing skills. Four different names are given to the writing lines: skyline,

plane line, grass line and worm line grid lines with illustrations for identification. Lower

case letters appear more frequently in text; therefore, they are presented first in the

instructional component of the program. There are several progress monitoring features

to measure students' response to instruction, to target students with inadequate growth,

and to identify areas that need improvement. The reading program also provides

instructional modification for students when needed for each phase.

The kindergarten materials include a manual, Large Sound Cards, Activity Cue

Cards, Standard Sound Cards, and Trick Word Flashcards. The program includes the

following posters for display, Basic Keyword Poster, Skyline Letter Poster, Letter

Formation Poster, and Alphabet Strip which are utilized throughout instruction. Other

provided items include a Writing and Drawing Pad, Magnetic Letters, Student Notebook,

Desk Name Plates, Journal, Letter Board, Dry Eraser Board, Home Support Pack,

Puzzles in a Sack, Laminated Writing Sheet, Puppets (Mother Echo and Baby Echo),

Magnetic Strips, Letter Formation Cards, and Magnetic Cards (Wilson Fundations

Teacher's Manual, Level K, 2015, pp. 9-14).

Fundations provides Word Play, as well. The purpose of this activity is for word

awareness, making words for decoding, and understanding sentences have separate words

and words have separate syllables. Word Play starts out utilizing sentence frames to

teach students that sentences are made up of individual words, start with a capital letter,

and end with appropriate punctuation.

Students also make words with the Standard Sound Cards, tap them out, decode

them, blend the sounds, and read the word. This is also done with nonsense words. The

Story Time provides and encourages teachers to read stories. Students learn about

different genres, practice reading comprehension, and practice Oral Reading Fluency

(ORF). Students read and discuss the stories, fill in graphic organizers, scoop chunks of

words for ORF, mark up words, look for specific letter patterns, capitalize letters,

punctuation, and so on. Wilson Fundations provides assessments at the end of the unit

application in which students should score 80% or higher to move on. Wilson

Fundations is slated to be utilized within the general education setting. This instruction is

in Tier 1 for the prevention program. Students in prevention receive (25-30 minutes)

daily lessons.

Tier II is offered for students who are considered at-risk, the lowest 30th percentile

(additional double-dose instruction 3-5 times a week) outside the general education

setting. This program provides daily double dose lessons 3-5 times a week. Wilson

Fundations also provides kindergarten model lessons on videos for each segment of instructional skills taught.

"Phonological Awareness involves several sequential skills: isolating sounds, identifying sounds, categorizing sounds, blending sounds, segmenting sounds and manipulating them" (Wilson Language Basics, 2015, p. 2). Sound mastery is a key component of phonics and is another important part of sound mastery. Wilson Fundations teaches sound in two ways, "letter to sound (students see the letter and identify the sound) and sound to letter (students hear the sound and identify the corresponding letters)" (p. 4).

Students do daily drill of letters, saying the letter keywords and sounds. The daily 2-3-minute drill is the only "drill" aspect of Wilson Fundations (Wilson Basics Training, 2015, p. 4). Wilson Fundations explicitly teaches students how to blend sounds into words. Students learn how to blend words by using a finger-tapping procedure which teaches the student how to say each sound as they tap a finger to their thumb, then they say the word sounds as they drag their finger across their fingers starting with the index finger (Wilson Language Basics, 2015, p. 4).

Nonwords (called Nonsense Words in Fundations) help solidify student's knowledge of word structure. The vocabulary practice helps students to develop vocabulary from independent reading and explicit instruction. Students also learn a "Word of the Day" which is selected to correspond with the word structure being studied. Words are used in sentences and are on flashcards to be reviewed frequently. High Frequency "trick" words are taught as well. Trick words are words that appear most

often in print. High frequency or trick words, whether phonetic or irregular, are used commonly in English. They need to be recognized and spelled quickly and easily even if their phonemic pattern has not yet been taught. Wilson Fundations presents these words, as these words are presented to be memorized. Trick words were selected from common high frequency word lists such as in the Fry Sight Word List and the American Heritage Word Frequency Book. Fluency reading is an essential skill for comprehension for quick and automatic recognition of words in isolation. Kindergarten students have 27 trick words for quick and automatic recognition (p. 5).

The Wilson Fundations was first published in 2002 at the request of the American public and was based on the reading research of their first reading program, WRS. As an established part of Wilson's three-tiered approach to successful reading and writing instruction, the Fundations is targeted for all K-3 students in the general classroom and as an intervention program for those requiring more specific reading intervention. Wilson portrays Fundations as an easy-to-follow reading program for teachers. Wilson prescribes that each of the daily instructions provide a daily lesson plan with a listing of all required teacher and student materials and a detailed description of the day's activities. The Fundations reading program can be implemented in one of three ways: general education whole class instruction, students in the lowest 30th percentile, and students with a language-based learning disability. Fundations provides students with a foundation in reading and spelling. The instructional timeframe is about 30-35 minutes per day for general educational settings and an additional two-three times for intervention instruction for students performing in the lower percentile.

The skills taught in the Wilson Fundations are phonological awareness, sound mastery; letter name, formation, and sound linkage; Phonics, high frequency trick words, fluency, comprehension, handwriting, spelling, and punctuation. The principles of instruction are explicit instruction explaining content clearly, systematic instruction (sequential and cumulative), multisensory instruction, and repetition. The student success component involves gradual release model, assessing student mastery, engaging students in rigorous work, and differentiated instruction, and students who are struggling in reading.

Wilson Fundations instruction is a multi-tiered literacy program, was co-created by Barbara and Edward Wilson. Wilson Fundations is a research-based reading and writing program that was based on the Orton-Gillingham principle that highlights the need for explicit systematic instruction for struggling readers (Wilson Reading Systems, 2010). Wilson Fundations is a highly structured remedial reading program that directly teaches the structure of language to students and adults who have been unable to learn with other teaching strategies, or who may require multisensory language instruction. The step-by-step program gives teachers the tools they need to work with even the most challenged reader. The Wilson Language Basics 2010) professes Wilson Fundations to be a powerful literacy plan to meet college and career ready standards. Although the literature on the effectiveness of the Wilson Fundations is extremely limited, one state's implementation that is heavily noted and celebrated in the literature for widespread academic improvements in the area of reading is that of the state of Florida. The Florida State Board of Education has reported academic gains in working with struggling readers

in Tier III (The Florida Center for Reading Research, 2011). Despite the progress,

Florida has made in improving students' achievement in reading performance, Matus

(2013) remarks that regardless of these claims of academic progress, "Florida still has far

to go" in improving students' academic performance in comparison to results of the 2012

Program for International Student Assessment test (p. 1).

Wilson Fundations Teacher Prerequisites

Schools and school districts who want to train teachers to utilize any of the

Wilson's three programs will have to require teachers to undergo professional

development through attending a three-day series of classes to become acquainted with

the Fundations's delivery structure. At the end of the training, teachers receive

certification. Afterwards, teachers receive the entitlement to utilize the Wilson

Academy's online resources and support. This training encompasses informational

details about the program's background and essential elements. On the first day, trainees

participate in sound card/quick drill; teaching and reviewing concepts for reading; word

cards; word list reading; sentence reading; controlled text passage reading; and listening

comprehension/applied skills.

The second day of the training entails the spelling component of the system. For

the spelling lessons, students do the quick drill in reverse, spell, and practice dictation.

With quick drill in reverse, students segment sounds in words and use magnetic letters to

build the words dictated by the teacher. The spelling lesson is then followed by dictation

exercises, when the teacher dictates sounds, words, and sentences for the students to

record.

The final day of the training involves a discussion of non-controlled and enriched text. Non-controlled text is where new words and sounds are introduced randomly or as they come up in the story. Enriched text uses uncontrolled "real-world" type text. The teacher reads the enriched text and makes symbols on the board to help the students recall what has been read. At the end of each paragraph, the teacher rereads the text and uses the symbols to assist students with the retrieval of story details and sequence. By the end of the passage, the text has been read several times and then the student is asked to retell the entire passage. After this process, the students are given the decodable text. They are then, presumably, able to read the passage at a much more accurate level, even though it is written at a more demanding level than their independent reading level. After dissection of these text types, practice and feedback of an entire WRS lesson is provided during the training (Wilson Reading System, 2010). Once the training is complete, teachers are given the Wilson Fundations materials necessary to conduct reading intervention at their respective schools. Sustained professional development is then provided monthly with Wilson coaches, who promote implementation fidelity.

The Wilson Reading Program has been identified to have the following strengths. According to Irvin (2006), she maintains the "instructional design is explicit and systematic; each lesson is planned carefully with a timed guideline to follow; the lessons are fast paced with multisensory instruction; and strong built-in comprehension component" (p. 32). Other advantages of Wilson Program are that there are students must use word clues to decode; it covers the "Big Five" reading essential of phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, vocabulary and comprehension plus spelling and the

mechanics of writing" (p. 6). However, the Wilson Program does not address the comprehension component of the Five Pillars of instruction. Two other advantages of the Wilson Program include that it can be utilized with the whole class, small group, or an individual. Lastly, the Wilson Program is aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

Despite these strengths, the What Works Clearinghouse (2007) contends that the "Wilson Reading System has no discernible effects on fluency or comprehension" (p. 4). Another criticism offered by Irvin (2006) is that the Wilson Fundations requires a skilled teacher to adapt to all struggling readers (p. 16). Torgesen of the Florida Center of Reading Research (2006) reported there were no significant effect on comprehension skills as exemplified on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised passage comprehension and GRADE passage comprehension subtest. Education.com suggests "most teachers need training beyond the 3-day Applied Methods workshops to implement the Wilson Reading System correctly and get the optimal results with their students" (p. 6). Yet, another poignant criticism of the Wilson Program is that it is a "brilliantly marketed program with many promises and scant research to show it works" (Margolis & Brannigan, 2009, p. 1).

Program Evaluation of the Wilson Fundations

The purpose of this program evaluation was to honor a kindergarten teacher and school administrator's request to monitor student learning in reading and provide the classroom instructor ongoing feedback that can be used to improve teaching and the

students' development, using Wilson Fundations. To accomplish this mission, the

program evaluation poses the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. To what extent was the Wilson Fundations implemented appropriately as

    designed by the author?

2. In what ways, could the implementation of the Wilson Fundations be

    improved at Grant Elementary School to derive the most benefit for the

    kindergarten students who participate in this program?

3. What was the overall academic effect of the Wilson Fundations on student

    learning in this kindergarten class?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Program evaluation has been defined as the use of a variety of procedures to collect information about learning and instruction (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Many researchers have used formative evaluation to scrutinize various components of an ongoing program in order to make changes and improvements, as the program was being implemented on a continuum (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Formative evaluation is used as a way to ensure the program plans, procedures, activities, materials, and modifications work as planned by the developer. Formative evaluation is generally "low stakes" which means that they have low or no point value (Merriam, 2009). The essence of formative evaluation is to identify a program's strengths and weaknesses and enable the stakeholders to focus attention on the program's areas of deficiencies, to better support and improve individual students' academic performance. Accordingly, when formative evaluation is "incorporated into classroom practice, it provides" the classroom teacher the "information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening" (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2014, p. 1). Ultimately, formative evaluations "allow teachers to check for understanding during the lesson instead of waiting until the completion of the lesson to assess student learning" (Sasser, 2014, p. 1). Another assessment technique that was utilized at the end of the academic year to evaluate students' learning and achievement was summative evaluation. In comparison to formative assessment, summative

48

assessment is considered "high stakes" and evaluate student learning at the end of the instruction (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). This assessment technique enabled the classroom teacher to focus more on students' academic outcomes at the end of academic year. The purpose of this program evaluation, through the use of both formative and summative assessment techniques, was to provide a constructive and beneficial review to the teacher's overall instructional effectiveness in implementing the Wilson Fundations program in an elementary school kindergarten class.

The program evaluation results were communicated to the stakeholders, kindergarten education classroom teacher and the building administrator, in both a written and verbal report. The formative evaluation focused on the implementation of Wilson Fundations with fidelity and highlighted both advantageous and disadvantageous features that helped to improve academic performance in literacy. These evaluative procedures enabled the program stakeholders and external evaluator to make a holistic determination regarding the efficacy of Wilson Fundations to kindergarten elementary students. These evaluation findings ultimately allowed the program managers, those who deliver the program, to note and make any necessary changes or modifications to improve the course curriculum.

As stated previously, there are three questions this program evaluation addressed to determine the effectiveness of the Wilson Fundations for kindergarten students in an elementary school.

Research Questions

1. To what extent was the Wilson Fundations implemented appropriately as designed by the author?

2. In what ways, could the implementation of the Wilson Fundations be improved at Grant Elementary School to derive the most benefit for the kindergarten students who participate in this program?

3. What was the overall academic effect of the Wilson Fundations on student learning in this kindergarten class?

Evaluation Framework Informing this Study

The evaluation framework that was utilized to inform the Wilson Fundations program assessment was Daniel Stufflebeam's CIPP Model. The CIPP Model of evaluation is a "systematic investigation of the value of a program or other evaluand" (Stufflebeam, 2003, p. 9) Many program evaluators assert that the CIPP Model is best suited for formative and summative evaluations, which helps to "inform and improve program implementation" and "program improvement" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, pp. 203, 206). "The CIPP Model is a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluation of projects, programs, personnel, products, institutions and systems" (Stufflebeam, 2003, p. 2). The model's acronym stands for "evaluation of an entity's context, inputs, processes, and products" (p. 2). The first evaluation component, "context evaluations assess needs, problems, assets, and opportunities to help decisions makers define the goals and priorities and help the broader group of users judge goals, priorities, and outcomes" (pp. 2-3). The second evaluation component, "input

evaluations assess alternative approaches, competing action plans, staffing plans, and budgets for their feasibility and potential cost-effectiveness to meet targeted needs and achieve goals" (p. 3). The third evaluation component, process evaluation assesses the implementation of plans to help staff carry out activities and later help the broad groups of users, judge program performance. The final component, "product evaluation interprets outcomes- intended and unintended, short-term and long-term goals- both to help a staff keep an enterprise focused on achieving important outcomes" (p. 3). The first three evaluation components: context, input, and process are all utilized as formative evaluation techniques. The last evaluation component, product, is a summative analysis and generally is utilized at the conclusion of the program assessment to gauge the overall outcome. The CIPP Model Evaluation engaged the evaluator of this study in a series of questions to guide the investigation of the Wilson Fundations Program, which inspired an examination of the program, "What needs to be done? How should it be done? Is it being done? Is it successful? (p. 3).

In comparison to other program evaluation paradigms, "the CIPP Model emphasizes that evaluation's most important purpose is not to prove, but to improve" (Stufflebeam, 2003, p. 5). Thus, "the model's intent is to apply evaluation users with timely and valid information in the use of identifying an appropriate area of development; formatting sound goals, activity plans, and budgets (p. 5).

The evaluator's roles varied across the four evaluation types (context, input, process, and product) for formative and summative assessments. The formative assessment evaluation role was to apply the CIPP information to assist decision making

and offer quality assurance. In the context evaluation phase, the evaluator identified

needed interventions that enabled the evaluator to choose and rank the program goals.

The input from the context evaluation provided guidance for choosing a program or other

strategy followed by the examination of the work plan. This process entailed

implementing the work plan and the product continuing, modifying, adopting, or

terminating the effort based on the outcome (Stufflebeam, 2003, p. 6).

Stufflebeam (2003) has utilized summative evaluation for the CIPP Model

information to sum up the program's merit, worth, and significance. The context

component provided a comparison of the goals and practices to assess needs, problem

assets, and opportunities. There was also a comparison of the program's strategy design

and budget to the targeted needs of beneficiaries. This process provided a full description

of the actual process and provided a comparison of the design and actual processes. The

key components of the CIPP evaluation model and associate relationships with programs

is listed below in Table 2.

Table 2

Daniel Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Model

Four Evaluation Type	Reciprocal Relationship
Context = Goals:	Beneficiaries, needs, resources, background, and environment
Input = Plans:	Stakeholders, strategies, budget, coverage, and research
Process = Actions:	Develop, implement, motivator, and feedback
Product = Outcomes:	Impact, effectiveness, transportability, sustainability, and adjustment

Note. Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017.

Stufflebeam (2003) suggests that stakeholder involvement in the CIPP Evaluation Model stands to enhance organizational learning and professional growth. The in-depth participation of stakeholders warrants extensive involvement in all phases of the program evaluation. "The utilization of these techniques helped to build commitment and empower stakeholders to use the pertinent data collected" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 199). The CIPP Model utilized some aspects of the participatory evaluation approach. The participant-oriented approach to evaluation, despite the diversity, aim to involve the program stakeholders to assist in conducting the evaluation. Research has proven that the active involvement of key stakeholders in the evaluation assessment increases the likelihood that the evaluation results will be utilized and better appreciated after the investigation. The distinguishing characteristics of this evaluation framework was that it required intensive involvement with stakeholders, an understanding of context, and a greater use of qualitative methods and it has a distinct focus on formative evaluation and organizational learning.

The rationale for wanting to use an evaluation approach with a participatory-orientation component for this evaluation was because it allowed both the internal program stakeholders, in conjunction with the external evaluator, to ultimately assess whether the program was implemented properly and identified practical ways to improve the program's effectiveness. The participatory evaluation method helped to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive assessment was incorporated collaborative perspectives and perceptions of both the program stakeholders and evaluator. This school environment was well suited for the CIPP Evaluation Model because it highlighted an aspect of

stakeholder involvement. The advantage of a combined external and internal

investigation provided the opportunity of obtaining a more realistic depiction and

analysis of the Wilson Fundations program results and benefited the identified student

population. The success of this program evaluation was attributed to the stakeholder

groups' familiarity with the program history, and decision-making patterns of the local

school environment at the district level. Conversely, the external evaluator stood to offer

greater validity, credibility and objectivity of results to the evaluation process of the

Wilson Fundations (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

Type of Evaluation Design Informing this Study: Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation was essentially a more diagnostic review of a "program's

purpose and provided information for program improvement" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p.

20). The formative evaluation provided information for the program deliverer to "judge

the merit or worth" of various parts of a program (p. 20). This formative evaluation

enabled the program evaluator to frequently assess what was working, what needed to be

improved, and offered ways to how it could be improved. The formative data collected

helped to identify problems in the program model or theory or in the early delivery of the

program that could then be modified or corrected. The data collection during the

formative evaluation phase was frequent and allowed additional instructional

modifications to be made immediately. Ultimately, formative evaluations were designed

to improve programs and enable managers to make changes in the program and its daily

operations.

This type of evaluation allowed the key stakeholders and the external evaluator to understand how the Wilson Fundations activities were connected to intended outcomes and the rationale to helped the investigators understand why the program, did what it did (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). In other words, the formative evaluation helped the stakeholders and the evaluator understand how well the Wilson Fundations worked in a real-world setting, while simultaneously, provided information on how the reading program may have been improved (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

The Evaluator's Role

The evaluator's role was that of a completely visible observer (Merriam, 2009). As the "primary instrument of data collection" (p. 127), the evaluator maintained a collaborative relationship with the stakeholders' which promised to bolster evaluation use, through stakeholder involvement. As the primary evaluator, the goal was to "provide information that addressed the issues that mattered and "develop that information in a way that was timely and meaningful for the decision makers, and communicate it in a form that was usable for their purposes" (Rossi et al., 2004, pp. 18-19). The ultimate role of the program evaluator was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, through formative recommendations for program improvements. The external evaluator was responsible for providing and discussing the program evaluation continuously with the primary stakeholders to both formally and informally advise them of the evaluation progress through written and oral communication. This exchange of information offered continuous updates about what was periodically learned regarding the evaluation of the Wilson Fundations.

Additionally, the stakeholders' immediate reactions and learning what was surprising and what was expected was paramount to this investigation. Finally, the evaluator provided a written report of the evaluation to program stakeholders and engaged the stakeholders in meaningful dialogue regarding the findings.

Stakeholders of the Program Evaluation

The stakeholders of the program were "individuals or organizations that had a significant interest in how well the program functioned" (Rossi et al., 2004). The stakeholders were an essential and integral component of conducting this CIPP Model Evaluation. The role of the stakeholder in this CIPP Model was paramount throughout the evaluation process, from the onset to the conclusion (Baker & Bruner, 2010). The site-based decision makers or stakeholders, were the school administrator and kindergarten classroom teacher, who were actively involved in the evaluation process. Recruitment scripts for the principal (see Appendix A) and teacher (see Appendix B) were created to obtain the school administrator and teacher's verbal permission to conduct the research at their school. After verbal consent was obtained, written consent was required for the principal (see Appendix C) and the classroom teacher (see Appendix D). Once verbal and written consent were received from the principal and teacher, the district's Office of Accountability, Assessment, and Reporting requested a verbal consent versus a written assent be obtained from students (see Appendix E). The final phase of the written consent needed to be obtained from the students' parents and guardian (see Appendix F).

The following roles were identified for program stakeholders in the CIPP evaluation approach: share their experiences working with the program; participate in collecting additional information about the program implementation; work with the evaluator to analyze both the data collected and experiences; and formulate conclusions about the program strategies. Students participating in the Wilson Fundations were another stakeholder group. The sample students enrolled in this general education kindergarten class were also considered stakeholders as they were the ultimate beneficiaries of the program evaluation.

Data Collection and Data Sources

The qualitative evaluation methods utilized included three kinds of data collection: direct observation, interviews, and documentation review. All three of these data sources enabled the external evaluator to become better acquainted with the Wilson Fundations and consistently monitor student progress during the evaluation phase of the program.

Observations

Observations were the basic source of data collection in this qualitative research study and took place in the setting where the phenomenon of itinerant naturally occurred (Merriam, 2009). This process required "paying attention, descriptive writing, recording field notes, and use of rigorous methods to validate observations" (Patton, 2012, pp. 260-261). This process allowed the evaluator to observe and study the "physical environment, participants, activities, interactions, and conversations" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 120-121). The observations offered a realistic depiction of the classroom setting,

implementation of the curriculum, and class interactions. The evaluator observed the

reading instruction for 2-3 days per week, over a 9-week interval, which equated to 18

classroom visits. These observation sessions involved the collection of data through

written field notes of the implementation of the daily Wilson Fundations. The field notes

described "the participants, the setting, and activities, or behaviors of the participants" in

enough detail that readers could feel as if they were there seeing what the observer saw

(p. 130). The field notes were a reflective component of the observation phase where the

observer wrote comments in the margins regarding "feelings, reactions, hunches, initial

interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses" (p. 131).

The Wilson Fundations has a group of lesson plans organized around the

implementation of the instruction. The Wilson Fundations implementation for level K

activities included Alphabetical Order, Dictation Sounds/Words, Drill Sounds, Echo/Find

letters, Echo Letter Formation, Letter-Keyword-Sound, Skywrite Letter Formation,

Storytime, Student Notebook, Trick Words, and Word Play. The entire lesson activity

was scheduled to take between 30-35 minutes per day.

The observations took place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest

naturally occurred and presented a first-hand encounter to obtain a "real-world

experience for the collection of data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 117). This process allowed the

evaluator to "notice things that had become routine to participants" and "things that may

lead to understanding the context" data. The observations enabled the external observer

to "triangulate emerging findings used in conjunction of interviewing and document

analysis to substantiate the findings" (p. 119). This experience enabled the external

evaluator to "make notation of the physical environment, context, behavior, allocated space, objects, resources, technologies in the setting" (p. 120). The complete on-site observer role enabled the external evaluator to monitor and observe all "participants' activities, interactions, conversations, and behaviors" during the instructional timeframe (p. 121).

The Wilson Fundations experts recommended that evaluators look for specific instructional components and items. These instructional components included the following: a daily lesson plan, Wilson Fundations room environment, lesson blocks as prescribed, active student engagement, questioning techniques and error correction, teacher circulation of the room, vocabulary, focus on trouble spots, and homework which includes: fluency drills, using words in context, and student workbook. Students' instructional activities such as tapping, scooping, penciling, writing, and visualization were also monitored as well. Further, it was also recommended that evaluators monitor student progress charts, individual and group post-test, student daily dictation work, and informal and formal school based assessments (Wilson Reading System, 2006).

Interviews

The purpose of the structured interviews was to stimulate and obtain varied responses and information from the interviewees pertaining to the perceived and inherent advantages and disadvantages of Wilson Fundations to the students. The interviews involved two adults who are acquainted with the Wilson Fundations, the school, principal (see Appendix G) and classroom teacher (see Appendix H). These interviews were "person-to-person in which one person elicits information from the other" (Merriam,

2009, pp. 87-88). There was one interview with the principal at the onset of the

evaluation. The interview enabled the principal an opportunity to review the report and

develop any outstanding questions or concerns. A post evaluation conference was also

conducted to discuss the final evaluation report which was given a week prior to the

actual meeting date. The final evaluation report contained the following three areas:

Program Antecedents Report, Program Implementation Report, and the Program Results

Report. This report was generated for a plethora of potential readers. In the first,

Antecedent Report, the evaluator informed those not previously acquainted with the

Grant Elementary School about the environment where the program evaluation was

conducted and how and why the program was started. The second report, Program

Implementation provided accurate details of the Wilson Fundations program to groups

who may want to carry out a similar program. The report included descriptors of the

program's beneficiaries, judgments about the program implementation was reserved for

the program results. The program results addressed potential questions of interests from

the reading audience. It also summarized conclusions relative to "the program's merit,

worth, probity, and transportability" (Stufflebeam, 2003, p. 44). It further reported on the

program's significance" (p. 44)

This program evaluation encompassed one principal interview at the onset of the

evaluation and two official teacher interviews: one teacher interview took place at the

onset and one mid-way (see Appendix I) of the evaluation. After the evaluation process,

the evaluator held a conference with the teacher to discuss the results of the Wilson

Fundations evaluation. Frequent interaction with the classroom teacher afforded the

external evaluator the opportunity to address any emerging inquiries on a consistent basis

throughout the evaluation phase. The initial interviews provided the external evaluator

more detailed information regarding the specific information that both the principal and

classroom teacher received from the evaluation. The initial individual conferences

ensured the program evaluation was mutually beneficial to both the stakeholders and

external evaluator. The preliminary interview served two major purposes, granting the

evaluator the opportunity to meet and become better acquainted with the stakeholder

group and established a mutual communicable rapport. The initial interview questions

for the principal and kindergarten teacher were arranged to elicit and confirm that the

program evaluation was designed to meet all the categorical and outstanding issues of the

stakeholders regarding the Wilson Fundations. The subsequent mid-way interview with

the classroom teacher focused more on a personal evaluation of the implementation and

student performance with the Wilson Fundations and noted areas warranted of

instructional improvements for the remainder of the academic year. The final teacher

conference encompassed a discussion of the Wilson Fundations Evaluation Report, which

was given to the classroom teacher in advance of the final meeting to allow an

opportunity for reflection and enhance the final conference.

  The list of initial interview questions highlighted Patton's Six Types of Questions

to Stimulate Responses (Patton, 2002). The experience and behavior questions explored

what the teacher was doing or has done in regard to the reading program. The opinions

and values questions examined how the principal and teacher felt about Wilson

Fundations. The feeling based questions investigated the principal and teacher's

perceptions and sentiments about the reading system. The knowledge questions were designed to address information about the program. The background and demographic questions enabled the evaluator to obtain professional information about each of the adult interviewees. The interview with the principal and classroom teacher were both "tape recorded to ensure everything said is preserved for analysis" and "written notes" were maintained as substantiation and authentication of the verbal interaction (Merriam, 2009, p. 109).

The evaluator wrote reflections about each session, immediately following the interview to capture "descriptive notes on behavior, verbal and nonverbal, of the informant and parenthetical thoughts of the interviewer" (Merriam, 2009, p. 110). "The interview sessions" were then "transcribed to obtain the best possible database for analysis" (p. 110).

Documents

The process of reviewing common documents and artifacts available to the teacher, such as, students' formal and informal reading assessment data, written assignments, and other physical material allowed the evaluator an opportunity to monitor student's academic growth and progress throughout the course of the program evaluation (Merriam, 2009). These "ready-made sources of data provided additional information regarding the students' academic progress and achievement" (p. 139). The continual and periodical sample review of documentation allowed the external evaluator the opportunity to gauge student incremental academic development. The documentation review was advantageous, as it provided additional source of existing student data on

various activities in the Wilson Fundations and offered a behind-the-scenes examination

of the program that may not be apparent through observation.

Data Analysis

The evaluator used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data collected.

The thematic analysis phase or process involved the "search for common themes

emerging from group dynamics and open interplay among participants" (Massey, 2011,

p. 22). This process entailed grouping text or other qualitative evidence, into similar

categories and assigning them codes. The codes subsequently were grouped or

rearranged into larger themes. The analysis continued by comparing themes to assess any

patterns or relationship among them (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Stake, 1995).

Verifications

The researcher utilized several strategies to ensure the information presented and

provided for this evaluation is accurate through verification, which provided the

researcher the ability to confirm the collected data is credible, accurate, and reliable.

This program evaluation involved the use of three different strategies to ensure internal

validity within the evaluation: triangulation, member's check, and audit trail (Merriam,

2009).

Triangulation necessitated the researcher use different sources to corroborate the

findings across various sources, as well as derive a holistic understanding of the

effectiveness of the program (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). The member check ensured the

researcher returned to the interviewees to verify the accuracy of the information collected

(p. 217). Last, but not least, an audit trail was maintained to "minimize the bias that

personal views and experience brings to an evaluation" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 98).

The audit trail ensured that the evaluator maintained accurate records of the specific

details and activities of the Wilson Fundations program for quality assurance (Merriam,

2009). The audit trail further enabled the researcher to maintain a "running record" of the

interaction with the continuing data, as it was being analyzed and interpreted (p. 223).

Ethical Considerations

Every effort was made, by the external evaluator, classroom teacher and school

administrator to obtain and maintain proper consent for all participants involved in the

program evaluation. All collected data and information was maintained in a confidential

storage container in a secure location. All consent forms outlined the type of data that

was collected and the method: observations, interview, and documentation review. Only

the external researcher had access to the collected data to protect all students and adult

participants. All collected student data was coded, to avoid name recognition by outside

or uninvolved individuals. As per the school district's request, all collected data sets

were properly discarded via shredding upon completion of the research study. The

researcher retained permission forms to garner student and adult participation

indefinitely.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of the Wilson

Fundations in a select kindergarten class at Grant Elementary School. The three major

goals of this program evaluation were to determine if the Wilson Fundations was

implemented with fidelity; assess the program's impact on student learning; and make

recommendations on enhancing or modifying the reading instruction to achieve academic

success for all students enrolled in this kindergarten class. The Wilson Fundations (2015)

is a multisensory and systematic phonics, spelling, and handwriting program geared more

towards phonics and spelling instruction. In addition to observing and analyzing the

instructional delivery of the reading program, in depth interviews with the select

kindergarten teaching staff, principal, assistant principal, and district reading specialist

were an integral part of the outcomes of this study.

Grant Elementary School is designated a Title I school, which means that the

"Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local

educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of

children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state

academic standards" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The school building was

demolished, rebuilt, and recently reopened in 2014. The school is in pristine condition

with no visible signs of ageing. Most of the school population consists primarily of

minorities with 90.7% African American; 7.6 % biracial or multi-racial, and 1.7% White students. The entire kindergarten class population consists of 24 African-American students, with 13 boys and 11 girls. The elementary school principal, assistant principal, kindergarten teacher, and assistant teacher are also all African-Americans. Furthermore, a large percentage, 96.57%, of the Grant Elementary student body receives free or reduced lunch, which indicates most of the students are also from low-income families.

Like many urban school environments, Grant Elementary School faces the challenge of providing high-quality education and a learning environment conducive to meeting academic standards outlined by the State of Georgia. Grant Elementary School students consistently struggles to perform at or above grade-level. This has recently resulted in the State of Georgia Department of Education classifying the school as an "Opportunity School." The state of Georgia gives this classification to schools that persistently receive scores below 60 on the Department of Education's accountability measure, the College and Career Performance Index, for three consecutive years. In review of the standard test scores in 2016, the school scored worse than 98.3% of elementary school in the state of Georgia and ranked 29th among 32 elementary schools in the district. Over the past years, the school administration and teaching staff worked tirelessly to improve the academic standing of the school and students enrolled in this learning environment, but consistently failed to accomplish its goal. Since the school failed to demonstrate adequate yearly progress on selected state and local assessments for several consecutive years, the state placed the school on the "Opportunity" list for corrective action.

The external and internal pressures placed on the administrative and teaching staff in Grant Elementary has been tremendous, but the school continues to strive in its efforts to raise the academic standard and students' academic performance levels. The school administration and one kindergarten teacher were very receptive to permitting a program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations, which is utilized throughout the elementary grades K-3 in this school, as well as, the entire school system. The district's adaptation to a direct, scripted reading instruction program such as Wilson Fundations is customary for schools who have experienced low academic achievement. Research indicates, schools who consistently demonstrate low academic success often resort to more highly prescriptive curricula that require the teaching staff to implement select commercial programs to improve student academic achievement. The principal indicated, "Wilson Fundations was selected over several other reading programs by representatives from each of the 26 elementary schools in the district." The principal also divulged she likes Wilson Fundations because "it provides consistency with the reading instruction throughout the district." The principal also claims, "the adoption of Wilson Fundations was an effective strategy for the district because it provided consistency in reading instruction from one school to the next for the large transient and mobile student population." She further explained, "this district-level decision helped to better prepare students for their transition from one school environment to the next and was far less disruptive to the reading curriculum during the students' transition." The principal further explained, "the Wilson Fundations is ideal for kindergarteners because it offers beginning readers explicit reading instruction coupled with extensive reading skill

practice." Similarly, the district level reading specialist presented three program highlights during our frequent conversations that she considered positive features of the Wilson Fundations, "teachers model, direct students to repeat sounds, words, sentences; assessments monitor students throughout the program; extensive practice is offered to provide multiple opportunities for skills application." These features are significant because the integration of literacy-related instructional strategies help to facilitate student learning in reading.

This classroom environment was an excellent pairing for conducting the program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations. The teacher and students were receptive to my presence in the classroom and began to anticipate my arrival without any disruption to instruction. There were many prevalent classroom behaviors that immediately caught my attention. One apparent and distinctive characteristic of the class was the students continuously strived to live up to the communicated expectations established by the classroom teacher and teacher assistant. The most obvious observation was the students were comfortable with the class regimen and established rules and routines. The students were very social and frequently interacted with one another to encourage, support, and correct academic and behavioral issues. The students welcomed the responsibilities of supporting and assisting each other during reading instruction, as students' seats were arranged in small tables, which helped promote communal interaction. However, the students were easily distracted, which was developmentally appropriate. The most notable description of these kindergarten students was their constant need to laugh and giggle throughout the instructional activities in the classroom.

Throughout the 9-week observation phase, the teacher explained during our brief but frequent conversations, that it took a considerable amount of time at the beginning of the academic year to form this cooperative and congenial class community. It was evident from my observations the teacher did an effective job in fostering a respectful class environment for learning. The communal learning environment made it easier to transition in and out of the classroom with very little disturbance. The students quickly became accustomed to my classroom visits and my appearance in the class became less of a novelty and a regular and anticipated fixture of the instructional setting on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The goal of this program evaluation was to determine the overall effectiveness of the kindergarten teacher's implementation of the Wilson Fundations. During this program evaluation, the primary objectives were to ensure the reading program was implemented with fidelity and the kindergarten students in this class made adequate progress to reach a basic level and develop proficient reading skills for their peer group.

Three research questions were selected prior to collaborating with the two stakeholders at Grant Elementary, the principal and teacher. Ironically, when the principal and teacher were asked what they hoped the reading evaluation would accomplish, they both responded with a request to address the following three questions below which were in direct alignment with the evaluation of the reading program.

Research Questions

1. To what extent was the Wilson Fundations implemented appropriately as designed by the author?

2. In what ways, could the implementation of the Wilson Fundations be improved at Grant Elementary School to derive the most benefit for the kindergarten students who participate in this program?

3. What was the overall academic effect of the Wilson Fundations on student learning in this kindergarten class?

The concerns of the principal and teacher were the basis of my overall reading evaluation questions as they were tailored to address their concerns regarding the implementation of the Wilson Fundations. The overall intent of the research was to ensure the information obtained from this program evaluation was diagnostic in nature and addressed the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning component of instruction. Additionally, the outcomes from the observations and research would also offer recommendations to improve the instruction or delivery to increase student learning. The three main objectives established for the evaluation findings were: (1) offer interpretations of the investigation findings, (2) offer suggestions on ways the delivery can be improved, and (3) draw and offer discernments relative to the data collected from the evaluation process. The results of this investigation are reported in this chapter based upon the response to each of the overarching stakeholders' questions.

Research Question 1

To what extent was the Wilson Fundations implemented in the way that it was designed at Grant Elementary School?

To determine if the kindergarten teacher implemented the Wilson Fundations as designed, observations of the class instruction were made over a four-month timeframe

for a total of 18 classroom sessions. As part of this evaluation, the researcher conducted

a thorough review of the Wilson Fundations Teacher's Manual and engaged in a formal

training from the school district's Reading Specialist prior to the classroom observations

to adequately monitor the teacher's delivery of the prescribed reading instruction for each

lesson. The resource guide coupled with training, afforded the evaluator the opportunity

to become well acquainted with the proper instructional procedures.

   The formative evaluation phase of this evaluation was very informative and

provided specific details regarding the delivery of instruction. The classroom teacher

demonstrated many strengths in the delivery of the prescribed reading instruction as

dictated by the Wilson Fundations to maximize student learning. From the onset, one

obvious observation was the student reading achievement levels where posted and visible

within and outside the classroom as they were labeled with an assigned number, versus

students' name, to easily identify the overall academic performance of all students

enrolled in the class. The displayed information was very informative and allowed her to

gather initial assessment information about students utilizing a far less invasive process,

as the data was readily available. Frequent classroom monitoring revealed the teacher

exercised effective classroom management skills by keeping the students' attention

focused on instruction and offering gentle reminders to refocus disruptive student

behavior. The teacher prepared and utilized a written lesson plan and the Wilson

Fundations Instructional Manual for reference in every instructional session. She was

proficient at delivering, pacing, and making a smooth transition from one instructional

activity to the next. The teacher was diligent in utilizing questioning techniques

throughout the entire lesson to make sure the students thoroughly understood the information presented. To that end, the teacher made the necessary corrections when she recognized constraints that hindered student progress as she proceeded through the general lesson procedures.

One of the most obvious features of the Wilson Fundations was the daily lesson procedures were repetitive and followed a consistent pattern of daily delivery. The field notes really allowed me to capture the sessions' daily activities that significantly contributed to the program analysis of the evaluation phase. At the beginning of the lesson, the students moved from their assigned seats to the carpeted area in front of the classroom to receive general instruction from the teacher. The students were seated on the floor directly in front of the whiteboard to see and maneuver the instructional prompts (Baby Echo pointer, Alphabet Magnetic Tiles, Large Sound Cards, Letter Formation Guide Chart, and the Vowel Sound Chart). The teacher was methodical about the delivery of instruction and consistently utilized various forms of assessment such as: oral review and drill of the alphabetical letters, sky write/alphabet letter formation, and word play, to gauge student learning as she progressed through the reading lesson. She also rotated amongst the students while seated on the carpeted area in front of the class and/or throughout the classroom working tables to ensure students were making adequate progress.

The Wilson Fundations Level K Manual has specific directions for the general student body and specifically provides students in the lowest 30th percentile with additional instructional activities. The 12 general sections are listed as Alphabetical

Order, Dictation Sounds, Drill Sounds, Echo Find Letters, Echo Find Words, Echo Letter

Formation, Letter-Keyword-Sound, Make It Fun, Sky Write/Letter Formation, Storytime,

Student Notebook- K, Trick Words, and Word Play You have 13 sections listed here.

The teacher always opened the lesson by conducting a review of drill sounds with

Large, Standard Sound cards, and the vowel extension poster. The Large Sound Cards

helped to vocally model the letter-keyword-sound and had the student repeat the letter-

keyword sound. The students echoed after the teacher or the leader for drill sound warm-

up. The Standard Sound Cards were listed on the board and the students reviewed this

card display with Baby Echo. The teacher said the letter-keyword-sound and held up

Baby Echo to have students repeat. The principal communicated, "the daily and

consistent alphabetical drills were positive aspects of the Wilson Fundations." The

teacher agreed, as she indicated, "the Wilson Fundations deliberate drills provided the

students with daily practice of naming and sound recognition." She also expressed, "the

drills were like the basic reading experience she had in school when she was the same

age." The teacher presented alphabetical concepts, letters and corresponding sounds, and

vowel extension every day for review. She introduced new letters daily until the

completion of the entire alphabet was presented and became a repetitive feature of daily

instruction. There was a discussion of new vocabulary terminology for Word Play using

the Standard Sound Card display to make 5 to 6 unit words, predetermined by the

teacher's manual. Most words followed the consonant-vowel-consonant (C-V-C)

formation, typically three letter words. The teacher discussed the long vowel sounds of

letters in words and utilized the word resource guide say that this guide is located in the

manual in each lesson to demonstrate how the additional vowel changed the pronunciation of the word.

The Wilson Fundations Level K Teachers Manual provided specific instructions on how to implement the program and procedures for teaching the various skills in the classroom. The first section was Drill Sounds/Warm-up. The teacher clearly communicated her expectations to the students for this component of instruction and reminded them that she would speak when Baby Echo was pointed to the letter or the word and they were to repeat when Baby Echo faced them. The headings listed below indicate the steps the teacher followed which provided active teacher-student interaction through a multisensory method to learning. The Wilson Fundations Manual and Material claim there are 13 steps to the daily instruction.

Alphabetical Order. The required material for alphabetical order included: standard sound cards, Baby Echo pointer, magnetic letter boards, titles and the alphabet overlay. This portion of instruction took about 2-3 minutes to complete. Students matched letter titles to the alphabet in order (A first, then B, etc.). The students immediately began the reading instruction with a Drill Sound/Warm Up sign the Large Sound Cards to review the alphabet letter sounds. The teacher or designated student reviewed the letter-keyword sound and had the students echo or repeat them. The evaluation strategy utilized for the component of the lesson was oral recitations and visual presentations. The students went through the 26 letters of the alphabet saying the letter, corresponding picture name, and letter sound such as: A-apple-/a/, B-bat-/b/, etc.

The teacher evaluated and assessed student performance through observation and verbal response. The teacher remediated as required as she progressed through the alphabet.

For each iteration of the drills, the teacher always designated a student leader to lead and/or demonstrate the exercise. The teacher or designated student served as the announcer for the letter and the student body recited the alphabet letters while the teacher or student pointed to Standard Card Display with the Baby Echo pointer. Baby Echo faced the letter when the leader said the letter name and then turned to face the students when it was time for them to recite the letter name. The leader paused at the end of each row. The vowels were represented in a different color than the consonants to highlight the letter as a vowel sound and make it easily identifiable. When the students completed the drill review of the entire alphabet, the teacher asked the students the number of sounds the vowels made and reminded them that each letter had a short and long vowel sound. The teacher and teacher assistant collaborated to assess student progress throughout the lesson.

Following the oral drill review of the alphabet, the teacher went to the Standard Sound Cards (Small Letter Tiles) that were placed on the board gradually as they were introduced to the students. The entire alphabet was displayed on the board when the researcher's classroom observations began. The alphabet cards were always listed in four rows (a-f, g-l, m-s, and t-z) to help the students learn the alphabet in four quadrants. When the alphabet letters were complete, the teacher moved to the Vowel Extension Posters. On this diagram, the students said the short vowel letter sound and moved to the right following the squiggly line toward the picture that represented the letter (e.g., a-

apple- /ă/, e- Ed- /ĕ/, i -itch - /ĭ/, o- octopus - /ŏ/, u- up- /ŭ/). The teacher said the letter

sound, the picture name, and letter sound and repeated the letter name. The students

echoed what the teacher presented.

The students were extremely familiar with the alphabetical order procedure and

recited the sound cards with lots of enthusiasm daily. The students seemed to thoroughly

enjoy the card review portion of the Wilson Fundations Reading instruction because they

do this activity aloud in unison with the whole class using a choral reading strategy. The

choral reading activities also help to build students' fluency as they are familiar with the

a-z letter/sound relationships (letter to sound and sound to letter) to ultimately increase

academic knowledge and confidence.

Diction Sounds/Words. In this step, the students proceeded to Diction Sounds

and Words which took about 5-10 minutes to complete. The material required for this

section was Echo the Owl, dry eraser markers, and tablets. However, the teacher only

utilized Baby Echo and the white board for this activity and asked select students to come

to the board and write the letter sounds they heard her pronounce to form the spoken

word. The teacher dictated the sound or word from the Fundations Teacher's Manual.

The students echoed the sound or word. The teacher then asked a student to come to the

white board and write the letter the sounds makes. The student wrote the letter that made

the sound, but could receive assistance from a selected student of choice if he or she did

not know the answer. The teacher asked the selected student to write the word on the

white board and spell it orally. The teacher checked the student's work and made any

necessary corrections as required. This dictation exercise enabled the students to utilize

the alphabetical sounds of letters to create words. Students became familiar with the connection of letters to words to the generation of phrases and sentences.

Drill Sounds. The Drill Sounds step took about 2-5 minutes. The materials required for this activity were the Large Sound Cards, Standard Sound Cards, and Baby Echo. The teacher used the Large Sound Cards. The students then echoed what was presented by the teacher. Both consonants and vowels were reviewed daily. The students really enjoyed this segment of the instruction, as they echoed the letter names and sounds with such enthusiasm and jubilation.

Echo/Find Letters. The Echo Find Letters activity took approximately 2-3 minutes. The materials required for the utilization of this component of instruction were the Standard Sound Cards, Echo the Owl, Letter Board and Tiles, and the Alphabet Overlay. The teacher dictated a sound and held up Echo facing students to repeat the sound. The teacher asked, "What letter says that sound?" A selected student went to the white board and pointed to the letter tile that represented the letter sound spoken. Then the student answered by naming the letter that made the sound. The teacher directed students to repeat the sound, name the letter, match it, and place the letter title on the second half of the board. This activity was more challenging to the students as they frequently struggled with this segment. The teacher indicated she "initially had to offer a lot of prompting to the students with this activity, but the students have gotten progressively better with daily practice."

Echo/Find Words. The Echo Find Words section took about seven minutes to complete. The materials used were Baby Echo and Letter Titles. The teacher dictated a

word, held up Echo, and the students repeated the word. The teacher then asked a student to come forward and tap out the word. The selected student found the tile letters for the sounds heard in the word from the four rows of tile letters. The student tapped the first sound he or she heard with index finger to thumb (first or beginning sound), middle finger to thumb (second or/medial or/middle sound), and ring finger to thumb (third or/last or/final sound). Then the students said the sounds as they pressed their thumb across their three fingers used starting with the index finger and said the full word. The teacher and students tapped out the word presented on their fingers. Teacher selected another student to spell the word orally. The teacher and student made the word with the selected sound cards. The teacher told one student to erase the words and the teacher returned Letter Cards to the left side of the board. The finger tapping component of the Wilson Fundations was interesting to observe the kindergarten students utilizing this strategy to help sound out words. The students were struggling with this component of instruction and needed consistent and continual guidance from the teacher to accomplish this task proficiently.

      Echo/Letter Formation. The Echo Letter Formation took about six minutes to complete. The emphasis of the Echo Letter Formation, the emphasis was the correct formation of the letter being written. The teacher demonstrated the letter formation using the Wilson Writing Grid on the white board as a verbalization guide and reminded students to grip their pencils correctly. The teacher directed the students to assume the proper writing position in their chairs with feet on floor and hands on the table. The teacher said a sound and held up Baby Echo for the students to repeat the sound. The

teacher asked the students "What is the vowel sound?" A student was called upon by the teacher to name the letter. The teacher or designated student wrote the letter on the writing grid affixed to the white board. The teacher then directed the students to say the letter that was verbalized or written. All students responded in unison with the letter name written on the writing grid.

Letter-Keyword-Sound. When the teacher introduced a new letter as she went through the alphabet, she used Baby Echo to point to specific letters of the alphabet for 2-3 minutes. This activity helped the teacher present new letters and sounds. The teacher displayed the Large Sound Cards and asked the students to name the letter. Then the teacher asked the students to name the keyword (picture). The teacher repeated the name of the picture placing emphasis on the initial sound of the first letter. The teacher explained the letter, picture, and sound then held up Baby Echo for the students to repeat. The teacher asked the students, "What is the name of the letter and what is the picture to help you remember the sound of the letter?" The students responded with the letter name, picture, and the sound of the letter.

Make It Fun. The Make It Fun section of instruction was rarely observed because the teacher presented this instructional section in a whimsical manner. On the one occasion the teacher placed items in a brown paper bag and asked several students to select an item from the bag and tap out the selected items' letter sounds. Then the student presented the item to the other students to guess the name of the item selected. This is one of the activities listed in the Wilson Fundations Teacher's Manual to help make the

reading instruction fun, but it appeared this was the first time it was presented to the students.

Sky Write/Letter Formation. The Letter Formation Writing Grid Chart was a guide designed to look like writing paper. The chart contained pictures of clouds, an airplane, grass, and a worm on the side of four consecutive lines: from top to bottom, the skyline was the first line, the second line was the plane line, the third line was identified as the grass line, and the fourth line was the worm line. This segment lasted approximately 2-3 minutes. The Wilson Writing Grid posted on the classroom white board helped demonstrate and guide the students through this practical exercise. The students were instructed to stand, shake their arms and body, and stretch prior to beginning the exercise. The teacher asked the students to point their arms out to represent a pencil. The teacher warmed the students up by pointing and naming the various lines. The teacher then demonstrated how to write the letter on the Grid using verbalization of the activity for each line as she formed the letters. The students then said the letter sound once the letter was made. The students practiced skywriting each letter a few times. There were usually two letters presented at once. Before the students proceeded to a new letter to skywrite, they were instructed to shake their arms out. The students would skywrite the letters first, then were instructed to write the letters on their writing grid.

Storytime. The Storytime component of the instruction was only observed once. The teacher selected a student to read a book to the entire class. When the researcher inquired about this section of instruction, the teacher stated she reads a book to the

students every Friday. This obviously accounted for the limited evaluation of this portion

of the reading program as classroom observations were conducted weekly on Tuesday,

Wednesday, and Thursday as requested by the classroom teacher.

Student Notebook K. The student notebook for the kindergarten class was

referenced once during observations for student writing samples. Once the traditional

writing instruction was completed, the teacher instructed the students to use their Apple

iPads to write alphabetic letters and words with software that displayed the Wilson

Writing Paper which contained four illustrated lines: skyline, plane line, grass line, and

worm line. The students were well acquainted with this procedure and did well on this

task as the teacher walked around the class to determine if the students worked and wrote

the letters and words accurately.

Trick Words. The teacher introduced Trick Words, Wilson's name for sight

words, to the students every day for about 2-5 minutes. The instruction varied as the

students were asked to write the words on the white board or on the make shift writing

grid paper in different colors inserted in a plastic sleeve which was strategically placed

for students to practice writing the alphabetic letters. The trick words were always

presented as words students could not tap out and the teacher emphasized that trick words

must be memorized. The trick words were written in large letters on the board. The

teacher read the word and the students repeated the word. Then the teacher presented the

word and talked about the tricky part. The teacher said the word, spelled the word, and

said the word again. The teacher instructed the students to skywrite the word as she

checked the students' paper to see if they used the appropriate skywriting techniques.

The students said the word again and the teacher asked the students to close their eyes and visualize the word. Then the students, skywrote the word a second time. The trick words segment is an effective way to expose the children to the Fry Sight word list for kindergarten students. Students also took these words home with them to study and learn for the three class assessments: beginning, middle, and end of the year.

Word Play. Word Play name was presented every day using the Standard Sound Cards to make five to six words daily. Students were instructed to utilize the standard sound cards to make a word then tap out each sound the word made. The teacher would occasionally use the sentence frames to help the students visualize the appropriate use of words in a sentence structure. The tall frames were used to begin sentences and to capitalize proper nouns. The teacher used the smallest frames to indicate the punctuation for the end of the sentence. The Word Play activity helped the teacher reinforce print awareness, phonological awareness, decoding, and spelling skills.

After the general instructional section on the floor was completed, the students returned to their designated seats at their tables for the writing component of the instruction. The students used their individual writing grid, with the Wilson Fundations writing sheet inserted in a plastic sleeve, to practice writing letters and words. The teacher consistently circulated throughout the assigned tables to ensure the students made their letters and words correctly during the writing component of the instruction.

The classroom teacher followed the 13 steps of instruction as suggested in the Wilson Fundation Level K Manual. Table 3 lists the suggested Wilson Fundations 13 steps with the frequencies of occurrences for all 18 observations of the instructional

delivery. The teacher utilized multiple recommended (formal and/or informal)

assessments into the instructional learning activities throughout the entire curriculum to

measure and monitor student progress and provided immediate feedback to students. The

diagnostic and formative assessment strategies that were incorporated in the Wilson

Fundations provided the teacher tools to help monitor student progress throughout the

process flow of instructional delivery.

Table 3

The Wilson Fundations 13 Steps of Reading Instruction

Categories	Number of Times Observed	Total Number of Observations
Alphabetical Order	18	18
Diction Sounds/Words/sentences	18	18
Drill Sounds	18	18
Echo/Find Letters	18	18
Echo Find Words	18	18
Echo/Letter Formation	18	18
Letter Keyword Sound	18	18
Make It Fun	1	18
Skywrite/Letter Formation	18	18
Storytime	1	18
Student Notebook K	1	18
Trick Words Practice	18	18
Word Play	18	18

Note. The frequencies of occurrences were generated from the 18 classroom observations in the kindergarten class for the 13 steps of the program implementation.

The teacher did follow the prescribed reading directions of the Wilson Fundations

curriculum accurately in general, but frequently omitted the Storytime, Make It Fun, and

Student Notebook sections as they were only presented once each during the eighteen

observations. At the district level, these three sections were considered adjustable or adaptable activities. In the Wilson Fundations' Teacher Manal, Storytime and Make It Fun are considered "Variable Activities." The Make It Fun activity is intended to reinforce previously taught concepts. Make it Fun activities are typically a game of some sort. Storytime helps students understand the structural elements of a story, as well as, familiarize them with print awareness and visualization. This activity involves listening, reading, and writing activities. The Student Notebook helps students with letter-sound relationships and they have an opportunity to practice correctly forming letters. Practice is important when it comes to letter formation. With the initial purchase of Wilson, teachers were given their own copy of the Student Notebook in the Teacher's Kit. The Student Notebook is a great resource, but is a consumable item, that must be purchased for students from year to year. Due to budget restrictions, this school site opted not to purchase this specific item. Therefore, this Kindergarten teacher had developed an innovative way to give students the chance to practice letter formation using an alternative method, the Wilson Fundations' Writing Grid inserted in a plastic protective sleeve for daily instruction. In the Wilson Fundations Manual, sound instruction is initially linked to letter formation. Students learn the letter name, its formation and its sound simultaneously. Consequently, the Make It Fun, Storytime, and Student Notebook K, were the only areas that were often skipped in the sequence of the Wilson Fundations instructional delivery. Additionally, the teacher would also modify the allocated delivery time based on the immediate needs of the students in her class, which demonstrated her

flexibility to adequately respond and modify the reading instruction to address and encourage student learning.

Research Question 2

In what ways, could the implementation of the Wilson Fundations be improved at Grant Elementary School to derive the most benefit for the kindergarten students who participate in this program?

The teacher followed the Wilson Fundations reading instructional procedures as prescribed for most of the Reading sessions instructional time. She presented the reading instruction in a concise sequential manner as recommended in the Wilson Fundations Teacher's Manual. When the teacher was asked why it took more time than allocated by the Wilson Fundations material to go through the instruction, the teacher responded, "I frequently extend the lesson activity time as deemed necessary to attain the desired student performance results." The teacher was attentive and responsive to student questions and provided clear explanations and directions to students as she progressed through the lesson. She also encouraged students to actively engage in instruction during the delivery of the Wilson Fundations. Although the researcher determined the teacher implemented the reading program successfully, there are two ways to improve reading instruction.

The most profound way to improve the reading instruction is to combine the Wilson Fundations of instruction with a core/literature-based language arts program for a balanced literacy approach to reading and spelling, as recommended by the creator, Barbara Wilson (Fundations Teacher Manual, 2015). Interviews with the kindergarten

teacher revealed the training received for the implementation of the Wilson Fundations was limited, as the teacher attended a three-day training session to prepare her for delivery of the program. The teacher stated, "I learned how to present and sequence the instructional material by independently studying the teacher's manual and implementing the directions as prescribed." The teacher effectively mastered the implementation and delivery of the Wilson Fundations in her kindergarten class. However, it would be mutually beneficial to have the kindergarten teachers visit each other's classes during their instructional planning breaks at least once a quarter to help the kindergarten teachers to remain accountable for implementing the Wilson Fundations with fidelity as prescribed in the teacher's manual. Kindergarten teachers observing other kindergarten teachers, peer observations, can be viewed as a form of collaborative professional development, which ultimately endorses continual professional growth to improve teaching practice and student performance. The peer observation recommendation is appropriate for the local school and district because it allows the teachers to share instructional techniques and ideologies between one another. As the district prepares to incorporate a core literature program to complement the Wilson Fundations, peer observations will help the kindergarten teachers improve in three major areas: increase the sense of shared responsibility for teaching and learning, increase focus on student achievement, and increase collegiality among the kindergarten staff in reading.

Another way to improve the reading instruction is to increase parental involvement with students at home. The teacher frequently sent written communications home and made phone calls to parents to elicit support in reinforcing reading skills at

home and to regularly inform parents of their individual child's progress. The teacher invited parents to attend meetings and visit classroom sessions for observation, but as indicative of many urban educational environments, oftentimes, there were only one or two parents who attended. The principal and teacher both indicated they would really like to have far more parental involvement in the school and classroom. When asked about the feedback parents offered regarding the Wilson Fundations, the teacher informed me, "The parents' were more concerned about their individual child's progress in reading rather than the reading program." The teacher further expressed concern regarding the lack of familiarity with the Fry Sight Words list for kindergarteners she sent home with the students for the parents to review with their individual child and she indicated, "I can tell when the students come back to school which parents are working with the child at home by the progress the student makes on the recognition of the sight words". The teacher claims the students' proficiency with the identification of the words is the most obvious indicator of the parents that work with their children at home versus those that do not.

Research Question 3

What was the effect of the Wilson Fundations on the teacher's overall instruction?

The data collected helped to determine the teacher's overall effectiveness by the results of comparing the test scores of each individual child from the beginning and middle of the year. This kindergarten class had a total of 24 students. The students' skill level in reading was very diverse. The students' initial reading performance level was indicative of the following skill levels: nine students were above grade level, six students

were on grade level, and six students were below grade level in reading. Three students enrolled into the class well after the initial assessment, therefore, limited initial data was available for these students. Both assessment scores, Kindergarten Sight Word Assessment and DIBELS Next were based upon the school's rubrics for quarters 1, 2 and 3. The first and second quarters are the longest and last for about 13 weeks. The third and fourth quarter of the year are about 10 weeks each.

One evaluation the teacher used to assess student reading grade level was the Kindergarten Sight Word Assessment. In the fall assessment, students were expected to score at least an 11, with a goal ranging from 9-12. The winter assessment goal was for the students to score at least a 22, with a goal range of 18-26. The spring assessment, which the teachers will administer at the end of the year, the students were expected to score 55, with a range of 44-55. The goal number refers to the number of words the student should identify correctly.

The second assessment the teacher utilized was DIBELS Next, which are short one- minute fluency measures. For this assessment, the students were tested on their ability to identify, with fluency, the initial sound of words, letter naming, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense words. At the beginning of the year the First Sound Fluency (FSF) targeted score was 23 and Letter Name Fluency (LNF) was 29. During the middle of the year students' FSF and LNF scores were 52. By the end of the year, the students were expected to make a 62 on both the FSF and LNF.

The mid-year evaluation results on both assessments revealed most students were performing at or above grade level in the identification of letter names, letter sounds, and

trick words. The six students experiencing academic challenges earlier in the year, as indicated by placement in the red zone, demonstrated significant progress in reading per the mid-year assessment tool. All students in this kindergarten class are now in the yellow (on grade level) or green zone (above grade level), which indicates reading performance is proficient. The mid-year assessment of individual students' reading indicated the Wilson Fundations had some impact on student learning, as all students' performance level met the districts and state's outlined standards in reading. All students continued to maintain their proficiency reading status for the remainder of the year and were all promoted to the first grade.

At the end of the 2016-17 academic year all the kindergarten students total composite DIBELS scores were between 91-119, which was on target as the established goal for the end of year assessment is 89-119. All students sight word recognition scores were between 44- 55, as the end of school target goal was 55, a few even exceeded the goal and were at 67, which included 12words from the first grade sight word list.

The Wilson Fundations successfully provided these beginning readers explicit reading instruction and practice that lead to academic achievement in reading. Direct instructional teaching techniques, utilized in the Wilson Fundations, proved to significantly help the students develop necessary reading skills needed to succeed academically. The principal, teacher, and reading specialist all identified the following strengths of the Wilson Fundations Program, "explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction; carefully sequenced sound/symbol instruction; addresses the five essential components of reading instruction – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary,

and comprehension." However, there are several areas of weakness the district reading specialist and the classroom teacher identified as less than favorable aspects of the Wilson Fundations.

The negative aspects of the Wilson Fundations were communicated emphatically by the classroom teacher and district reading specialist regarding the Wilson Fundations. The first negative comment communicated included, "volume and cost of material of the Wilson Fundations is significant as teachers need manuals, books, journals, cards, and DVDs." The price of the program and kit for each individual classroom is expensive and the price has increased significantly over the last two years of conducting the program evaluation. Unfortunately, this makes it even more difficult for the school system to purchase replacement material which requires the teacher to resort to using make shift or homemade material to supplement the consumables which is laborious and time consuming.

The classroom teacher and reading specialist's opinions differ regarding the three-day training offered through the district to show teachers how to implement the reading program. The district level reading specialist agrees that more time probably should be allocated for training but given the current funding constraints, the current training model "provides teachers with adequate information to implement the program effectively in the classroom." Conversely, the classroom teacher felt "more training is needed beyond the 3-day applied method workshop to adequately prepare for the implementation of the program." The one area the classroom teacher and district reading specialist both mutually agreed upon was, "training is necessary to implement Wilson Fundations

appropriately" due to the multi-tiered steps. However, the teacher felt the real training occurred when she returned to school and had to continue to independently study and implement the program in her individual classroom where she became better acquainted with the material and reading instruction. The final complaint both the teacher and district reading specialist made about the Wilson Fundations was, "the reading program is extremely scripted and leaves little room for creativity and/or variation."

As a reading specialist and researcher, my major concern with the Wilson Fundations Reading Program was the letter-keyword-sound cards for the letters "e" for Ed, "i" for itch, and "x" for fox. The pictures on these cards do not automatically coordinate with the identified letter, as photo prompting is necessary by an arrow. The author could have utilized more simplistic images to depict the letter and sound, for example "i" is a picture of a monkey scratching. However, the daily repetitive practice of stating the alphabet and corresponding alphabetic sound was very effective and enabled students to commit to memory. The students became well acquainted with the sound and letter representation due to daily review. The students developed an automaticity response to the letters once presented.

During the academic year of this program evaluation, I had the opportunity to substitute in many kindergarten classes throughout the district. The kindergarten students, district-wide, were well acquainted with the regimen of the instructional delivery of the Wilson Fundations and could guide me along as a novice presenter of the program. The students' familiarity with the Wilson Fundations was very regimented and

routine which speaks volumes to the developers and teachers responsible for the delivery and implementation of the reading program.

An additional advantageous feature of Wilson Fundations is that it is very well promoted on the Internet. There are multiple kindergarten model video examples available online to provide examples of how to deliver each component of the Wilson Fundations. The videos are accessible to the teachers to review at his/her convenience. It also provides an additional level of support for the educators. The teacher can review the videos to ensure instructional delivery is adequately aligned to authentic implementation. The skill development at each level of the Wilson Fundations is presented in a scope and sequence fashion as to build upon previously taught skills from unit to unit and year to year.

The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (2017) established a Framework for Effective Practice and suggests high quality research-based curriculum provides learning goals and activities that provide guidance on "what to teach, (content) and how to teach it (learning experiences and teaching practice)" (p. 1). The creators of the Framework for Effective Practice have selected four components for the frame's skeleton which is often depicted as a house. The foundational design of the house is representative of the "engaging interactions and environment" in a learning community. Just as the bottom of a house structure must be solidly constructed to alleviate eventual collapse, the same is true for educational programs. The Wilson Fundations is a great example of what "right looks like" as it relates to an effective academic program for the Framework for Effective Practice.

Wilson Fundations' curriculum content is based around literacy development skills in early childhood development that helps to enhance and improve students' literacy performance. The curriculum of Wilson Fundations does provide a thorough 13-part lesson plan that offers extensive teacher-student interaction and multi-sensory learning techniques to adequately and substantially support student learning. The first pillar of the structure is research based curriculum and teaching practice. The Wilson Fundations is a research-based curriculum and presents the following skills in a repetitive fashion daily: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principles, decoding, encoding, word analysis, high frequency/sight word instruction, vocabulary development, fluency, language development, listening and reading comprehension with visualization and metacognition. This program evaluation attests to the fact the Wilson Fundations addresses foundational skills of the Common Core Standards in Reading for grade levels K-3.

The Wilson Fundations' second pillar, continuous and ongoing formative assessment, is an integral part of the curriculum. The students are constantly assessed throughout the curriculum to ensure the students are grasping the concepts presented. The curriculum promotes universal screening for benchmarking (point of reference to compare data) and diagnostic assessment (establish level of what is known) for continuous progress monitoring. Students who experience difficulties after the whole group instruction are given an additional instructional lesson called double-dose.

The fourth stage, the roof, provides highly individualized teaching and learning. The double-dose instructional session gives students additional time to master the

identified delinquent skills and/or skill sets. Therefore, students who show signs of

deficiencies are immediately identified and targeted for additional instruction until

mastery.

Recommendations for Future Implementation of the Wilson Fundations

In review of the field notes generated during the 18 classroom observations, there

are three instructional steps that were frequently omitted during instruction. These areas

were only presented once during the entire four-month evaluation phase: Make it Fun,

Storytime, and Student Notebook K. The implementation of these three steps helped to

break up the monotony of the Reading instruction, which adds variation in the daily

instruction of the Wilson Fundations. Therefore, the consistent implementation of these

three steps would add value to the daily instructional delivery of the reading program and

help to employ the program according to the plan of the author which is known as

fidelity. Program implementation with fidelity is "using the curriculum and instructional

practices consistently and accurately as they were intended to be used" (Mellard, 2010, p.

3), which, subsequently, influences the outcome of the program. The implementation of

these three instructional steps is one recommendation for the classroom teacher. These

three steps will help to benefit the instruction because they would add variation to

instruction.

The Make It Fun section helps to break up the repetitiveness in Wilson

Fundations. The students in the class seemed to enjoy this component of the instructional

process when presented as it helped to bring diversity of practice into the lesson. The

students responded well to this activity and seemed to enjoy it. Since this portion of

instruction does not require any major or additional preparation on the teacher's behalf, it would be advantageous to include this portion of instruction in the delivery on a daily basis. The teacher may have incorporated this section later in the daily instruction, but the incorporation of the Make It Fun component of the instruction was not evident during the multiple observations of the class reading activities.

The Storytime section of the Wilson Fundations was perhaps one of the most enjoyable aspects of reading instruction for children. Students loved to hear their teacher read stories aloud in class. Researchers often contend that nothing makes a book more appealing to a child than to hear a teacher read a book aloud. Most teachers are very expressive and animated when reading books and stories to children, which really draws the attention of the students to listen intently to the story. Students often want to participate in the story by orally reciting the major and repetitive verses while looking at the pictures in the book that complement the story. Reading stories aloud to students also helps to develop memory, prediction skills, character analysis, and comprehension skills. Further, reading aloud help stimulate students mentally as books evoke emotions from children as they empathize with the characters in the story. Listening to stories read aloud by others, especially the classroom teacher, is one of the most enjoyable experiences and activities of the kindergarten classroom experiences.

The Student Notebook K is also another feature of the Wilson Fundations that was only witnessed once during the class observations. The student notebooks housed many of the written instructional letter formation, as they were introduced. The students were afforded the opportunity to write the letter and say the sound of the letter orally,

commit to memory, and color the associate picture that corresponded to the letter. This notebook enabled the students to retain a record of what they have learned in Reading for the entire year. It also served as memorabilia for student to reflect upon the kindergarten academic year.

Two General Recommendations to Improve Reading Instruction

There are two overarching recommendations that would help improve the reading instruction at Grant Elementary School: increase parental involvement and the formation of data teams to implement data driven instruction. These two approaches would help establish a stronger foundation for teaching and student learning.

Increase Parental Involvement

Research has consistently shown over the years that one major issue that seems to be a prevalent problem in many urban school settings is getting parents to become active participants in the educational experience of their child. In my conversations with the kindergarten teacher observed, the lack of parental involvement certainly presents a challenge in her classroom community. Like many urban centers around the nation, getting parents to assume an active role in the classroom and school environment is often challenging. Many studies have shown that parental involvement in their child's educational process, both at school and at home, is a significant indicator of academic success, devoid of race or socioeconomic status. Studies have also shown that the effort of parents and teachers working collaboratively together positively affect the education of children. The first recommendation to the teacher and principal of Grant Elementary School is to strengthen the relationship between the school and home in the education of

all the students to facilitate a more positive and productive educational environment.

Joyce Epstein (2015) developed one of the most comprehensive frameworks to date that

encompasses six types of parental involvement in the K-12 academic environment, which

highlights that parental involvement at the school can be multi-dimensional and multi-

faceted.

Table 4

Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

Type	Description
Type 1: Parenting	Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
Type 2: Communicating	Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs.
Type 3: Volunteering	Recruit and organize parent help and support.
Type 4: Learning at Home	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
Type 5: Decision Making	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.
Type 6: Collaborating with the Community	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development

Note. 2002, p. 141.

The six types of parental involvement are reflected in Table 3, parenting,

communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with

the community all define the many ways parents can support the educational process of

their child to raise academic achievement and student success.

Parenting. Parental involvement at school offers many benefits to each individual

student, as well as collectively as a group. Research has shown that when parents get

involved with their child's school events, such as parent-teacher conferences, open house, and homework children become more motivated to achieve higher levels of academic competency and perform better academically, which also includes learning to read faster. Further, studies on parent involvement indicate the more extensively involved parents are in their children's academics, the higher the level of student academic achievement (Jeynes, 2008, 2011, & 2012).

The school can elicit more parental involvement by providing education and training for parents. Training parents essentially helps the school to accomplish two missions at once. Helping parents improve their academic skills will simultaneously enable the parent to adopt skills that will help them to work with their child/children academically at home. For instance, parents who receive some direct training in teaching reading skills can be more involved and capable of helping their child learn to read at home. Training parents can have a positive effect on the reading skills of their child if given prompts and techniques on how to accomplish this goal (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2015).

Communicating. Communication is key to helping parents remain abreast to what is happening at school. The optimal form of teacher and parent communication in school environments is two-way communication. Two-way communication includes various forms of interaction to keep parents abreast and up-to-date on their child's academic progress. These communications can include several contact methods such as through newsletters, conferences, and notes. The two-way communication feature allows parents the opportunity to respond or contact the classroom teacher on issues that may

arise pertaining to the academic development of their child (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2015).

Volunteering. Parents volunteering in the school environment helps to give them a sense of ownership in the school's culture from both an academic and social perspective. It is important for schools to provide activities that facilitate volunteerism. Schools need to recruit, train, and schedule volunteers and stakeholders to support student academic engagement in the school environment (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2015).

Learning at home. Schools can help ~~to~~ train parents how to establish effective learning environments for learning at home. Grant Elementary School can train and help parents learn how to establish supportive and productive home learning environments. Secondly, the schools can provide information to families about how to help students at home with homework and other designated activities. The goal is to teach parents about the home activities (home activities or school activities) and coordinate the home learning environment with what is going on in the student's classroom and curriculum. Schools can support learning at home by sponsoring curriculum nights and developing summer learning packets to encourage home participation (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2015).

Decision making. Schools can offer parents a chance to be part of the decision-making team for the school environment. Some parents would like the opportunity to voice their opinion regarding their child's educational needs and be an integral part of the school environment. This could be accomplished by forming an advisory committee, school council, or extend an invitation to join the local Parent Teacher Association in the local school community (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2015).

Collaboration with the community. On a larger scale, the school can form allegiances with businesses, organizations, and churches in the community. Collaborating with the community can help improve student learning by strengthening school and family programming. The school can identify resources and services in the community that can help to improve the school's offerings. This can be a reciprocal relationship where the local business, colleges and universities, government agencies, civic organizations, and religious groups help meet the goal of providing a well-rounded and positive academic experience (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2015).

The one lesson the field of education has learned over the years is, parental involvement is not a one-size-fit-all model. The parental involvement offerings at the school level must reflect a diversified set of selections and options to ultimately benefit both the school and individual parent. Research has persistently and consistently shown the reciprocal effect of parental involvement at the school level justifies the time and effort the school invests in establishing the volunteer framework at their individual school.

As it relates to the Wilson Fundations, parental involvement is definitely built into the curriculum and emphasize developing literacy skills as an extension of the school environment at home through the "Home Support Packs." Wilson Fundations offer the classroom teachers informational updates to utilize for parents about the concepts students are currently learning and subsequent activities parents can do at home with their child to reinforce reading instruction in the school environment. These packets are available in both English and Spanish to facilitate communication with diverse home

environments. These home activities foster vocabulary and comprehension skill development. Wilson Fundations also encourage parents to read aloud to their child and engage in discussions about what is read. Another recommended strategy is promoting parents to allow children to listen to audiobooks to build comprehension and support classroom learning. There are aspects of the Home Packet that affords students the opportunity to speak and express themselves to develop oral and mental skills.

Just like the Kindergarten teacher who participated in this research study, teachers are often receptive to have parents come into their classroom environments to assist with the Wilson Fundations daily instruction. There are multiple ways parents can become involved in the Reading process at school: quiz students on trick word vocabulary words using flash cards, allow a child to read a book or vice versus, assist with writing instruction, etc. Most classroom teachers would welcome the opportunity to have a classroom volunteer to assist with instructional preparation and delivery to individual, small, and whole group encounters.

Professional Learning Community (Data Teams)

During the 2016-17 academic year, there was one elementary school in the district that made significant student academic progress which subsequently enabled its removal from the Focus School list, another list in conjunction with the Opportunity List of another segment of schools within the district who are in jeopardy of academic failure, also. The school administrator at this elementary school indicated that the establishment of a school data team to monitor student academic progress was the single contributing factor to remedy its pervasive and continuous academic downward trend in student

academic achievement. Data teams are "small grade-level or department teams that

examine individual student work generated from common formative assessments"

(Besser, Anderson-Davis & Peery, 2006, p. 6). "Data teams adhere to continuous

improvement cycles, examine patterns and trends, and establish specific timelines, roles,

and responsibilities to facilitate analysis that results in action" (White, 2005, p.18). The

data teams collect data regarding the school's academic programs to inform instruction

and improve student academic achievement, through the staff's data-driven decision-

making process. The process of the data team meetings consists of five steps: discuss the

data collected, analyze strengths and obstacles of the data, and establish goals: set,

review, and revise, select instructional strategies, and determine results indicators (Besser

et al., 2006). The data team encompasses three different groups: vertical data team

(multiple grade level representatives), horizontal data team (grade level representatives),

and specialist data team (specialty classes representatives). The characteristics of

effective data team members include nine factors: "accountable to colleagues, on time for

meetings, positive, prepared, believe all students can learn, participate fully in all

meetings, reliable, support decisions, and support colleagues" (p. 65). The data team

meetings at Grant Elementary School occur weekly for about 60 minutes and the topics

discussed were success and challenges, progress monitoring, assessment schedules,

intervention needs, resources, and achievement gaps (p. 75). The data team created a

communication system for internal and external stakeholders to share and display the data

multiple ways: "data room, data wall, school hallways, and newsletters" (p. 76).

The principal at the school that was removed from the Focus List identified that consistently monitoring student achievement through formative assessment is essential in keeping a running track and updated records of student academic performance in all subjects. The school used pre-test and post-test models to monitoring student academic achievement which helped the teachers see patterns of failure developing. Therefore, the teacher can assign the student to receive extra instruction and other needed resources to improve learning and educational performance. She indicated that frequent monitoring of the students' academic performance helped the teacher meet the needs of students before they fell further behind academically. The consistent monitoring of students' academic performance helped the teachers obtain information about the kinds of problems the students were experiencing and subsequently modify instruction as deemed appropriate. The implementation of data based instruction really made a difference in the instructional practice at this elementary school and has enabled the school's name to be removed from the Focus list for schools experiencing academic failure in the district. The success of this school in the district offers a good example for Grant Elementary School to use as a similar model.

Summary

The results listed above indicate the Wilson Fundations does live up to its promise to help students improve their academic performance in reading. Though this blanket statement cannot be generalized to all students, it has proven to live up to its promise for the students in this kindergarten class at Grant Elementary School. Barbara Wilson, the creator of Wilson Fundations, maintains that this reading program is designed to give all

students a solid foundation in reading (Wilson Fundations, 2015). The Wilson Fundations instructional lessons ensure students develop the critical skills for reading and spelling: phonemic awareness, phonics/word study, high frequency word study, reading fluency, vocabulary, handwriting, and spelling as these areas are being taught daily. The Wilson Fundations is appropriate for most reading instructional group settings as it can be utilized during whole class, small group, and/or one-to-one instruction. Although used in some districts as the primary core reading program, the creator claims it is just not enough, as it must be combined with a core/literature based language arts program. The Wilson Fundations is the right reading tool required to intervene early, but can enhance reading skills even more, if combined with a core/literature-base language arts program for an integrated and comprehensive approach to reading and spelling.

Wilson Language Training claims its reading program serves as a prevention program to help reduce reading and spelling failure (Wilson Fundations, 2015). The Wilson Fundations is an integral approach to a multi-tiered system of support that can serve as a response to intervention for students experiencing reading difficulties. As stated in the Wilson Fundations material, progress monitoring was built into the curriculum, which enabled the teacher, to remain abreast and well informed of student learning and progress in reading.

Wilson Fundations has created a comprehensive and compact reading program that does address many of the comprehensive instructional needs of elementary students in Reading. The Wilson Fundations five essential reading components for elementary students enabled the teachers to implement an effective program that is explicit,

systematic, and interactive. However, complimenting this reading program with another literary program, as Wilson Fundations suggests, would likely help the kindergarten teachers enhance student academic achievement in this urban environment, as the reading instruction promises to be more holistic and comprehensive.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The overarching purpose of this program evaluation was to assess implementation of the Wilson Fundations in an urban kindergarten classroom setting and offer recommendations to improve and/or modify such implementation. The opening portion of this chapter will provide a brief review of the problem, purpose, and the research methodology utilized to conduct this program evaluation, followed by a detailed discussion of the major research findings of the program evaluation. The final part of this chapter will discuss implications for practice and offer recommendations for research on the Reading to achieve better academic results for student learning in kindergarten.

Overview of Problem

Reading is a complex and multi-faceted process that entails the mastery of five Major components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Young children must master all five components to effectively learn the skills and concepts necessary to become proficient in reading. While it is not required that all children in the United States attend kindergarten, it is typically the first grade most students enter to begin their formal school experience. The kindergarten curriculum focuses on teaching students basic skills and concepts for early reading. This program evaluation, conducted in a kindergarten class at Grant Elementary School, analyzed implementation of the Wilson Fundations. This program evaluation was necessary to

determine the impact of the program on learning outcomes based on how well the students in this kindergarten class mastered the fundamental skills of reading. The influence of the reading program on student learning and achievement was the major focus of this evaluation. The results revealed from the formative and summative data serve as the evidence required to determine whether the reading program was implemented with fidelity and whether it was effective in improving academic performance in reading for the kindergarten students enrolled in this class.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this program evaluation was to address three concerns related to the implementation of the Wilson Fundations and its prescribed benefits advertised by the creator, Barbara Wilson. The first concern was associated with how well the program was implemented. The second concern regarding implementation of the Wilson Fundations was rooted in assessing the overall impact of the reading program as an intervention for the students' learning in this kindergarten class. The final concern addressed in this program evaluation was making applicable suggestions to the classroom teacher and principal on ways the instructional process in reading can be modified to improve student learning. The three research questions listed below were tailored to address these concerns.

Research Questions

1. To what extent was the Wilson Fundations implemented appropriately as designed by the author?

2. In what ways, could the implementation of the Wilson Fundations be improved at Grant Elementary School to derive the most benefit for the kindergarten students who participate in this program?

3. What was the overall academic effect of the Wilson Fundations on student learning in this kindergarten class?

Review of Methodology

The methodology utilized to conduct this program evaluation was classified as a qualitative study. This practical participatory program evaluation included the involvement of the principal and teacher to improve and ensure relevance of the investigation to the primary sponsors. The balanced control between the evaluator and stakeholders during this investigation ensured that interested parties could obtain the desired and applicable data sought after by each party. Involvement of the stakeholders was also a way to enhance organizational learning for both the principal and classroom teacher. Another basic objective for involving the stakeholders in this investigation was associated with the knowledge base of the principal and classroom teacher. Both were more familiar with the context of the Wilson Fundations and served as valuable allies in the planning and evaluation of the curriculum.

This evaluation process encompassed a combination of various qualitative research methods: observations, interviews, and student document reviews. The evaluator utilized formative evaluation techniques to examine how the reading program was implemented and monitored. Information obtained from the formative and summative evaluation results were utilized to gauge the effectiveness of the students'

reading skill acquisition during the current academic year. The evaluator's intent was to gather as much data as possible to provide feedback to the stakeholders regarding the program's strengths and weaknesses during the implementation of the curriculum process.

The theory utilized to conduct this program evaluation was Daniel Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model. The CIPP Evaluation Model is a decision-focused approach that offers a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluation (Stufflebeam & Zhang 2017). The context component of the evaluation model required the evaluator to collect and analyze the Wilson Fundations by conducting a needs assessment to determine the evaluation goals, priorities and objectives. The input component enabled the evaluator to assess the goals and objectives of the Wilson Fundations and gather pertinent information regarding the tenets of the program. The process component of the Wilson Fundations permitted the evaluator the opportunity to identify how well the program was being implemented through the continuous monitoring of the program delivery procedures. The product component of the evaluation model allowed the evaluator of the Wilson Fundations to assess the actual academic outcomes afforded to the students individually and collectively to contribute to the decision of whether the program should be continued, modified, or dropped (Stufflebeam & Zhang 2017).

The 18 class observations provided the evaluator an intense and holistic overview of the Wilson Fundations for kindergarten students in one class at Grant Elementary School. The class observations further enabled the researcher to collect both formative

and summative evaluation information for diagnostic purposes to ensure the instruction was implemented with fidelity and achieved the desired academic results. The field notes recorded during the class observations enabled the researcher to collect data to help make a formative evaluation throughout the entire 9-week observation timeframe. The formative evaluation helped to serve a diagnostic function to identify, appropriately, implemented procedures and recognize consistent concerns that surfaced which needed improvement. The summative evaluation was conducted at the end of the program and focused more on the outcomes of the program implementation on student learning. The summative evaluation information obtained was far more limited and focused more on the judgment of the reading program's worth based solely upon the program effectiveness outcomes.

The principal and teacher interviews were a way for the evaluator to discover what types of data and evidence the stakeholders wanted the program evaluator to obtain from the research study. The subsequent informal teacher interviews and conversations enabled the evaluator to find out more about the successes and challenges the teacher experienced with the implementation of the Wilson Fundations with her kindergarten students. The daily observation location of the evaluator was an advantageous position, as all class activities were readily and visibly accessible and could be viewed easily from the designated location. The teacher invited and encouraged the researcher to move throughout the classroom for accessibility, if there was an obstruction.

The use of more than just one data collection method for this case study helped the evaluator to triangulate the research findings. The tools utilized for data generation

for this program evaluation were complementary of one another to enable the researcher to gain a holistic perspective of the Wilson Fundations. The purpose of triangulation was to obtain confirmation of the findings through convergence of different assessments or viewpoints (Merriam, 2009), which the varied research methods facilitated. Therefore, the classroom observations, teacher and principal interviews, and documentation reviews helped to form a holistic and comprehensive overview of the Wilson Fundations. The observations provided a way to collect empirical data in this qualitative program evaluation and required the evaluator to remain clear about collecting, recording, and analyzing data to circumvent worries about the reliability and validity of the data.

The analysis of the data enabled the evaluator to make sense of the evidence that was generated throughout the evaluation process. There was a series of questions that initially emerged or surfaced regarding the assessment of the evidence collected. These questions included, but were not limited to the following:

1. Did the Wilson Fundations accomplish what it set out to?

2. Were the objectives appropriate? Were the objectives changed or modified in any way?

3. Is the design of the Wilson Fundations suitable for kindergarten students?

4. How can the Wilson Fundations be changed to better service teachers and students?

5. How are the students progressing academically using the Wilson Fundations?

6. What elements are missing from the Wilson Fundations that would help to improve reading instruction?

7. What instructional elements can be added to the Wilson Fundations to improve teaching and learning?

These preliminary questions helped to shape and structure this qualitative research study. The analysis of the collected information involved examining the assembled data to determine how the facts and records answered the evaluation questions. The researcher had to look for emerging patterns and common themes as they emerged from the responses and collected information of the study by using thematic coding procedures. Thematic analysis helps to categorize the data in a manner that captures the important concepts of the data set (Merriam, 2009). The evaluator utilized a data reduction strategy until a point of saturation of the data was reached. Secondly, the researcher had to examine how the patterns did or did not, help to inform or enlighten the research questions. Thirdly, the researcher had to look for any deviations that were obvious from the emerging patterns. Fourthly, the researcher had to determine if there were any factors that might explain any atypical responses. Fifthly, the researcher had to consider and identify any noteworthy stories that emerged from the study's analysis and determine if any of these patterns or findings suggests that additional data may need to be collected. Lastly, the researcher had to govern if the emerging patterns in the research findings explained any discrepancies in the responses. The researcher also examined the procedural implementation of the daily instructional curriculum and procedures looking for appropriate application of the program tenets and frequency of occurrences during the 18-week program evaluation timeframe.

Major Findings

One of the major findings from this program evaluation was the Wilson

Fundations provided an effective curriculum for kindergarten students enrolled in this

class, according to the data collected. The classroom teacher was diligent in adhering to

the frequent monitoring tools that were embedded in the reading curriculum to ensure

students were making adequate progress. Research has consistently shown that "frequent

monitoring of each student's learning is an essential element of good instruction and a

characteristic of an effective continuously improving school" (DuFour et al., 2010, p.

28). All the students in this class met the established district's reading goals and criteria

established for kindergarten students. Students were assessed frequently throughout the

academic year, which enabled the teacher to identify students who experienced academic

difficulty and ensured these struggling students could acquire the additional academic

support through the double-dose instructional technique as reading deficiencies were

detected. The double-dose instructional technique was constantly evolving, depending on

the individual needs of all the students periodically throughout the academic year. The

established student groupings depended upon the individual needs of the students on the

multiple skills presented.

There was evidence of student progress made in reading for all the students,

especially the six kindergarten students who were struggling and performing below grade

level, as indicated by the test results and formative classroom observation data. Per the

assessment results, every child in this kindergarten class is now performing at or above

grade level in reading. The Wilson Fundations, prevention and early intervention reading

program, utilized for the instructional strategy in this kindergarten class provided an effective instructional alignment curriculum to activate students' prior knowledge and provide experienced-based learning activities. This curriculum allowed the teacher to scaffold the learning tasks which empowered the students' acquisition of key knowledge and skills to move forward, and developed independent understanding of basic reading skills. The teacher promoted student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content to engage students in active learning and to facilitate the students' acquisition of key knowledge and skills. The Wilson Fundations provided the students active engagement in the learning process and captured the students' interest throughout the instruction, built upon students' prior knowledge and skills, and reinforced learning as the prescribed lesson were repetitive and progressive in nature.

Through the Wilson Fundations, the classroom teacher offered differentiated instruction to adequately address the collective and individual student needs in this kindergarten environment. The reading activities were appropriate for all students in the class as the instruction provided remediation, enrichment, and acceleration learning activities to promote student learning and understanding of the reading material. The flexible grouping strategies were well suited to accommodate students' academic needs and growth. The diagnostic and formative assessment tools provided through the Wilson Fundations Reading curriculum enabled the teacher to continuously collect data on student academic achievement. Wilson Fundations informed instruction and offered appropriate activities for all students, collectively and individually, to master the established student objectives in Reading. The analysis of the data enabled the teacher to

design appropriate short and long-term instructional interventions and enhancements to promote student academic progress. These progressive monitoring strategies enabled the teacher to remain cognizant of student achievement throughout the academic year.

The teacher demonstrated a proficient level and understanding of the reading curriculum and pedagogical knowledge to engage students to be active learners. She used a variety of diagnostic and formative assessment strategies to advance student learning and academic success. The Wilson Fundations provided guidance that offered high frequency usage of basic reading concepts (phonemic awareness and alphabet principles, sound mastery in phonics, basic sight words mastery, and trick word vocabulary) daily to build continuity and promote learning to achieve the literacy goals in kindergarten.

The kindergarten teacher's implementation of Wilson Fundations was precise, but frequently exceeded the 30-35-minute timeframe, as many of the reading lessons would last for 50-60 minutes. The teacher consistently assessed student learning as she progressed through the instructional lesson of the day. The research findings indicate that the teacher realized the instruction required an adjustment and extension in the instructional time which proved to be advantageous to the development of the kindergarteners' foundational skills in reading. The kindergarten students, deemed emergent readers, have effectively mastered the basic skills in reading for their grade level.

The one overarching limitation to Wilson Fundations is that the program is heavily scripted. Teachers must follow the directions of the reading program as prescribed or verbatim to secure fidelity of the implementation of the curriculum, as

designed by the author. The standardization of a Reading curriculum does resolve the issue of instructional Reading design, techniques, and delivery for new and inexperienced teachers, but unfortunately, scripted reading commercial curriculum programs marginalize more experienced teachers' practice. Scripted curriculum also requires teachers to deliver the curriculum as stated, regardless of the time required, and therefore can take away from other valuable instructional time.

These research findings are important because they provide a detailed description of the strengths and weaknesses of the Wilson Fundations for the development of early childhood reading skills in kindergarten. It goes without saying that teaching children how to read is a lengthy and explicit process that requires an effective systematic and intensive curriculum approach to help students learn to read. It is paramount that urban teachers alleviate reading failure among students who derive from low socioeconomic backgrounds to close the achievement gap between their peers who hail from more affluent backgrounds. As stated in the literature review, inner city schools across the United States have had a long history of poor student academic performance, across all subject areas. Reading is a fundamental skill that must be proficiently obtained by all students to adequately progress through the formative educational setting, K-12, and life in general. This study will hopefully encourage urban early childhood teachers to realize students can learn to read proficiently, devoid of their socioeconomic backgrounds. This study has emphasized that the use of effective evidenced-based reading curriculum can provide operative teaching strategies for disadvantaged students to improve the impact on their academic performance. These implications are significant because the overarching

goal of the school environment is to ensure students are performing at or above grade level. High academic performance is even more crucially important among disadvantaged student populations. This study does help to advance the use of research methodology on the Wilson Fundations, however, this single research study's findings, observing one teacher and a limited number of students in a specific geographic location, is not enough to generalize the results or constitute scientific evidence to other disadvantaged student populations across the United States.

<div align="center">**Implications of Practice**</div>

Implications for Instruction

The first major implication of the Wilson Fundations evaluation is that it offers many connotations for strength of implication for practice. The curriculum is a multisensory, structured language program that provides systematic and explicit instruction. Wilson Fundations is research-based and emphasize phonemic awareness, phonics, high frequency word study, reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, handwriting, and spelling which covers a large percentage of the five basic components of reading instruction. However, one of the biggest weaknesses of Wilson Fundations is that it must be combined with a core/literature and comprehension program to have the most proficient effort on student's literacy development for students to be successful. Wilson Fundations has enabled the kindergarten students in this class the opportunity to progress appropriately in reading, but if coupled with another comprehensive reading program, as recommended by the founder, Barbara Wilson, the

results promise to be even more rewarding for all the stakeholders: school administrator, teacher, students, and parents.

Implications for Effective Teachers

The second important implication of practice for this study is the significance of an effective kindergarten classroom teacher. The effectiveness of the kindergarten teacher is the single most important factor in setting the stage for a child's mental and academic growth from the onset of his educational experience. In this era of increased educational accountability, high academic standards and expectations, research shows strong benefits to children who are enrolled and attend high quality kindergarten programs. The role and goal of kindergarten teachers is to "inspire students to be readers" (Duffy, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, the kindergarten teacher is required to ensure the instructional program is set up appropriately to have a direct and positive impact on student learning and academic success, as these students begin their educational journeys. Kindergarten teachers must be familiar and prepared to provide a broad range of different literacy interventions for the diverse instructional needs of students to offer accommodating learning experiences for all students enrolled in the class (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duffy, 2003; Van Hess, 2011). Research shows that a teacher's knowledge and use of current children's literature on best practices in the classroom have a direct impact on student literacy gains. Educational research has consistently and continuously shown that early literacy acquisition lays the foundational tier for subsequent lasting and long-term outcomes of academic development for students. The classroom teacher should ensure she provides effective instruction to students for preventive and interventional purposes for academic

preventive and interventive purposes in Reading to enhance educational success for all students. In order to be an effective Reading instructor, the teacher should remain abreast of current evidenced-based literacy, instructional practice, and assessment to enable her to vary instruction and provide a high quality and comprehensive reading program.

Implications for School Administrators

The third significant implication of this study is that educational leaders at the school level must make prudent decisions about literacy education within the building to effectively impact teaching and learning. As the instructional leader of the school, principals must ensure there is an effective instructional focus, instructional evaluation, and continuous progress monitoring to focus on student achievement outcomes to maximize student achievement. As a general practice, the principal should frequently engage teachers in discussions about instructional methods, approaches, and perpetual curriculum issues that surface through an ongoing professional development program. Effective school administrators emphasize the use of student data to guide instruction and provide intervention for struggling student readers to enhance student achievement for the individual teacher class and schoolwide (Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, & Kosanovich, 2007).

Implications for Strong Evidence-Based Reading Programs

Although this program evaluation demonstrates the Wilson Fundations Reading program is an effective systematic instructional Reading program in Grant Elementary School, there are three reading programs that have been proven, through a national best-evidence synthesis to have strong evidence of effectiveness for students in Title I areas

and beginning readers: Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, Reading Reels, and Success

for All (Slavin et al., 2009). Strong evidence of effectiveness was determined by

conducting "at least two studies, one which is a large randomized or randomized quasi-

experimented study or multiple smaller studies with a sample weighted effect size of at

least +0.20 and a collective sample size in computing means" (p. 1). This research study

was conducted to systematically review the "achievement outcomes of four types of

approaches to improving the beginning reading success of children in kindergarten and

first grade" (p. 2). Research has identified these three reading programs have positive

achievement effects in Reading for beginning readers, as well as, Title I schools. This

research study offers school districts throughout the nation, the option to select one

program, among three best-evidenced approaches that would be most conducive and

beneficial to its educational community.

Further Research

This study, a program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations raises several

opportunities for future research. It is alleged that the school district's director plan to

modify the Reading curriculum for focus schools to improve teaching and learning and

increase students' Reading achievement. The school district has already begun the

process of integrating another reading program into the curriculum called Balanced

Literacy. The Balanced Literacy approach is all encompassing and supports student

success in four major areas of literacy instruction: listening, speaking, reading, and

writing activities. Snow et al. (1998) contend that "the most popular strategy for

accommodating the potential range of student needs and interests is to include in each

lesson an ample menu of optional activities" (p. 192). Balanced Literacy is composed of three major components: reading workshops, writing workshop, and word work. This comprehensive reading program promises to provide a holistic approach to language arts. There are eleven components of the Balanced Literacy program: Read Aloud/Modeled Reading, Write Aloud/Modeled Writing, Shared Writings, Interactive Writing, Guided Writing, Independent Writing, Independent Reading, Guided Reading, Interactive Reading, and Shared Reading. The Balanced Literacy approach gives students the opportunity to learn in multiple ways: modeled, shared, guided, and independent. This reading approach provides a diversified lists of teaching strategies that accommodate multiple forms of flexible groupings: whole, small, and individual instruction. The Balanced Literacy curriculum also encompasses training skills for listening, viewing, speaking, and presenting. Reading experts in the field of education assert that successful literacy programs are dynamic and enriched with a broad range of activities (Snow et al., 1998).

Another strategy the district intends to employ to increase student academic performance in reading is to enhance the classroom libraries by increasing the number of accessible books for students in the classroom for instructional and independent reading. The district's intent to hire a book company representative to demonstrate how books should be organized and displayed in the classroom setting to maximize student interest, utilization, and learning is an impressive one. For a child to obtain the skills and practice necessary to become an accomplished reader, the child will need access to books. The more children are exposed to books at school, the more students will learn to

love and enjoy them. An organized and functional classroom library that students can use for studying and independent recreational purposes is a vital component of the early childhood classroom. Research shows that classroom libraries should have 300-600 books (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The more books students have in their classroom increases the likelihood the child will find a book he or she likes which encourages the students to want to read more. The kindergarten classes at Grant Elementary School where this program evaluation was conducted had books displayed around the entire environment, but was limited in comparison the books a kindergarten class should process and offer for student choice. This was very much the case for the remaining kindergarten classes in the school as well. Though I did not physically go into all the kindergarten classrooms at Grant Elementary School to gather this information, just passing the classrooms and peeping in the door for a quick assessment was informative. Neumann (1999) states that "the more contact children have with books, the better readers they become" (p. 1). She continues to insist "the classroom library should provide a variety of genres: traditional stories, fantasy, reality fiction, historical fiction, biographies and autobiographies, and other information (p. 3). Additionally, she further contends that to "attract and maintain children's interests, classroom libraries must be stocked with a variety of many good books that span a significant range of difficulty" (p. 3).

Recommendations

One major recommendations that may position Grant Elementary School to continue to improve the reading skills of the kindergarten students enrolled in its

educational environment. The major recommendation I would offer relative to the

implementation of Wilson Fundations is the incorporation of parental involvement to

help supplement student learning as outlined in the curriculum. The kindergarten teachers

can utilize the Wilson Fundations Home Support Packs to increase parental support for

students at home. Wilson Fundations already has corresponding home activities that

coincide with the classroom instruction incorporated within the reading curriculum.

These pre-existing home communication letters, documents, and activities help the

teacher and parents establish partnerships to improve student learning. The home

activities are deliberately slated to coincide with the instructional events occurring in

school. Research has consistently shown that successful home and school interaction

should be well integrated within the overall school mission and perspective grade-level

curriculum. Research further contends that a strong home-school academic connection

manages to strengthen student's support systems which encourages and motivates the

students to perform better academically. Parental involvement is the greatest predictor of

early literacy success, as well as, continued and later academic achievement (Snow et al.,

1998). Most schools who are successful in the academic arena, go beyond the typical

narrow description of parental involvement. Therefore, the home-school strategies that

individual schools employ should be tailored to the individual school population. Quality

home student activities should reflect the needs of the populations it serves. Schools who

have a strong commitment to parental involvement take an active role in helping parents

learn a variety of ways to be involved in the educational process of their child at home.

Wilson Fundations recommend elementary teachers host training opportunities to parents

to teach them how to work with their individual child in the home environment on reading skills and strategies. Schools that offer effective literacy programs typically offer training platforms in Reading for parents to utilize home literacy activities to promote effective literacy development. The number one goal for elementary schools is to help students become proficient and independent readers. Research consistently shows there is a positive correlation and effect on student learning and achievement when parents work with students on homework. School leaders and teachers should encourage the engagement of parent and student interactions about schoolwork at home which is paramount and essential in promoting student literacy development. The outreach to solicit parental support in the home environment should be as comprehensive as possible. In addition to training workshops, schools should also include literacy related articles in the school or class newsletters; extend an invitation to the parents to observe a Reading class at school; provide literacy and author's night in the school environment; engage students in theatrical performances; and solicit reading partner volunteers for individual, small, and group reading sessions.

Two additional recommendation includes the establishment and utilization of a Family-based Literature Program. Family literacy programs have created many learning opportunities for adult learners and their children in both rural and urban settings. Family literacy programs provide courses that that work with the entire family, rather than one child or the adult separately on reading skills. Some researchers contend that literacy extends beyond the acquisition of reading and writing skills, but also entails the ability to use these skills in a socially appropriate context. Research further contends that the

conception of literacy has evolved to include the skills required to function in a

technological society, as well (Caspe, 2003, p. 1). Caspe developed eight principles to

guide the development and implementation of family literacy programs in schools. These

perspectives suggest that family literacy programs should:

1. Strive to understand parents' literacy strengths and reinforce their knowledge

   and skills.

2. Believe that literacy is acquired through shared dialogue, where learners are

   actively contributing to their own learning.

3. Provide opportunities for adults and children to reflect on literacy practices in

   their daily lives.

4. Recognize the literacy history of parents and that all parents come with some

   memories of literacy.

5. Grow out of needs of participants and examine resources in a sociocultural

   context.

6. Adopt an empowerment philosophy and take action to break down patterns of

   social isolation.

7. Respond to the interests of adults and children.

8. Document their experiences and learn from them, which at the same time

   contributes to building a research base for family literacy. (p. 3)

DeBruin-Parecki, Paris, and Siendenburg (1997) assert that the Family-based

Literacy Program is an intergenerational literacy program that seek to enhance literacy

within families and fuses adult literacy with student programs to enhance the literacy

growth in adults and children. This author claims that the hallmark of successful Family-based Literacy Programs is that it is tailored to meet the needs of the specific population it serves and has provided four simple steps to incorporating a Family-based Literacy Program in school environments. The first step is to ensure the participation. This ranges from making provisions for child care and transportation. A second critical feature is to use curriculum that is meaningful and useful this includes modeling and coaching of parent-child literacy activities. The third critical features is the participation of a stable and capable staff who bring diverse expertise to the work with the family-based literacy group. The final critical feature is to secure the necessary funding to ensure that the family-literacy program can be sustained over time.

Literacy experts have contributed that the biggest benefit of Family Literacy Programs is an increased positive literacy interaction in the home environment, between parents and children, as a correlation of participation, which provides opportunity and encouragement for the entire family to become successful readers.

Concluding Remarks

Reading problems can be detected and prevented early in most children if the instruction is from a proven evidenced-based curriculum, intensive, and comprehensive (Denton & Mathes, 2003; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Denton et al., 2003). The multi-sensory repetitive and interactive instructional approach techniques help to build student literacy skills and enhance the confidence levels of students to establish a strong foundation in reading. The Wilson Fundations provides a multi-sensory approach to reading and seems to hold the students' attention as it teaches sounds to the alphabetical

letters, how to analyze multisyllabic words, phonological awareness, and decoding

skills. Performing proficiently in these basic skills for reading naturally contributes to

oral reading fluency and comprehension, which are the goals of effective reading

instruction. Though this class sample performed well utilizing the Wilson Fundations,

other class samples could alter the overall findings of this program evaluation.

The field of education is continuously searching for ways to improve education

for inner-city disadvantaged youth that will ensure they develop adequate reading skills

necessary to succeed throughout their life, from kindergarten to adulthood. Over the

years, there have been significant risk factors associated with disadvantaged youth who

do not achieve proficient reading skills, as this is the primary basis to all avenues of life

and living. The goal in the educational community is to find a solution that would

narrow the achievement gap between affluent and disadvantaged youth in public

schools. The evaluator has witnessed the academic difference between the haves and the

have nots. More affluent families have the financial means to provide their children with

additional resources and support to ensure their child is successful in school and

beyond. This applies to academia, athletics, social skills, and religious experiences. The

more affluent families strive to provide their child with a well-rounded environment to

maximize student learning and exposure. Unfortunately, the disadvantaged child is not

privileged to such luxuries. Though the educational community is unable to radically

change the financial income of families, it can ensure that students obtain the skill sets

needed in the academic arena to improve their financial state in adulthood. Quality

education is one way to accomplish this goal. The educational community owe it to

disadvantaged youth to continuously strive to provide educational quality opportunities

and tools necessary to succeed in school, as well as, in life in general.

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL'S TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT FOR WILSON

FUNDATIONS EVALUATION

Hi, my name is Tonika Terrell. I am a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago. I am aware that your school implemented the Wilson Fundations for a few years. I am calling to request your permission to conduct a program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations in (teacher's name) kindergarten classroom.

I am contacting you to inquire if you will approve a program evaluation in your school. Do you have a few minutes to discuss the program evaluation?

☐ If yes, continue with the script below.
☐ If no, thank her for allowing you the opportunity to talk to her

I am inviting you to take part in this program evaluation because I would like to determine if the Wilson Fundations has had an impact on student learning in Reading.

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to provide me the opportunity to observe instruction of the Wilson Fundations over a nine-week timeframe. I would like to begin the study with an initial interview with you and the teacher to ensure the program evaluation will address any outstanding questions you may have regarding the implementation of the program.

Other procedures will entail obtaining written permission from the parent/guardian for students to participate in the observation phase. The observations will last for about nine-weeks. Please note that all classroom observations will be audiotaped. I would like to conduct an initial principal interview and two teacher interviews, initial and midway, which will also be audio taped.

As a Loyola University Chicago graduate student, I will make every effort to ensure all collected information remains private. Please note that all collected material will be coded and only identifiable by me, as the primary researcher. However, please note that I will not be able to guarantee that information discussed in class instruction will remain confidential because participants may repeat what is discussed to others.

Your permission to allow me to conduct this program evaluation will be most appreciated. I will keep all collected information until the end of the evaluation phase. Afterwards, all collected data or information will be shredded except for the consent forms which authorize me to conduct the research. All consent forms will be kept indefinitely as per Loyola University Chicago's policy.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason. No matter what decision you make, there will be no penalty.

Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this study?

Yes: Document oral consent below and continue with the screening or interview. If applicable, inform the principal she will receive an information sheet regarding the study for her records via email. The principal will further receive a consent form to sign before study officially begins.

No: Thank her for her time.

Name of Subject:
Insert principal's name:

Person Obtaining Consent
I have read this form to the subject. An explanation of the research was given and questions from the subject were solicited and answered to the subject's satisfaction. In my judgment, the subject has demonstrated comprehension of the information. The subject has provided oral consent to participate in this study.

Please know that a written consent form will be forwarded to you electronically. Please read, sign and return to me via email. Please send to tterre1@luc.edu.

Name and Title (Print) _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

TEACHER'S TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT FOR WILSON FUNDATIONS

EVALUATION

Hi, (teacher's name), my name is Tonika Terrell. I am a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago. I am aware that your school has implemented the Wilson Fundations for a few years. I am calling to request your permission to conduct a program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations in your kindergarten class. Do you have a few minutes to discuss the program evaluation?

☐ If yes, continue with the script below.
☐ If no, thank the teacher for allowing me the opportunity to talk with her.

I am inviting you to take part in this program evaluation because I would like to determine if the Wilson Fundations has been implemented with fidelity. I would also like to evaluate if the system has had an impact on student learning in Reading.

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to provide me the opportunity to observe instruction of the Wilson Fundations over a nine -week timeframe for eighteen sessions. I would like to begin the study with an initial interview with you to ensure the program evaluation will address any outstanding questions you may have regarding the implementation of the program.

Other procedures will entail obtaining written permission from the parent/guardian for the student to participate in the observation phase. Please note that all classroom observations will be audiotaped. I would also like to conduct two teacher interviews, initial and midway of the evaluation process. These interviews will also be audiotaped.

As a Loyola University Chicago graduate student, I will make every effort to ensure all collected information remains private. Please note that all collected material will be coded and only be identifiable by me, as the primary researcher. Please note that I will not be able to guarantee that information discussed during the class sessions will remain confidential because participants may repeat what is discussed to others.

Your permission to allow me to conduct this program evaluation will be most appreciated. I will retain all collected information until the conclusion of the evaluation. Afterwards, as per the school system mandates on the Request for Permission to Conduct Research dictates, all collected data will be shredded and destroyed upon completion of the project. All consent forms will be kept indefinitely as per Loyola University Chicago's policy.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason. No matter what decision you make, there will be no penalty.

Each student in your class will receive three paperback books for their participation. Student participation is totally voluntary as well. There will be no penalty for withdrawal from the program evaluation.

Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this study?

     Yes: Document oral consent below and continue with the screening or interview. If applicable, inform the teacher she will receive an information sheet regarding the study for her records via email. The teacher will further receive a consent form to sign before the study officially begins.

     No: Thank her for her time.

Name of Subject:
Insert Teacher's Name:

Person Obtaining Consent
I have read this form to the subject. An explanation of the research was given and questions from the subject were solicited and answered to the subject's satisfaction. In my judgment, the subject has demonstrated comprehension of the information. The subject has provided oral consent to participate in this study.

Please know that a written consent form will be forwarded to you electronically. Please read, sign and return to me via email. Please send to tterre1@luc.edu.

Name and Title (Print) _____

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (PRINCIPAL)

Project Title: Wilson Fundations Evaluation
Researcher: Tonika R. Terrell
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ann Marie Ryan

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study conducted by Tonika Terrell, doctoral student, for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Ann Marie Ryan in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation of the Wilson Fundations for kindergarten students. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any question you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to determine how effective the Wilson Fundations has been in contributing to improve academic performance of students in the area of literacy in one of your kindergarten classes.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

· Partake in one interview at the beginning of the evaluation (30 minutes) and a final conference at the conclusion of the program evaluation (30 minutes). Both of these sessions will be audio taped.

· Permit 18 audiotaped classroom observations, over a nine-week timeframe.

Location:
Both the interview and conference will take place in your principal's office or another location you may deem more appropriate.

Risks/Benefits:
There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research. This experience will not exceed those experienced in everyday instructional life between the teacher and student population in an educational environment. The ultimate benefit derived from the program evaluation will entail an assessment of how the reading program is being implemented.

Confidentiality:
All observation sessions will be audio taped and all collected information will be coded for confidentiality and will remain in a locked file container until the end of the evaluation process. Please note the primary investigator will not be able to guarantee that information discussed in the classroom instruction will remain confidential because student participants may repeat what is discussed to others. After the evaluation, all

collected material and research data will be shredded and burned at the conclusion of the evaluation as dictated by the school district. However, all consent forms are to be kept indefinitely as per Loyola University Chicago's policy.

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 to refrain from answering any question or to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Tonika Terrell at 912-661-2229 or tterre1@luc.edu. The faculty adviser for this student project is Dr. Ann Marie Ryan, 312-915-6232 or aryan3@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 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**

_____
Approval Signature for Audio taping

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature   **Date**

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (TEACHER)

Project Title: Wilson Fundations Evaluation
Researcher: Tonika R. Terrell
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ann Marie Ryan

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study conducted by Tonika Terrell, doctoral student, for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Ann Marie Ryan in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation of the Wilson Fundations for kindergarten students. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any question you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to determine how effective the Wilson Fundations has been in contributing to improve academic performance of students in the area of literacy in your kindergarten class.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

· Partake in one interview at the beginning of the evaluation (30 minutes) and a final conference at the conclusion of the program evaluation (30 minutes). Both of these sessions will be audio taped.

· Permit 18 audiotaped classroom observations, over a nine-week timeframe.

Location:
Both the interview and conference will take place in your classroom or another location you may deem more appropriate.

Risks/Benefits:
There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research. This experience will not exceed those experienced in everyday instructional life between the teacher and student population in an educational environment. The ultimate benefit derived from the program evaluation will entail an assessment of how the reading program is being implemented.

Confidentiality:
All observation sessions will be audio taped and all collected information will be coded for confidentiality and will remain in a locked file container until the end of the evaluation process. Please note the primary investigator will not be able to guarantee that information discussed in the classroom instruction will remain confidential because student participants may repeat what is discussed to others. After the evaluation, all

collected material and research data will be shredded and burned at the conclusion of the evaluation as dictated by the school district. However, all consent forms are to be kept indefinitely as per Loyola University Chicago's policy.

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 to refrain from answering any question or to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Tonika Terrell at 912-661-2229 or tterre1@luc.edu. The faculty adviser for this student project is Dr. Ann Marie Ryan, 312-915-6232 or aryan3@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 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**

_____
Approval Signature for Audio taping

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   **Date**

APPENDIX E

STUDENT VERBAL ASSENT SCRIPT

My name is Ms. Terrell. I am a student at Loyola University Chicago. I would like to learn how your teacher teaches you how to read.

You will see me in your class for about 3 times a week. I am very excited about coming to your class, but I must have your permission, which means you must say I can come.

As a thank you gift, I will give each of you three books to take home.

I need for you to take this permission form home to your parents or guardian and ask them to sign it. Please return to your classroom teacher at your earliest.

By raising your hand, who would like for me to come to your class to watch your teacher teach you how to read.

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (PARENT/GUARDIAN)

Project Title: Wilson Fundations Evaluation
Researcher: Tonika R. Terrell
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ann Marie Ryan

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study conducted by Tonika Terrell, doctoral student, for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Ann Marie Ryan in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to allow your child to participate in an evaluation of the Wilson Fundations for kindergarten students. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any question you may have before deciding whether to allow your child to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to determine how effective the Wilson Fundations has been in contributing to improve academic performance of students in the area of literacy in your child's kindergarten class.

Procedures:
If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

· Allow Ms. Terrell to observe reading instruction in your child's kindergarten classroom. The major focus of the observation will be on the classroom teacher's delivery of instruction, as dictated by the Wilson Fundations. There will have no interference in the instructional time of your child other than Tonika explaining what her role will be in the classroom for the next 9 weeks. She will also obtain student verbal consent to participate in the evaluation process.

· You will also need to permit Tonika to audio tape 18 classroom observations over a nine-week timeframe.

Location:
All 18 classroom observations will take place in your child's classroom environment during the regular reading instruction. No additional requirements will be made of any student.

Risks/Benefits:
There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research. This experience will not exceed those experienced in everyday instructional life between the teacher and student population in an educational environment. The ultimate benefit derived from the program evaluation will entail an assessment of how the reading program is being implemented.

Confidentiality:
All observation sessions will be audio taped and all collected information will be coded for confidentiality and will remain in a locked file container until the end of the evaluation process. Please note the primary investigator will not be able to guarantee that information discussed in the classroom instruction will remain confidential because student participants may repeat what is discussed to others. After the evaluation, all collected material and research data will be shredded and burned at the conclusion of the evaluation as dictated by the school district. However, all consent forms are to be kept indefinitely as per Loyola University Chicago's policy.

Compensation:
All students in the classroom will receive three trade books for home library for participation in the program evaluation, whether the student decides to withdraw from the study or not. Please accept this gift as a token of my appreciation.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want your child to be in this study, he/she does not have to participate. Even if you decide to have him/her participate, you are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Tonika Terrell at 912-661-2229 or tterre1@luc.edu. The faculty adviser for this student project is Dr. Ann Marie Ryan, 312-915-6232 or aryan3@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 the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to allow your child to participate in this research study. Please indicate below whether you will allow your child to participate in this research study.

_____ I give permission to allow my child to participate in the Wilson Fundations evaluation process.

_____ I do not give permission to allow my child to participate in the Wilson Fundations evaluation process.

_____   _____

Parent's Signature   **Date**

_____

Approval Signature for Audio taping

APPENDIX G

PRINCIPAL INITIAL INTERVIEW

Based on Patton's Question Guide

Background/Demographics

1. How was the Wilson Fundations selected in the kindergarten department in your school?

2. In what ways has the Wilson Fundations made progress toward achieving the desired academic outcomes for the kindergarten students in Reading?

3. Are there any overarching questions you would like to be addressed in the program evaluation of the Wilson Fundations at your school?

Behavior/Experience

4. What are the overarching goals you would like the Wilson Fundations to achieve this academic year?

5. What additional support do you think the kindergarten teacher may need to improve the academic achievement of students in the area of Reading?

6. What type of parental feedback have you received regarding the Wilson Fundations for your kindergarten student population?

Opinion/Belief

7. What do you like best about the Wilson Fundations for the kindergarten program?

8. What do you like least about the Wilson Fundations for the kindergarten program?

Feelings

9. How did you feel the implementation of the Common Core Standards may impact the performance of students in the kindergarten program?

10. What additional programs have been implemented to assist the kindergarten students to improve their academic progress in reading?

11. How did you feel about the kindergarten students' academic performance in the area of reading in the past two academic years?

Knowledge

12. What additional support do you think is needed to further support kindergarten students' academic performance in the area of reading for the remainder of the year?

Sensory

13. How does the multi-sensory instruction, offered though the Wilson Fundations, help to improve the academic performance of the students enrolled in the kindergarten program at your school?

Additional Questions

14. How did you respond to the kindergarten students' academic performance on standardized tests or assessments they were required to take in 2015-2016?

15. Would you like to provide any other relevant information about reading in the kindergarten level at this time?

APPENDIX H

TEACHER INITIAL INTERVIEW

Based on Patton's Question Guide

Background/Demographics

1. Why did you decide to become a kindergarten teacher?

2. How has the teaching experience in an urban kindergarten environment measured up to your original expectations?

3. What are the most challenging aspects of your job in the area of reading?

Behavior/Experience

4. How have your instructional practices in reading changed since the implementation of the Wilson Fundations?

5. How do you encourage your students to monitor their own academic progress in the area of reading?

Opinion/Belief

6. How have the Common Core Standards affected your teaching practice in your kindergarten classroom in the area of Reading?

7. What do you like best about the Wilson Fundations?

8. What do you like least about the Wilson Fundations?

9. What do you think needs to be added to the Wilson Fundations to improve students' academic performance?

Feelings

10. What modification/s would you make to the reading program, if given the opportunity to improve students' academic performance?

11. What additional resources do you think will help to maximize reading instruction for your students?

Knowledge

12. Explain the tools/systems you use to monitor your students' academic progress in Reading?

13. How is the data regarding the academic achievement of students in the area of Reading utilized to make academic modifications to the curriculum for each individual student?

Sensory

14. How has the multi-sensory approach to instruction, offered in the Wilson Fundations, most benefitted your kindergarten student population?

Additional Question

15. Do you have any additional information that you would like to share about the Wilson Fundations?

APPENDIX I

MID-WAY INTERVIEW

Based on Patton's Question Guide

Background/Demographics

1. How is each individual student progressing in the area of reading with the Wilson Fundations, so far?

2. What seems to be the biggest overarching area of concern with the Wilson Fundations for the majority of the students?

Behavior/Experience

3. How do you motivate the students to become engaged in the Wilson Fundations process?

4. How involved have the students' parents been in the development of their reading skills through the Wilson Fundations?

Opinion/Belief

5. What do you see as the greatest strength of the Wilson Fundations for the kindergarten students in your class, at this time?

6. What do you think needs to be modified, at this time, to bolster student achievement in the area of Reading using the Wilson Fundations?

Feelings

7. What policies and practice need to be changed, at the district level, to enable you to better service kindergarten students in the area of Reading in your class?

8. What suggestions do you have to better support and enhance literacy for the kindergarten students enrolled in your class?

Knowledge

9. How do you individualize reading instruction with the Wilson Fundations?

10. What additional services/support are available through general education for struggling students in your school outside of the kindergarten program?

Sensory

11. What additional modifications need to be made in your physical classroom to improve the multi-sensory approach to instruction in your classroom?

Additional Question

12. Would you like to provide any other relevant information at this time?

REFERENCE LIST

A Child's Place Montessori School. (2017.). Comparison of Montessori and Traditional Education. Retrieved February 14, 2017, from: http://www.a-childs-place.com/comparison.shtml

Allphin, L. (2016). 10 Reading Skills for Kindergarten Kids. Retrieved from: https://www.education.com/magazine/article/Pre_Kindergarten_Reading_Skills/

American Montessori Society. (2016). Introduction to Montessori. Retrieved from: http://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori

American Montessori Society. (2016). Retrieved from: http://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori/Benefits-of-Montessori

American Montessori Society. (2016). Retrieved from: http://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori/Montessori-Classrooms

Antonacci, P. A., & O'Callaghan (2012). *Promoting literacy development: 50 research-based strategies for K-8 learners.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Child Health and Human Department.

Arnold, D. H., & Doctoroff, G. L. (2003). The early education of socioeconomically disadvantage children. *The Annals Review Psychology, 54*, 517-545.

Aubel, J. (1999). *Participatory Program Evaluation Manual.* Child Survival Technical Support Project and Catholic Relief Services (1-75).

Baker, J. A., & Bruner, B. (2010). *Participatory Evaluation Essentials: An update guide for nonprofit organizations and their evaluative partners.* Bruner Foundations (ii-62).

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. (2010). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Beatty, J. J., & Pratt, L. (2010). *Early literacy in preschool and kindergarten: Multicultural perspective* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Bertin, P., Perlman, E., & Wood, J. M. (2004). *Preventing academic failure*. Retrieved December 30, 2016, from http://www.epsbooks.comJehov/downloads/research_paper/PAF_Research .pdf

Besser, L., Anderson-Davis, D., & Peery, A. (2006). *Data teams.* Englewood, CO: Center for Performance Assessment.

Biancarosa, C., & Snow, G. E. (2006). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy.* A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C. Alliance for Excellent Education. Retrieved from: http://www.adlit.org/article/19784/

Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. (2008). *Effective instruction for adolescent struggling readers: A practice brief.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Carlsoon-Paige, N., Bywater-McLaughlin, C., & Wolfsheimer-Almon, C. (2015). Reading Instruction in kindergarten: Little to gain and much to lose (pp. 1-12). Retrieved from: https://deyproject.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/ readinginkindergarten_online-1.pdf

Caspe, M. (2003). Family literacy: A review of programs and critical perspectives. Harvard Family Research Paper. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from: http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-literacy-a-review-of-programs-and-critical-perspectives

Center for Public Education. (2007). Pre-kindergarten: What the research shows. Retrieved from: http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Pre-kindergarten/Pre-Kindergarten/Pre-kindergarten-What-the-research-shows.html

Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2017). Standards in your state. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/

Committee on Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children of the National Research Council. (1998). Retrieved from: http://www.readfaster.com/education_stats.aspK

Creswell, J. W., & Plano-Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Curwood, J. S. (2007). What happened to kindergarten? *Instructor, 117*(1), 28-32. Retrieved from: https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/ what-happened-kindergarten/

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat word and education*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.

DeBruin-Parecki, A. S., Paris, S., & Seidenberg, J. (1997). Family literacy: Examining practice and issues of effectiveness. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 40*(5), 596 -605.

Delpit, L. D. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: New Press.

Denton, C., & Mathes, P. G. (2003). Intervention for struggling readers: Possibilities and challenges. In B. R. Forman (Ed.), *Preventing and remediating reading difficulties* (pp. 229-252). Baltimore, MD: York Press.

Denton, C., Vaughn, S., & Fletcher, J. (2003). Bringing research-based practice to scale. *Learning Disability Research and Practice, 15*, 74-94.

Denton, K., West, J., & Walston, J. (2003). *Reading-young children's achievement and classroom experiences: Findings from the condition of education, 2003* (Report No. NCES-2003-070). Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED480265).

Duffy, G. G. (2003). *Explaining reading: A resource for teaching concepts, skills, and strategies*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Dufour, R., DuFour R., Eaker, R., & Karhanek, G. (2010). *Raising the bar and closing the gap: Whatever it takes*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Epstein, J. L. (2015). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Feldman, K. (2004). Helping older kids who struggle with reading. *SchwabLearning.org*. Retrieved from: http://peterswife.org/LD/OlderKidsandReadingProblems.pdf

The Florida Center for Reading Research. (2011). *Wilson Fundations Research Study*. Retrieved form http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ FCRR_Fundations_Report.pdf

Fitzpatrick, J. L., Sanders, J. R., & Worthen, B. R. (2011). *Program evaluation: Alternatives approaches and practical guidelines*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Gaille, B. (2017). 15 U.S. literacy rate and illiteracy statistics. *Statistics.* Retrieved from: http://brandongaille.com/us-literacy-rate-and-illiteracy-statistics/

Garrison, C., & Ehringhaus, M. (2014). *Formative and summative assessments in classroom*. Association for Middle Level Education. Retrieved from: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/33148188-6FB5-4593-A8DF-8EAB8CA002AA/0/2010_11_Formative_Summative_Assessment

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ginsberg, K. R. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds. *Pediatrics, 119*(1), 182-191. Retrieved from: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182

Good, R. H., & Kaminski, R. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills: Administration and scoring guide* (6th ed.). Eugene: University of Oregon, Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited.

Hollowell, K. (2011). Basic reading skills. Seattle PI. Retrieved from: https://www.verywell.com/what-are-kindergarten-readiness-screenings-actually-for-2601503

Hollowell, K. (2017). List of reading strategies that are taught in kindergarten. *Our Everyday Life.* Retrieved from http://oureverydaylife.com/list-reading-strategies-taught-kindergarten-4951.html

Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why race and culture matter in schools: Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms.* New York and London: Teacher College Press.

Irvin, J. L. (2006). *A resource guide for adolescent literacy: Prepared for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*. Tallahassee, FL: National Literacy Project.

Jeynes, W. H. (2008). A meta-analysis of the relationship between phonics instruction and minority elementary school student academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, *40*(2), 151-166.

Jeynes, W. H. (2011). Parental involvement research: Moving to the next level. *The School Community Journal, 21*(1), 9-18.

Jeynes, W. H. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs of urban schools. *Sage Journals, 47*(4), 706-742. Retrieved from www.http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/ 0042085912445643

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Kim, C. (2008). Academic success begins at home: How children can succeed in schools. *Heritage Foundations*. Retrieved from: http://www.heritage.org/ education/report/academic-success-begins-home-how-children-can-succeed-school

Ladson-Billing, G. (2009). *The dream-keeper: Successful teachers of African American children.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Linnell-Olson, L. (2016). What are kindergarten readiness screening actually for? *Very Well.* Retrieved from: https://www.verywell.com/what-are-kindergarten-readiness-screenings-actually-for-2601503

Linnell-Olsen, L. (2016). What you need to know before you redshirt a kindergarten year. *Very Well* (pp. 1-2). Retrieved from: https://www.verywell.com/what-to-know-before-you-redshirt-a-kindergarten-year-2601505

Mann, D. (2013). Babies listen and learn while in the womb. *WebMD*. Retrieved from: http://www.webmd.com/baby/news/20130102/babies-learn-womb#1

Margolis, H., & Brannigan, G. G. (2009). *Reading disabilities: Beating the odds*. Voorhees, NJ: Reading 2008 & Beyond.

Matus, R. (2013). Despite progress, Florida still has far to go. *Redefined.* Retrieved from: https://www.redefinedonline.org/2013/12/floridas-academic-gains-still-arent-good-enough-pisa-results-show/

McNulty, R. J., & Gloeckler, L. (2011). Fewer, clearer, high common core state standards: Implications for students receiving special education services. *International Center for Leadership in Education* (pp. 1-16). Retrieved from: http://www.leadered.com//pdf/Fewer.Clearer Higher CCSS Special Education 2014.pdf

Mellard, D. F. (2010). *Fidelity of implementation with an RTI framework tools for schools*. National Center on Response to Intervention. Retrieved from: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/rti/dl11/11-fidelity%20of%20Implementation %20guidev5.pdf

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, E., & Almon, J. (2009). Crisis in kindergarten: Why children need to play in schools. Alliance for Childhood, College Park, MD, pp. 1-7. Retrieved from: http://earlylife.com.au/info/sites/default/files/Miller&Almon2009.pdf

Montessori, M. (1995). *Absorbent mind*. New York, NY: Holt and Company.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1996, April). Technology and young children – Ages 3 through 8. [Position statement]. Retrieved December 5, 2006, from http//www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/pstech98.htm

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2017). Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Retrieved from http://www.naeyc.org/DAP

National Governors Association Center for Best Practice and Council of Chief State School Office. (2010). *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (social studies, science, and technical subjects).* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http:www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSS/ELAStandards.pdf

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

Neuman, S. B. (1999). The importance of the classroom library. *Scholastic*, pp. 1-6. Retrieved from teacher.scholastic.com/products/paperbacks/downloads/ library.pdf

Nieto, S. (2011). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. New York, NY: Teachers College.

Noguera, P. A. (2008). *The trouble with black boys… And other reflections on race, equality, and the future of public education.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pacific Resources for Education & Learning. (2012). Stages of reading development. *Reading Rockets*. Retrieved from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/stages-reading-development

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2010). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use.* New York, NY: Guilford.

Patton, M. Q., & Cochran, M. (2002). A guide to using qualitative research methodology. Medecins Sans Frontieres. Retrieved from: https://evaluation.msf.org/sites/evaluation/files/a_guide_to_using_qualitative_research_methodology.pdf

Payne, C. M. (2011). *So much reform, so little change: The persistence of failure in urban schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Ravitch, D. (2013). Why I cannot support the common core standards. *Diane Ravitch's Blog*. Retrieved from: http://dravitch.net/2013/02/26/why-i-cannot-support-the-common -core-standards/

Reardon, S. E., Valentino, R. A., & Shores, K. A. (2012, Fall). Patterns of literacy among U.S. students. *The Future of Children, 22*(2), 17-37.

Resnick, B. (2009). What is response to intervention (RTI)? *Special Features.* Rush Neurobehavioral Center. Retrieved from http://www.rnbc.org/2009/10/what-is-response-to-intervention-rti/

Reutzel, D. R., & Cotter, R. B. (2012). *The essential of teaching children to read: The teacher makes the difference* (3rd ed.). London, England: Pearson.

Rhoads, K. (2015). *Investment in reading research from kindergarten through high school*. National Center for Special Education Research. Retrieved from: https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pdf/Reading_2015.pdf

Rodriquez, E. T., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Spellman, M. E., Pan, B. A., Raikes, H., Lugo-Gil, J., & Luzie, G. (2009, November-December). The formative role of home literacy experiences across the first three years of life in children from low-income families. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 30*(6), 677-694.

Rosenberg, M. S., Westling, D. L., & McLeskey, J. (2013). *Primary characteristics of students with intellectual disabilities.* Pearson Allyn Bacon, Prentice Hall.

Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2014). *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (7th ed.) New York, NY: Random House.

Routman, R. (2002). *Reading essentials: The specifics you need to teach reading well.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sasser, N. (2014). What are the advantages and disadvantages of formative assessment? *Our Everyday Life*. Retrieved from: http://oureverydaylife.com/school-psychologist-vs-counselor-20332.html

Shanahan, T. (2003). Research-based reading instruction: Myths about the National Reading Panel Report. *The Reading Teacher, 56*, 646-655.

Shapiro, J. (2014). Kids don't read books because their parents don't read books. *Forbes.* Retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/jordanshapiro/2014/05/13/kids-dont-read-books-because-parents-dont-read-books/#7b7945c125d5

Shores, C. (2008). Response to intervention implementation models: Standard protocol. *CEC's RTI Blog.* Retrieved from https://cecblog.typepad.com/rti/2008/09/response-to-int.html

Slavin, R. E. (2011). *Effective reading programs for Title I schools*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University School of Education's Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE). Retrieved from: http://www.bestevidence.org/word/white_paper_Feb_2011.pdf

Slavin, R., Lake, C., Chambers, B., Cheung, A., & Davis, S. (2009). Effective reading programs for the elementary grades: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, *79*(4), 1391-1466. DOI: 10.3102/0034654309341374

Slavin, R. E., Lake, C., Davis, S., & Madden, N. A. (2009). *Effective programs for struggling readers: A best-evidence synthesis*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University School of Education's Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE). Retrieved from http://www.bestevidence.org

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Snow, K. (2012). Variation in children's experience of kindergarten and Common Core. *Common Core Issue Brief*. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/CommonCore_KVariation.pdf

Sousa, D. (2005). *How the brain learns to read.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stansberry, K., & Swanson, L. (2009). Effective reading intervention for kids with learning disabilities. *LD online*. Retrieved from http://www.ldonline.org/article/33084/

Strauss, S. (2012). The connection between education, income inequality, and unemployment. *Huffington Post Business*. Retrieved from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-strauss/the-connection-between-ed_b_1066401.html

Strauss, V. (2015). Report: Requiring kindergarteners to read-as Common Core does may harm some. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/01/13/report-requiring-kindergartners-to-read-as-common-core-does-may-harm-some/?utm_term=.18793962d689

Stufflebeam, D. L. (2003). *The CIPP Model for Evaluation*. Presented at Annual Conference of Oregon Program Evaluation Network (OPEN). Portland, OR. Retrieved from: https://www.google.com/search?q=www%2Chttp%2F%2F%3A+inspiringed.com%3A8082%2Frid%3D1P108VQWW-2C1PNMN-3L8%2FCIPP-ModelOregon10-03.pdf&rlz=1C1EJFA_enUS700US700&oq=www%2Chttp%2F%2F%3A+inspiringed.com%3A8082%2Frid%3D1P108VQWW-2C1PNMN-3L8%2FCIPP-ModelOregon10-03.pdf&aqs=chrome..69i57.33596j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

Stufflebeam, D. L., & Zhang, G. (2017). *The CIPP Evaluation Model: How to evaluate for improvement and accountability*. New York: NY: Guilford Press.

Swanson, H. L. (1999). Intervention for students with learning disabilities. *The Exceptional Parent, 32*(6). Retrieved from: https://www.questia.com/read/1G1-56528451/intervention-research-for-students-with-learning-disabilities

Torgesen, J. K. (2006). *A comprehensive K-3 reading assessment plan: Guidance for school leaders.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. Retrieved from: www.centeroninstruction.org/

Torgesen, J., Houston D., Rissman, L., & Kosanovich, K. (2007). T*eaching all students to read in elementary school: A guide for principals.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. Retrieved from: http://fcrr.org/Interventions/pdf/Principals%20Guide-Elementary.pdf

Torgesen, J. K., & Hudson, R. (2006). Reading fluency: Critical issues for struggling readers. In S. J. Samuels, & A. Fastrup (Eds.), *Reading fluency: The forgotten dimension of reading success*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *Title-improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged*. Retrieved from: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *District competition definitions of high needs*. Retrieved from https://definedterm.com/high_needs_students

U.S. Department of Education (2010, July). Wilson Fundations. *What Works Clearing House* (pp. 1-4). Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/Intervention Reports/wwc_fundations_070110.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor Employment. (2015). Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from: https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm

Van Hees, J. (2011). The expressive realities of 5- and 6-year-olds in low socioeconomic schools. *Set: Research Information for Teachers* [Wellington] 3, 47-59. Retrieved from http: Gogalegroup.com

Vilorio, D. (2016). Education matters earnings and unemployment rates by education attainment, 2015. *Bureau of Labor Statistics.* Retrieved from: https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/data-on-display/education-matters.htm

Walker, T. D. (2015). The joyful, illiterate kindergarteners of Finland. *Taught by Finland, 119*(1). Retrieved from: http://taughtbyfinland.com/the-joyful-illiterate-kindergartners-of-Finland/

White, S. H. (2005). Beyond the numbers: Making data work for teachers and school leaders. Englewood, CO: Lead + Learn Press.

Wilmshurst, L., & Brue, A. W. (2011). Advantages of RTI. *Education.com*. Retrieved from: http://www.education.com/print/advantages

Wilson, B. A. (1996). *Wilson Reading System.* Oxford, MA: Wilson Language Training Corporations.

Wilson, B. A. (2015). *Wilson Fundations Teacher's Manual, Level K* (2nd ed.). Oxford, MA: Wilson Language Training Corporations.

Wilson, B. (2017). Wilson Fundations. *Overview.* Retrieved from: http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/fundations/overview/

Wilson Language Training Corporation. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/FS_PROGRAM_MainPage.htmhttp://www.wilsonlanguage.com

Zakariya, S. B. (2015). Learning to read, reading to learn: At a glance. *Center for Public Education*. Retrieved from: http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/earlyliteracy

VITA

Tonika René Terrell is the daughter of Hosea Terrell, Jr. and Edna Mae Coats-Terrell. She was born in Vidalia, Georgia on February 11, 1965. She attended the Wheeler County School System in Alamo, Georgia her entire life and graduated from Wheeler County High School in 1983. She attended the College of Mount Saint Joseph in Cincinnati, Ohio upon completion of high school and obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education in 1987. She continued her studies at Xavier University also in Cincinnati, Ohio in the field of Early Childhood Administration in1997.

Tonika worked for 10 years in the Cincinnati Public Schools as a classroom teacher for grades 1-8. She was among the first 250 teachers in the United States to achieve the status of National Board Certified Teacher. Her area of specialty was as an Early Childhood Generalist. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards recruited her to serve as a Teacher-in-Residence for two years as a teacher recruiter.   She has served as the Co-Director of National Board Certification in the Cincinnati Public Schools for two years and the Director in Chicago Public Schools for six years and the District of Columbia Public Schools for two years.

Tonika attended the Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in McRae, Georgia during her upbringing and is a member of Phi Delta Kappa and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She currently lives in Savannah, Georgia and attends the Resurrection of Our Lord Catholic Church.

DISSERTATON COMMITTEE

The dissertation submitted Tonika R. Terrell has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Ann Marie Ryan, Director
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Dr. David Ensminger
Associate Professor and Program Chair, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Dr. Charles Tocci
Assistant Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago