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Sylvia Idrogo

August 2015

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF READ 180 READING INTERVENTION
PROGRAM: ADMINISTRATORS', TEACHERS', AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THE IMPACT OF READ 180 ON SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MIDDLE
SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ONE LARGE URBAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
In Professional Leadership

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Abstract

This study focused on evaluating the READ 180 reading intervention program which is designed for students in grades 4 through 12 at least two years below level. The goal of READ 180 is to address the unique needs of adolescent learners and their literacy gaps through the use of literature, direct instruction in reading skills, and a computer program. In the 21st century, adolescents will have to read and write more than any other time in human history (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). As schools strive to improve student literacy, more than ever, districts are turning to programs such as READ 180 as a solution to ensure reading proficiency. Even though there are numerous research studies on the benefits of READ 180 (Caggiano, 2007; Papalewis, 2004; Scholastic, 2002), there is limited research that specifically focuses on whether or not READ 180 meets the needs of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are English Language Learners (ELLs). This program evaluation examined administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are English Language Learners (ELLs).

Multiple sources of data were utilized for this program evaluation. Frequency

distributions were used to analyze students' survey responses. The constant comparison method was used to categorize, compare, and theme data collected from focus groups and interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Findings among students, READ 180 teachers, and administrators were similar, indicating the READ 180 program positively impacted students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Additionally, findings revealed students, teachers, and administrators perceived the teacher has the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills. Students did not perceive their attitudes toward reading were influenced by READ 180; however, on their survey responses they indicated that they enjoyed reading and felt successful when reading. READ 180 teachers thought the program did influence students' attitudes toward reading. During the focus groups, English Language Learners (ELLs) responded that the READ 180 did represent their cultural backgrounds and met their language learning needs; although, their survey data indicated students' were not able to make connections to their family and home life when they read the stories, books, or completed the activities in the READ 180 class. Student focus group data revealed they perceived that the technology in READ 180 did facilitate their reading comprehension; however, their survey data indicated the computer as the least helpful of the program. READ 180 teachers perceived the technology in READ 180 did facilitate students' reading comprehension while administrators perceived the technology did not facilitate students' reading comprehension. Students in the READ 180 class enjoyed reading and felt successful in their reading comprehension. Results of the program evaluation have implications for instructional leadership and the support for literacy at the district level as well as at the school level.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Declining national reading scores and increased dropout rates highlight the serious reading problems among adolescent learners (Boling & Evans, 2008). School leaders have the responsibility of ensuring all students read proficiently. The foundation for all learning is the ability to read since it is essential in the content areas such as math, science, and social studies. Nationwide, many students in the middle school grades fail to develop the reading skills needed to meet higher academic standards later in their educational careers (Kaine, 2009). Students with learning disabilities experience persistent problems in comprehending text. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that the percentage of fourth graders and eighth graders with learning disabilities who scored below the basic level of reading achievement was 66% and 63% which was substantially higher than the percentage of students without learning disabilities, 31% and 22% (Jitendra & Gajria, 2011). High levels of literacy are needed for most jobs and reading proficiency is necessary to run households and participate in community activities. Reading skills are also a prerequisite for advancement in employment. High rates of poverty and unemployment correlate to low achievement in reading (Wagner, 2000).

Educators are being held accountable for student achievement through federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law as part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), and the legislation required higher expectations for school districts to ensure proficient levels of student achievement in reading (O'Donnell & White, 2005). The NCLB Act was implemented as a means to offer an equal educational opportunity and

academic student achievement for all students, including students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are English language learners (ELLs).

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2010), “the literacy performance of thirteen-and-seventeen year olds on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has remained stunningly low, revealing that nearly six million of the twenty-two million American secondary students who struggle to read and write” (p.1). As a result, reading achievement of adolescents has become a nationwide concern. With the American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, billions of dollars have been spent by district and school leaders in an effort to improve literacy achievement of adolescents (U. S. Department of Education, 2013). ARRA laid the foundation for education reform by rewarding states for significant improvement in student achievement and closing achievement gaps in reading (Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation, 2014). However, there are no guarantees that one program contains all the components needed to meet the needs of adolescents or that one instructional approach addresses the individual needs of adolescents. Identifying effective teaching strategies or programs to address the literacy crisis in adolescents continues to be a work in progress which makes teaching reading to adolescent even more challenging. Forty years of research from the National Institute of Health noted that five components of readings (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) are necessary for children to become literate readers (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). According to Lyon (2003), an effective reading program must have three critical components: reading

fluency, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension skills; yet, it can be a difficult task to find a reading program that addresses all the needs of struggling adolescents.

Researchers have noted one of the most prominent concerns for developing adolescent reading programs is student interest (Deshler, Hock, & Catts, 2006). Struggling adolescent readers often are not interested in the material being taught in their classrooms. In order for students to be successful in completing high school and well-prepared to pursue a post-secondary education, they must be able to read fluently and comprehend what they read. Additionally, students who are performing below grade level in reading are at risk of ultimately dropping out of school (Sternberg, Kaplan, & Borck, 2007).

The International Reading Association (IRA) recommended that school districts focus on evidence-based practices when implementing programs (International Reading Association, 2000). The NCLB Act requires that school districts use their federal funds to support evidence-based strategies for teaching and learning. These mandates require school leaders to address the needs of struggling adolescent readers and has triggered a renewed focus on instructional leadership. As a result of the NCLB Act, more than ever, principals must have in-depth knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and student achievement (Bottoms, 2001). Additionally, school leaders are searching for effective reading programs to close the achievement gap for all students including students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Educator accountability requires that principals have in-depth knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and student achievement (Bottoms, 2001). It has become a necessity for school leaders to understand literacy and to have the knowledge of effective reading

instructional practices.

School districts are striving to close the achievement gap for all students, including students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Today's classrooms include students from diverse backgrounds and literacy experiences. Students who are English language learners or come from poverty have greater challenges with learning to read (Cunningham, 2006). These students are at-risk of learning to read because they often have limited access to print, limited exposure to vocabulary, and limited life experiences to build background knowledge. Research has demonstrated that there is a negative correlation between reading achievement and poverty (Cunningham, 2006). It is recommended that educators implement differentiated instruction, and include a variety of teaching principles when working with ELLs (August & Hakuta, 1998). Educators working with students with learning disabilities who are also ELLs need to adjust their teaching methods based on the individual differences of students. Meeting the needs of each individual student is not easy. As a result, policies, programs, and plans based on research and best practices are needed to improve reading instruction, teaching, and learning.

Scholastic (2011) reported that the READ 180 reading intervention program closes the reading achievement gap for struggling adolescent readers, including students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. The program was designed to address the literacy needs of students in middle and high school who are struggling in reading. Based on more than ten years of research, it was created by experts at Vanderbilt University, and in collaboration with the Orange County Public School System in Florida (Papalewis, 2004). This intervention program combines

research-based reading strategies with the effective use of technology so that students have opportunities for success through instructional, modeled, and independent reading components (Papalewis, 2004). Chapter 2 will provide a detailed description of (a) the adolescent literacy crisis, (b) instructional approaches to reading, (c) reading instruction in middle schools, (d) history of reading, (e) components of reading programs, (f) technology and teaching, (g) reading interventions, (h) an overview of Scholastic's READ 180 reading intervention program, and (i) leaders and literacy.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need to decrease the number of illiterate adolescents, especially students with learning disabilities in middle school. More than 8 million students in grades 4-12 are struggling readers, and seventy percent of the 8th graders read below the proficient level (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs demonstrate many of the same difficulties as native English speakers with learning disabilities (August & Shanahan, 2006; Tyler, 2006). However, the task of learning English and having a learning disability adds another level of complexity to learning to read and demonstrating successful reading achievement (Muller & Markowitz, 2004). Students with learning disabilities may struggle with developing literacy skills in their native language. Sometimes students with learning disabilities who are ELLs may have acquired literacy skills in their native language, but lack the cultural and linguistic knowledge necessary to benefit fully from the academic English instruction. Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs may suffer repeated failure in the classroom, fall behind in grade, and drop out of school if they are not provided instruction to overcome language barriers (Office of Civil Rights, 2013). It is critical for

middle school students to enter high school with proficient reading skills. Students who enter the ninth grade in the lowest 25% of their class are twenty times more likely to drop out of school than their high performing peers (Carnevele, 2001). The challenge for school leaders is to select a literacy program that meets the individual needs of students and addresses their gaps in reading skills. Effective school leaders make a huge difference in student learning with a laser-like focus on the quality of instruction in their schools (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Now more than ever, the focus for the school leader is to be an instructional leader, specifically a literacy leader. School leaders need to understand literacy, be able to identify and implement effective reading programs, and be able to lead their instructional coaches, teachers, and paraprofessionals they supervise (Dowell, Bickmore, & Hoewing, 2012). The READ 180 reading intervention program claims to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs by providing research-based literacy instruction. Even though there are numerous research studies on the benefits of READ 180 (Caggiano, 2007; Papalewis, 2004; Scholastic, 2002), there is limited research that specifically focuses on whether or not READ 180 meets the needs of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs in reading. This study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge on literacy development in students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities that are ELLs (August & Shanahan, 2006, 2008; Garcia & Tyler; 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

This program evaluation examined administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading

comprehension skills. Specifically, this study explored: 1) the perceived impact READ 180 reading intervention program had on students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading, 2) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 3) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 4) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 5) the influence of READ 180 on students' attitudes toward reading, 6) ELL student's perceptions of how the READ 180 program reflected their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs, and 7) students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension. This study focused on perceptions of administrators who supervise middle school READ 180 teachers, middle school READ 180 teachers, seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities, and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are English language learners in a large, urban school district in Houston, Texas. Culture and personal experiences are important in instruction and intervention according to McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, and Leos (2005). Hence, it is a necessity to explore the cultural relevance of the READ 180 reading intervention program (Caggiano, 2007). This program evaluation also explored ELL students' perceptions of how the READ 180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and met their language needs.

The READ 180 reading intervention program consists of 90 minute daily instruction that provides individualized instruction to meet each student's reading needs.

It is based on a blended instructional model which includes whole-group instruction, small group instruction, technology, differentiated instruction, and independent reading (Scholastic, 2002). The program guarantees reading comprehension skills improvement for students struggling in reading which includes students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (Scholastic, 2009). Fear of failure, lack of motivation to complete work, anxiety, depression, or distress are factors that may negatively influence the self-efficacy of these students (Protheroe, 2004). There are a number of research studies on the effects of READ 180 on struggling readers (Caggiano, 2007; Papalewis, 2004; Scholastic, 2002); however, there is limited research specific to ELLs. This research study was designed to assist school leaders in evaluating how the READ 180 reading intervention program influences reading experiences of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs.

Significance of the Study

The NCLB Act requires school leaders to address the needs of struggling adolescent readers. School leaders have the responsibility of ensuring that all students learn to read, comprehend, and understand the material in classrooms. This is a huge undertaking for school leaders because a student's ability to read impacts every aspect of his or her life and this includes their jobs and interactions in society. Adolescents will have to read and write now, in the 21st century, more than any other time in human history (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

The READ 180 reading intervention program is used in fourth through twelfth grades throughout the urban school district in Houston, Texas. The NCLB Act requires

that school districts use their federal funds to support evidence-based strategies for teaching and learning. Scholastic (2002) reports the READ 180 program is an intensive research based program that includes a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development on research based strategies designed to raise reading achievement of struggling readers which includes students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. The program is expensive in relation to money and time, and costs \$43,000 for 60 student licenses at the basic level (Kim, Capotosto, Hartry, & Fitzgerald, 2011). The urban school district in which this program evaluation is situated has spent approximately two million dollars on the READ 180 reading intervention program over a four year period. In addition, the impact of the program upon students' reading habits and skills are unclear. Therefore, it was essential to assess the relevance of this prescriptive program to student learning outcomes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and students. This program evaluation enhanced the understanding of the value of the READ 180 reading intervention program. It will assist school leaders in evaluating how the READ 180 reading intervention program impacts reading experiences of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs.

Research Questions

1. What perceived impact does the READ 180 reading intervention program have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on improving reading

comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?

3. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
4. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by students to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
5. How were attitudes toward reading influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
6. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represented their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?
7. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Research Design

Multiple methods were utilized for this program evaluation. A program evaluation was utilized to provide an in-depth study of the impact of READ 180 on seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh

and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. An important aspect of the program evaluation was using multiple sources and multiple methods of data gathering. A program evaluation was appropriate for this research because administrators, teachers and students from a large, urban school district participated in the study. Permission was obtained from the school district by submitting the district's Application of Research Studies. Permission was then obtained from the Human Subjects Committee of the University of Houston by completing the Human Subjects Application for the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The school district in this study is located in southwest Houston and has a diverse student population of 45,748. The district consists of 24 elementary schools, six intermediate campuses, six middle schools, two ninth grade centers, and three high schools. The ethnic breakdown of the district's diverse student population consists of 31.2% African American, 12.5% Asian, 51.2% Hispanic, and 3.5% White. The district has 81.7% economically disadvantaged students with 36.2% Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, and 7.6% Special Education students who are all at risk according to the Texas Education Agency (2013b).

The bounded system for this program evaluation included six middle schools in a large, urban school district. Participants included administrators, teachers, and students. The administrators from each of the six middle schools were invited to participate in the study. Four of the administrators agreed to participate in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, but one cancelled on the day of the interview. As a result, three administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers participated in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Six teachers who teach the READ 180 program and 50 seventh

and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities were invited to participate in the study. Students who participated in the READ 180 program for a minimum of one school year were the selected students. Participants for the teacher focus group included three READ 180 teachers even though all six READ 180 teachers had agreed to participate at the mutually agreed upon date and time. Out of the fifty students invited to participate, only thirty students brought back their signed parent permission forms. A total of thirty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs participated in the program evaluation.

Multiple methods were used to collect data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, demographic surveys, and student documents during the 2013-2014 school year in the spring semester. The researcher also collected archival data to describe Lexile level gains. Consent was obtained from administrators and teachers. Consent was obtained from the parents of the students participating in the study. Then, assent was obtained from students who participated in the READ 180 program for a minimum of one school year. Administrators selected the date and time of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews which were held before school, during the day, or after school. READ 180 teachers participated in a focus group. The focus group was held after a district Professional Learning Community (PLC) day. District PLCs are held once a month on Wednesdays. In this district, students are released early so that the teachers can receive additional professional development. READ 180 teachers attend the same professional development session during the PLC day. A focus group was held for the students participating in the study. For the interviews and focus groups, questions

asked applied to administrators, teachers, and students while other questions asked did not. Data was compared and triangulated.

The results of the program evaluation provide an analysis of the READ 180 reading intervention program to understand the perceived efficacy of the program in improving reading comprehension while justifying whether seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs need additional reading interventions to further their confidence in, and motivation towards reading. The study also explored administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions on the influence of READ 180 on their attitudes towards reading, perceptions on their cultural background and language learning in READ 180, and perceptions of technology facilitating their learning.

Theoretical Framework

For purposes of this study, Anderson's (1994) Schema Theory, Bruner's (1966) Constructivist Theory, Bandura's (1994) Social Learning Theory, and Gay's (2000), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Theory form the theoretical framework that guided this program evaluation. Schema theory involves the process by which learners combine their background knowledge with their new knowledge (Anderson, 1994). This theory established how the student's background knowledge plays a fundamental role in comprehending text. According to the constructivist theory, learning is an active process where learners construct new ideas based upon current and past knowledge (Bruner, 1990). This theory helped establish student's perceptions on the effects of the READ 180 reading intervention program on their reading comprehension skills. Students' background knowledge and prior experiences impact new learning. In addition, students'

beliefs in their ability to succeed in a particular situation also impact learning (Bandura, 1994). The social learning theory established the effect of the READ 180 reading intervention program on student's self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes towards reading. Culturally relevant pedagogy is teaching that utilizes the experiences, background, knowledge, and cultural knowledge of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective (Gay, 2000). Culturally relevant teaching empowers, validates and affirms diverse students (Gay, 2000). Culture, background, and experiences influence teaching and learning. Culturally relevant pedagogy theory helped explore the cultural relevance and language learning in the READ 180 reading intervention program.

Educators need to understand how students learn to read, and understand the reading process and components of reading. Schema theory is based on the idea of every act of comprehension being related to one's knowledge of the world (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). The schema theory describes the process by which readers combine their background knowledge with their new knowledge. In reading, students integrate their prior knowledge with the reading task and information in the text. Student's previous experiences with the world are crucial to deciphering text. The goal is for students to interact with and comprehend the text. Thus, students create meaning from the text and activities, and construct their own knowledge.

According to the constructivist theory, learning is best understood and applied when learners develop their own mental models of the information learned. A major theme of Bruner's (1990) theoretical framework is that learning is an active process where learners construct new ideas based upon current or past knowledge. Constructivist

theorists believe students must actively process novel information in order to integrate it with prior knowledge and promote deeper learning (Hein, 1991; Jonassen, 1999; Taber, 2006; Loyens & Gijbels, 2008). Constructivists suggest that learning is more effective when students are actively engaged in learning rather than receiving knowledge passively. Some constructivism-based instructional goals are providing the learner with support and skills by modeling, coaching, and scaffolding so that students can actively construct their own personal learning (Vogel-Walcutt, Gebrim, Bowers, Carper, & Nicholson, 2011).

According to Bandura's social learning theory (1994), self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her own ability to succeed in a particular situation. He described the beliefs as causes of how people think, behave, and feel (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy plays a significant role in student achievement. Students' perceptions and beliefs affects their motivation to read and attitudes toward reading.

Limitations

This program evaluation aimed to provide an understanding and rich description of the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and students. The location of the school sites where the individual administrator interviews, teacher focus group interview, and a student focus group interview were in 6 of the 17 campuses in the school district that utilized the READ 180 reading intervention program. A limitation of the study was that the research was conducted at the district where the researcher is employed, and the data was collected from only one district. The study was bounded within a particular district and the findings in this district may not be indicative of other districts. The sample size is another limitation. Findings may not be generalized to other settings.

Definitions

Direct instruction. A scripted method for teaching that is sequenced and focused in specific skill development (Slocum, 2004).

English language learners (ELLs). Students who speak a language other than English as their first language or native language. The phrases ELLs and limited-English proficient (LEP) are similar in meaning, and both terms are used by the Office for Civil Rights (2013). The term LEP is also used in the federally mandated *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2001).

Guided reading. An instructional approach to teaching reading where a teacher works with a small group of students in using problem-solving strategies to decode words, understand concepts, read fluently and independently (Richardson, 2009).

Learning disabilities. The Federal definition for learning disabilities refers to a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B, 2005).

Lexile. The term refers to a metric measurement used to evaluate reading and text difficulty. It is a range of standardized measurements indicating reading comprehension and vocabulary ability and ranges from 200-1700 (Metametrics, 2012). Adolescents are matched to text-no matter where they are in the development of his or her reading skills-and in examining reader growth.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a federal mandate that requires states to strive to close the achievement gap for students.

rBook. The rBook is an interactive reading response book used as the primary component of whole group direct instruction. Each rBook consists of 9 Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up assignments (Scholastic, 2011).

READ 180. READ 180 is a commercial reading intervention program which consists of a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development designed for any student reading two or more years below grade-level (Scholastic, 2011).

READ 180 software. The READ 180 software refers to the installed program on the READ 180 computers that assist students while they are working on the computers during one of the READ 180 rotations (Scholastic, 2011). This is referred to as computer assisted instruction whereby instruction is presented on a computer as support for literacy and learning.

Reading comprehension. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) defined reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. The reader, the text, and the purpose for reading are the three elements of reading comprehension (Lipka & Siegel, 2011).

Scholastic reading inventory (SRI). This is a computerized assessment students in the READ 180 reading intervention program take several times a year. The SRI provides students a Lexile score (Scholastic, 2011).

Struggling readers. Alvermann (2002) defines struggling readers as youth with clinically diagnosed reading disabilities as well as students who are English language learners.

Summary

This chapter built the foundation for conducting research on how adolescent students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs perceived the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program. There is a need to focus on the literacy of adolescent ELLs due to the limited research on this particular population (August & Shanahan, 2006, 2008; Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Today adolescents who leave high school without excellent reading and writing skills are at a great disadvantage as literacy skills are a prerequisite for success in society. Approximately forty percent of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek (Achieve, Inc., 2005). One in four adolescents cannot read well enough to be able to understand informational text or identify the main idea in a passage (Kamil, 2003). Every school day, almost seven thousand students drop out of high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). Students typically dropout of high school because they do not have the literacy skills needed to keep up with the curriculum because these skills have become more complex (Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). Furthermore, dropouts typically earn less than their peers with an education and are at greater risk for unemployment. The crisis in adolescent literacy is concerning and is having devastating impacts on society. This program evaluation enhanced the understanding of the value of the READ 180 reading intervention program, and will assist school leaders in evaluating how the READ 180 reading intervention program

influences reading experiences of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. In addition, this program evaluation will help school leaders determine whether or not the READ 180 reading intervention program is appropriate when working with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Reading comprehension is essential to academic learning in all content areas but to as well as lifelong learning as well (Torgesen, 2002). Educators are being held accountable for student achievement with the increased federal accountability system. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)(2001) was implemented as a means to offer an equal educational opportunities and student achievement for all students, including students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are English language learners (ELLs). It is critical that students with learning disabilities receive targeted instruction that addresses their weaknesses. Eighty-percent of students diagnosed with learning disabilities are diagnosed because their reading skills lag behind from their general education peers; furthermore reading is the primary disability in 90% of students identified with a learning disability who are also ELLs (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). Learning to read and demonstrating reading achievement is compounded by the challenge of learning English and having a learning disability (Muller & Markowitz, 2004). Students get off to a fast start during the elementary grades, but begin to fall behind during early adolescence (International Reading Association, 2001 & National Middle School Association, 2001). Hence, students have gaps in their reading skills when they enter middle school. The review of the literature provides a detailed description of (a) the adolescent literacy crisis, (b) instructional approaches to reading, (c) reading instruction in middle schools, (d) history of reading, (e) components of reading programs, (f) technology and teaching, (g) reading interventions, (h) an overview of Scholastic's READ 180 reading intervention

program, and (i) leaders and literacy.

Adolescent Reading Crisis

Reading is essential for the academic success of students. Over the past decade, the reading deficiencies of many adolescents have increased. As a result, the nation is concerned with the reading achievement of adolescents. The RAND Corporation examined adolescent literacy in the nation and found the average proficiency rate of eighth graders was 32% in the 2003 National Assessments of Educational Progress reading assessments which indicated that only this percentage were reading on grade level (2005). In recent years, the adolescent literacy problem has received national attention by various reports by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Reading Next (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), Writing Next (Graham & Perin, 2007), and the Center for Instruction, and Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents (Torgesen, et. al., 2007). Graduation rates are a cause for alarm: 70% of high school students graduate on time with a regular diploma, and less than 60% of African-American and Latino students graduate on time (Greene & Winters, 2005). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) indicated the high stakes for students to move on from middle school to high school, and earn a high school diploma when they are performing below level in reading.

An important challenge facing educators today is narrowing the achievement gap in reading for adolescent who aren't reading on grade-level. Accountability in public education and an emphasis on measuring student achievement through state-mandated assessments highlights the need to address the achievement gap in struggling adolescent readers. There has been no significant change in progress in the NAEP assessment for

students in grades fourth through eighth grade between the years 1992 and 2003, and eighth grade scores in 2003 decreased (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). Federal legislation was passed to reduce the number of students falling behind in reading, but many students in these grades still require remediation. The 1984 Report Card from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1985) indicated that gains in reading for thirteen- and seventeen-year-olds have either flat-lined or increased insignificantly since 1971 (Jacobs, 2008).

NAEP results show that the current generation of adolescents is unable to meet academic and workforce challenges. Twenty-five percent of eighth and twelfth grade students read below basic levels, which indicates that they have no more than the most simple concrete literacy skills according to 2002 NAEP results (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005), and more than six million adolescents have been left behind academically and will be similarly disadvantaged when they enter the U.S. labor market. NAEP's 2007 Report Card indicated that there has been no "significant change in the percentage of [eighth-grade] students at or above the proficient level" when compared to the 1992 and 2005 data (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007, p. 3).

The International Reading Association (IRA) issued a position statement on adolescent literacy which stated little attention was given to the reading skills of older students (Moore, Bean, & Birdyshaw, 1999). They criticized the fact that adolescent literacy was not a hot topic in educational policy or a priority in schools, and that in the United States, most Title I budgets are allocated for early intervention. "Even if all children learn to read by Grade 3, the literacy needs of the adolescent reader [are] far

different from those of primary-grade children.” (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999, p. 1).

A series of reports and position papers responded to the request for action for adolescent reading. The RAND Corporation’s *Reading for Understanding*, proposed a research agenda to address the pressing problem of comprehension (Snow, 2002) while *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* outlined fifteen elements of effective adolescent literacy programs and literacy achievement (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).

There continues to be a crisis in adolescent literacy even though reports define principles for adolescent literacy reform (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006a, 2006b, 2007) and the practices supporting adolescents’ literacy development most effectively (NAEP, 2006). The needs of the adolescent reader are different from those of primary children (Moore et al., 1999). In 1917, E. L. Thorndike made a clear distinction between the skills necessary “to read” and the reasoning ability necessary to comprehend, noting that comprehension required the mind to “select, repress, soften, emphasize, correlate, and organize all under the influence of the right mental set or purpose or demand” (Hunnicutt & Iverson, 1958, pp. 139–140). R. L. Thorndike identified age thirteen, or the onset of adolescence, as the time when reading is no longer a decoding problem but, instead, is a thinking problem. He emphasized that reading was a reasoning process rather than a set of distinct and specialized skills (1973). His research brought about new thinking and challenged teachers not just to teach students to read, but also to think. Teaching middle school students how to read is much more complex than teaching students in grades after elementary. Instruction focuses on the acquisition and

proficiency of subject matter in middle school rather than acquisition and proficiency in reading (Kozen, Murray, & Swindell, 2006).

It is critical that school leaders are informed and educated about reading instruction and how to help older struggling readers. The 21st Century requires that adolescents engage with text, process it, and apply the information. Students have the responsibility of learning more complex content at a faster pace to cover the material assessed on state assessments (Woodruff, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2002). They must understand, comprehend, and construct information using print and non-print materials in various types of platforms (International Reading Association, 2012). In fact, the Commission of Adolescent Literacy of the IRA indicated that adolescents would have to read and write more than any other time in history when they entered the workforce in the 21st Century (1999). The IRA updated their position statement in 2012 and emphasized that the same holds true in 2012. Adolescents will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs and to be able to process the information they receive on a daily basis. Students who cannot read experience greater challenges in the content area subjects and reduce their chances of being successful in school (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). In addition, college success is determined by students' abilities to read fluently and comprehend what they read. Many struggling adolescents lack the ability to read with comprehension and many more lack motivation (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). Struggling adolescents may lack the background knowledge in what they are reading and often have limited exposure to written and oral language.

Fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are essential skills for reading and reading programs (Lyon, 2003). In order for any reading program to be successful, these

three elements should be embedded within it. However, one reading program will not address the needs of all struggling readers. School leaders face obstacles in sending prepared graduates to the workforce. Twenty-five percent of the high school students across the nation read at a below-proficient level and this affects students in all content area subjects (Joftus, 2002). School leaders are focused on meeting these accountability requirements and are looking at creating or purchasing high quality reading programs. Specifically, school leaders, must target all students who are at risk of not meeting standards in school, and must be familiar with reading instruction.

The implementation of the NCLB Act continues to pressure school districts to ensure that there is improvement in student achievement. All students will read at proficient level and score proficient on state reading assessments (NCLB, 2001). Reading comprehension skills is a complex cognitive process that cannot be understood without a clear description of the role that vocabulary development and vocabulary instruction play in the understanding of what has been read (National Reading Panel, 2000). Comprehension is an active process that requires an intentional and thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text (text comprehension instruction). Also, the preparation of teachers to better equip students to develop and apply reading comprehension strategies to enhance understanding is intimately linked to students' achievement in this area (National Reading Panel, 2000).

More than eight million students in grades 4 to 12 are identified as struggling readers (Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003), and at least eight million children and teenagers in grades four to twelve are struggling with reading in schools in the United States (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). If a student cannot read by the 8th grade, the

likelihood of dropping out of school is almost a given (Papalewis, 2004). Between 2000-2010 more than two thirds of all jobs required some postsecondary education (Carnevele & Desrochers, 2003). High school educators face immense challenges if the achievement gap is not closed in middle school, prior to students becoming 9th graders.

Results from a descriptive study conducted with 346 adolescents where 83% attended urban schools indicated that struggling adolescent readers (those with an overall reading skill profile at or below the 40th percentile) need intensive word level interventions in addition to comprehension interventions (Hock, Brasseur, Deshler, Mark, Stribling, 2007). These struggling adolescents scored significantly lower in decoding, vocabulary, word recognition, fluency, and reading comprehension. They scored at the 1st to 7th percentile in all reading skills measured. Struggling adolescent readers may lack fluency in word reading and many times have not acquired adult-like decoding and word recognition skills. Struggling adolescent readers lack sufficient fluency in word recognition and can benefit from intervention targeted at word reading strategies (Hock, et al., 2005). Also, struggling readers may not have the contextual knowledge to form an initial understanding of text, which may be a result of a lack of language experience (e.g., English Language Learners) or a developmental language impairment (Catts, Hogan, & Adlof, 2005). The lack of relevant background knowledge is a further obstacle which is critical in order to build a deep understanding of text. Without knowledge of the subject matter, adolescents gain less from reading a text than those with knowledge of the subject matter. Also, they lack the strategies needed for comprehension and making connections to the text to past knowledge and experience. Adolescents who struggle with reading are

reported to lack good reading comprehension strategies (Swanson & Hoskyn, 1999; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000).

Exposing students to reading programs with remedial components as well as motivating the reluctant reader is critical to responding to reading failure. Students who have difficulty reading often give up because they are frustrated or bored. If students are provided preferred reading selections and differentiated modes of instruction, adolescents may see improved reading outcomes (Joftus, 2002).

Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities continue to experience gaps in their learning throughout their schooling, and struggle with phonological awareness and word recognition, decoding, and reading fluency (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). They have insufficient word recognition skills, poor reading fluency, and demonstrate significant deficits in reading comprehension. Students with learning disabilities and at-risk readers all struggle to read each year and consequently they fall further and further behind in school which increases the probability that they will drop out of high school (McCray, Neal & Vaughn, 2001). Students with learning disabilities often view themselves as poor readers and lack the confidence to be successful (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Based on child-count data from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B, 45.5 % of students receive special education services due to learning disabilities (Thurlow, Moen, Liu, Scullin, Hausmann, & Shyyan, 2009). The most common problems associated with learning disabilities are difficulties with basic print reading and reading comprehension (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001). Special education reading programs include students with varying ability levels and sometimes varying

disabilities; however, the majority of students have an identified reading deficit.

Instruction usually occurs in the general education classroom or in a special education reading class, but sometimes it occurs in a self-contained special education classroom. Special education reading classes focus on reducing the discrepancy between student grade level performance and student's ability level (Lundberg, 1995). Some students receive specifically designed instruction to address their individual needs in the special education reading class and often have no general education reading class. Students often lack self-confidence and become easily frustrated and give up due to a history of academic failure. Several factors for promoting quality reading instruction for students with learning disabilities are they must be involved in their learning, which includes planning their instructional program, goal setting, assessment, and evaluation (Deshler, Ellis, & Lenz, 1996; Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2010). Students with a learning disability in reading fall further behind each year they are without intensive reading individual or small group instruction (Drummond, 2005).

A study of middle school students with learning disabilities revealed student's ongoing frustration with their inability to read and they labeled themselves as unable to learn to read (McCray, Neal, & Vaughn, 2001). Students with learning disabilities need intensive and explicit reading instruction in small groups or individual instruction (McCray et al., 2001). The majority of students have reading deficits in basic reading skills and comprehension skills. On the other hand, in another study with middle school students with learning disabilities, students consistently misused reading strategies, had negative attitudes towards reading and did not have many opportunities to read in the

classroom (McCray et al., 2001). Middle school students who struggle to read perceive that reading is difficult, and they are unsuccessful (McCray et al., 2001).

English Language Learners

English language learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing student group among the public school population. Currently, there are approximately 5.5 million students attending U. S. public schools whose first language or native language is not English, and 80 percent of these students speak Spanish (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos, & D'Emilio, 2005). The U. S. Department of Education defines Limited English proficient (LEP) students as those between the ages of three and twenty-one who are enrolled in elementary or secondary education, speaking another language other than English at home, born outside of the U. S., and not having sufficient mastery of the English language to meet standards and excel in English-language classrooms. Students designated LEP in grades K-12 increased by 72 percent from 1992 to 2002 (Donovan & Cross, 2002; US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2003). The terms ELL and LEP are used interchangeably, but ELL has recently become frequently used in academia (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004; Harper & de Jong, 2005; Reeves, 2004). School districts vary in how they define ELLs; with some using written tests to determine ELL status, and others base it on their English proficiency. Under the NCLB ACT (2001), they are required to identify ELLs consistently, measure skills, and demonstrated that ELLs are making adequate yearly progress in reading.

The increase in LEP students in U. S. schools presents a challenge to educators, as the academic achievement of students who are linguistically and culturally diverse have not kept pace with their white, middle class peers (Alliance for Excellent Education,

2007; McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, & Leos, 2005; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Students who are English language learners face the challenge of overcoming a language barrier in addition to overcoming low academic achievement. ELLs come to school with a variety of language abilities in which some are proficient in their first language and some are limited in their first language. Reports from NAEP have demonstrated that there is a large achievement gap between students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, many of whom are ELLs, and white students (McCardle, et al., 2005). ELLs do not acquire the English language at the same rate as their English speaking peers, and do not perform academically after several years of instruction in both language acquisition and academic content are often referred for special education services (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; McCardle et al., 2005). ELLs do not read English at the same rate as they speak it. Many ELLs learn to converse fluently in English long before they can read the language (August & Shanahan, 2006). It takes ELLs two to three years to learn to communicate in English in informal, social settings, and five to seven years for ELLs to understand and use the language of the classroom, of academic literature and texts (Cummins, 1981).

Recommendations for effective literacy instruction for adolescent ELLs recognize the interrelatedness of oral language proficiency and literacy development. There are many factors that affect ELLs' success in middle schools. ELLs must leave high school capable of speaking and understanding academic English, reading text for understanding, and writing expository texts with proficiency in order to meet the increasing literacy demands of the workplace.

At-Risk Students. A student who reads at a proficient level can read approximately ten million words, whereas a struggling reader can read less than one hundred thousand

words upon entering middle school. Self-esteem and motivation are affected by this factor alone (Lyon, 2003; Vacca & Vacca, 2005). The at-risk middle school student in grades 6-8 is one who is below-grade level on vocabulary, demonstrates difficulty in sustained silent reading, is unable to transfer acquired reading strategies to all content areas, and shows limited comprehension abilities (Lowe, Lowe, & Wood, 1992). At-risk students may include students who are reading below grade level, students identified with learning disabilities, and students with learning disabilities who are also ELLs. Vacca and Vacca (2005) identified the following four factors associated with at-risk readers:

1. Have a limited ability to process the information they read,
2. Have limited reading strategies to assist them in understanding written information at above the literal level,
3. Generally do not understand the reading process,
4. Often have low self-esteem, and
5. Do not understand the value of the reading process.

At-risk students and ELLs often struggle with decoding words (Vacca & Vacca, 2005). Not being able to decode words impacts reading comprehension. Some students need explicit instruction to develop these skills. Older students who struggle to decode words benefit from interventions grounded in research which provide the reading skills they missed in primary grades and can bring them to grade level in one to two years (Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander & Conway, 1997). Effective interventions include systematic and explicit instruction in-small group or one-on-one settings (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Students with disabilities who are ELLs benefit from explicit academic language instruction, discussion, scaffolding writing techniques, and

teacher support (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). In fact, all struggling adolescents benefit from explicit, intensive, on-going instruction in reading strategies (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Intense specialized instruction is required for adolescents who struggle in reading.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Due to the 10% yearly increase of ELLs in schools, districts have increased their focus on how to meet the needs of diverse populations (McCardle, et al., 2005). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) reports 9 out of 10 students who leave elementary as struggling readers continue to struggle as adolescent readers. Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs and who are struggling in reading, often feel they do not fit in with the mainstream culture of their school (Muller & Markowitz, 2004). Students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs are perceived as “outsiders” and face further rejection due to the stigma of having a disability (Artiles, 2003). These students and their families are members of the non-dominant socio-cultural and/or linguistic communities, and many times enter school with worldviews that hugely differ from those represented at school (Hollins, 2008). Students from diverse cultures may find aspects of the curriculum less relevant to their backgrounds and personal life experiences. Moreover, students who come from families who speak little or no English are at a higher risk of dropping out from high school, and complete high school at lower rates (Gil & Bardack, 2010). According to the 2000 Census by the National Center for Educational statistics (2004), only 49% of students, who reported to the 2000 Census that they spoke English with difficulty, earned a diploma four years later.

Students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are

ELLs benefit from instruction that is simultaneously responsive to their disability, English language proficiency, and culture. Rogoff (2003) defines culture as an individual characteristic reflecting who a student is, where the student comes from, the conventions and language of communication, how students learn, and approach social and classroom interactions. It is important for teachers to realize that their instruction and student learning is influenced by culture (Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Hoover & Patton, 2005). The concept of culturally relevant pedagogy has informed the field of education on the importance of culture in teaching and learning. Gay (2000) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as a combination of critical pedagogy and sociocultural theory:

Culturally relevant pedagogy simultaneously develops, along with the academic achievement, social consciousness and critique, cultural affirmation, competence, and exchange; community building and personal connections, individual self-worth and abilities; and an ethic of caring. It uses ways of knowing, understanding, and representing various ethnic and cultural groups in teaching academic subjects, process and skills. (p. 43)

Culturally relevant teaching empowers, validates and affirms diverse students (Gay, 2000). This occurs when teachers use their student's cultures as a tool for learning, and use differentiated instruction to tailor learning to every aspect of a student's culture. Lessons and instructional approaches should be assessed to identify the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive demands that will be placed on these students. The unique needs of ELLs must be considered when designing and delivering literacy instruction. Research-based strategies that have been identified as successful in the development of reading skills in monolingual students may be beneficial for ELLs but there is no one

method that works for all students. Due to the variability in adolescent ELL's language and academic background, there is a need for systematic and explicit comprehension and vocabulary instruction. Adolescent ELLs with good reading comprehension skills in their native language can apply them to their English language skills since it is simpler for them to develop the concept in English than for students who lack the concept in their native language (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; August, 2002; Riches & Genesee, 2006; Krashen, 2003). Given the diverse cultural backgrounds and learning needs of these students, it is paramount for school leaders and teachers to understand that no single, one-size-fits-all instructional approach, curriculum, or reading intervention program is likely to address the needs of every adolescent learner (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

Self-Efficacy and Motivation

How students feel about themselves will contribute to how well they will approach reading. Self-efficacy can also be defined as the belief within oneself that later leads to competence (Vacca, 2006). Self-efficacy plays a crucial role on how the student thinks, feels, behaves and focuses on his/her abilities rather than on comprehension strategies. In order for struggling readers to progress through the reading process, explicit reading instruction is necessary (Vacca, 2006).

Motivation is crucial in influencing self-efficacy and text comprehension. Students can focus on the task with the use of effective comprehension strategies. However, students with low self-efficacy are easily discouraged and struggle before beginning the task if they are simply working to finish the task (Vacca, 2006). Students with low self-efficacy tend to daydream while they are reading because the text does not

hold their interest. When reading, they must read for purpose and have a personal connection with the text they are reading (Vacca, 2006). Teachers must activate student's prior knowledge and get them interested when teaching reading. Activating prior knowledge is a strategy proven to increase student motivation. Making predictions and creating anticipation are other pre-reading strategies. "Pre-reading instructional strategies often involve arousing curiosity about the topic, evoking predictions and creating anticipation for reading, presenting problems to be solved through reading, or eliciting student generated questions about the materials before assigning a particular text" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 58). Students with low self-efficacy typically avoid challenges, expend little effort, and give up while students with high self-efficacy are more willing to approach learning, expand effort, persist when facing challenges, and use strategies effectively (Protheroe, 2004). Factors that may negatively influence self-efficacy were identified by Protheroe (2004). They are:

1. Student may not see the importance of completing work and how it related to their life.
2. Students may be afraid of failure.
3. They may find they are below level when compared to their peers and become frustrated.
4. Students desire attention from the teacher.
5. They may experience anxiety, depression, or distress, and rebel against their parents.

Students with reading difficulty often lack motivation to read and experience

detrimental effects in their subject area classes. Highly motivated students read three times more than their less motivated peers which significantly increasing reading achievement (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students who read more frequently experience growth in word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). Students with learning disabilities often are at a disadvantage because they have the tendency to be less motivated to read, have poor reading skills, and lack the confidence to read (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). Fluency activities can assist with improving reading skills and motivation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Repeated fluency instructional activities are effective in developing fluency and comprehension in all students, but specifically at-risk and students with learning disabilities (Peebles, 2007). Repeated reading activities motivate struggling adolescent readers because students are exposed to familiar reading. These activities typically consist of three phases: the initial timing phase, the practice phase, and the final timing phase (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). Students feel a connection to the text when they are engaged in the learning experience. Through repeated reading, students build confidence and their motivation increases. As students' motivation increases, they continue to develop their reading skills. It is essential that students feel supported and a part of learning community so that they can stay motivated with the reading tasks as they move from grade level to grade level. Using repeated fluency activities with students with learning disabilities has been associated with improvement in reading accuracy and reading comprehension in a comprehensive review of fluency intervention studies from the past 25 years (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler 2002).

In middle schools, motivation plays a significant role during reading. How

students feel about reading and their reading skills impacts their achievement in reading. Students with strong motivation will be interested in reading and read more than students with low motivation (Baker & Wigfield, 1995; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students who are less motivated to read are usually less engaged with their text while they are reading. Teachers need to ensure high student engagement and motivation. Numerous studies have shown that a significant relationship exists between motivation and multiple forms of achievement in schools, including reading achievement. The task for middle school teachers intensifies as they aim to keep students motivated to read and improve in their reading skills.

Instructional Approaches to Teaching Reading

There are many instructional approaches to teaching reading. In this section, four areas will be considered: (a) differentiated instruction, (b) direct instruction, (c) guided reading, and (d) research-based strategies.

Differentiated Instruction. As previously discussed, the diversity of students in classrooms is increasing, and the need to shape curriculum and instruction to maximize learning for all students is more urgent than ever. School leaders and teachers are searching for instructional approaches that will allow them to accommodate the learning needs of all students. Rejecting a “one-size-fit-all” curriculum in order to meet the needs of every student is the cornerstone of the differentiated instruction approach (Campbell, 2008; Gregory & Chapman, 2007; Paterson, 2005; Rothenberg & Fisher, 2007; Tomlinson, 2003). According to Tomlinson (2013), differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching that accommodates for the different ways students learn. The approach of differentiated instruction is a concept that incorporates many effective

traditional methods, teaching strategies, and constructivism. Its roots are in special education and gifted education but it has been developed as a means of accommodating the range of readiness and ability levels, learning styles and student's interests. It is an organized and flexible way of adjusting teaching and learning to meet the varying learning needs of students, while helping them achieve maximum growth (Tomlinson, 1999). Through a blend of whole class, small group, and individual instruction, differentiated instruction provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product (Tomlinson, 2004).

Students vary in their abilities, disabilities, language, cultures, socioeconomic status, motivation, personal interests and more, and school leaders need to be aware of these differences as literacy leaders. Knowing of these varieties will assist school leaders in identifying and implementing effective instructional approaches and reading programs. They will also be able to lead their instructional coaches, teachers, and paraprofessionals they supervise. It is recommended that educators implement differentiated instruction, and include a variety of teaching principles when working with students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (August & Hakuta, 1998; Hoover & Patton, 2005; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, Scammacca, 2008).

Guiding principles for teaching ELLs were developed by a group of researchers and educators, a comprehensive review of the literature, and the Center for Research on Education and Diversity (CREDE). These principles are:

- (a) Learning and developing that facilitates productive activities among students,
- (b) Students' prior knowledge and learning,
- (c) Educational activities within the context of students' prior experience and

skills,

(d) Higher level thinking and complex solutions, and

(e) On-going verbal dialogue (Hoover & Patton, 2005).

Educators working with students with learning disabilities who are ELLs need to adjust their teaching methods based on the individual differences of students. Meeting the needs of each individual student is not easy. As a result, policies, programs, and plans based on research and best practices are created to improve reading instruction, teaching, and learning.

Direct Instruction. Direct instruction is an approach to teaching reading, but can be used in other content areas. This approach was developed by Siegfried Engelmann in 1964 under the premise that all students can demonstrate success; and that if a student fails, the quality of instruction should not be blamed on the student (Adams & Engelmann, 1996). Direct instruction uses a teacher centered format where teachers group students according to functioning levels in reading. Students are taught specific skills on a sequential basis, and the texts are specifically geared towards reinforcing the skills they are being taught. According to Gersten (1986), direct instruction includes the following provided by the teacher:

1. Explicit instruction in each strategy and the process is explained in detail;
2. Clear expectations for students to master each step of the process;
3. Modeling processing errors and modeling how to solve the problem;
4. Gradually reducing the assistance by the teachers;
5. Students moving on to work independently;
6. Students are given multiple opportunities to systematically practice;

7. Reviewing student progress cumulatively; and
8. Teachers planning their instruction while keeping in mind potential student errors.

Reciprocal teaching is an example of direct, explicit instruction where the teacher provides students with four strategies: questioning, clarifying, predicting, and summarizing. Students are then given the opportunity to apply the strategies in small groups. Quality instruction, specifically for middle and high school students, includes integration of comprehension strategies across the content areas (Biancarosa, 2005). The Strategic Instruction Model allows the teacher to communicate across the content areas with word identification, visual imagery, self-questioning, and paraphrasing. These strategies are used to assist students with their understanding of the text and material. Interestingly, many times a student's perception of their ability is a predictor of how much they read and their reading comprehension level (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Furthermore, students' sense of competence in reading and writing decreases, as students become discouraged. Students, who are motivated, increase their reading comprehension, self-perception, and strategy use when they are exposed to a reading curriculum which actively engages them in the learning process and is self-directed (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Allowing students to choose what they read and learn about is one recommendation (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Allowing students to set literacy and learning goals for themselves by letting them decide how to meet expectations and goals set by the teacher is another suggestion for schools to improve learning and motivation (Schunk, 2003). Text-based collaborative learning is the student's ability to perform reading and writing tasks in small groups (Biancarosa, 2005). It has been established that cooperative learning improved reading comprehension and

student achievement for students in upper elementary through high school, including students with learning disabilities (Slavin, 1991). Positive achievement effects of cooperative learning have been consistent with all levels, including low achievers in grades 2-12 (Slavin, 1991). Struggling readers benefit from working in cooperative groups. This allows for peers who can model correct solutions and provide help (Kinger & Vaughn, 2000). Strategic tutoring in fourth through twelfth grades has shown to be effective in meeting students' individual needs because it identifies and targets student's area of weakness and promotes independence (Biancarosa, 2005). Higher reading achievement levels have been demonstrated by students who read and have access to diverse texts (Campbell, Kapinus, & Beatty, 1995). During the reading process and in classroom libraries, students need access to diverse texts with a variety of styles, topics, genres, and content areas (Biancarosa, 2005). Direct instruction is an instructional approach where teachers can provide adolescents with direct and explicit instruction in reading strategies such as comprehension strategies to improve students' reading comprehension. Students are also provided explicit instruction in routines and procedures that readers can use to help them make sense of texts.

Guided Reading. Guided reading is a key part of a balanced reading program.

Richardson (2009) provided four elements that are part of this teaching approach:

- Analyzing students' reading assessments to identify the instructional focus,
- Prompting students to use their reading strategies when they encounter a problem,
- Teaching the necessary specific skills appropriate to the reading level of the student,
- Using guided writing to support the reading process.

During guided reading, the teacher works with students in small groups and assists them with their reading skills. This setting allows for teachers to aid students in being able to process and understand the text read (Fountas, 2001). Students are grouped according to their reading levels. Therefore, teachers are able to focus on specific skills for the small groups and individual student needs. Each reader's development of effective reading strategies for processing novel texts as increasingly challenging texts is supported by the teacher, and the ultimate goal is to help students learn how to use independent reading strategies successfully (Fountas & Pinnel, 1996). They emphasized that guided reading should consist of:

1. Students with similar reading abilities working together in small groups,
2. Assistance in reading provided in an effort to enable students to become independent readers,
3. Students reading whole text silently and independently,
4. Text becoming more difficult as students move on the reading levels (Fountas & Pinnel, 1996).

Activities are focused on structured lessons involving what to do *before reading, during reading, and after reading*. During the *before reading* part of the lesson, the teacher models, explains, assists students in establishing anticipatory questions, builds background knowledge, helps students to access prior knowledge and encourages students to engage with the text. *During reading* is when students are reading text at their ability level and the teacher takes notes on how effective the students are with their reading strategies. Opportunities to respond to the text as well as assisting students in their area of difficulty are activities in the *after reading* part of the lesson (Fountas &

Pinnell, 1996).

Technology can be important to a well-structured Guided Reading Program and help ensure that students are engaged (Rose, 2002). Students need individual feedback and guidance in order to stay focused. This is not available through traditional books or leveled books. Computers can be used to provide meaningful practice to students, and audio versions of books allow for students to hear skilled readers.

Constructivist-based approaches for teaching skills emphasize the importance of developing a conceptual understanding of what is being learned (Vogel-Walcott, et al., 2010). The sociocultural theory of cognitive development acknowledged the influences of language acquisition and cognitive development. Vygotsky's work can be applied to the concept of scaffolding and teaching children to read, since teachers assist students in developing their reading skills through guided reading (Clay & Cazden, 1990). The zone of proximal development was a concept emphasized in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory involving the distance between the actual developmental level and the potential level of development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The connection can be made to reading in that students' progress through their zone of proximal development as the teacher guides and supports the students. Scaffolding is necessary for guiding students as they make progress through their zone of development. Teachers assist students in extending their current reading skills and knowledge and helps move them on from where they are to where they need to go. This can be referred to as the learning zone (Vygotsky, 1962; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The teacher assists students in being able to read and comprehend the text.

Middle school is the bridge between elementary and high school. Adolescents in middle school are often at varying reading levels. Guided reading is an instructional approach that allows teachers to work with students at different reading levels. Finding books at the appropriate academic level and interest level for adolescents is an ongoing task for middle school teachers.

Research-Based Strategies. Research-based programs include strategies for beginning reading instruction which provides comprehensive, organized instructional plans, and practice opportunities that permit students to make sense of reading. A teacher's task is to find out what adolescents understand, what they need to learn, and the instruction that needs to be provided in the classroom (The Texas Reading Initiative, 1997). Biancarosa and Snow (2004) identified the following strategies to help improve adolescent literacy. The strategies include:

1. Direct, explicit, comprehension instruction;
2. Effective instructional practices embedded throughout the content areas;
3. Self-directed learning and motivation;
4. Text-based collaborative learning;
5. Strategic tutoring;
6. Diverse texts;
7. Intensive writing;
8. Technology component;
9. On-going formative assessment of student progress.

Activating prior knowledge, identifying text structure, summarizing, and incorporating the use of graphic organizers are examples of explicit, direct instruction

strategies that enhance the students' ability to comprehend what they read (Biancarosa, 2005). Students benefit from explicit, direct instruction in questioning, clarifying, making predictions, and summarizing. Effective instructional strategies embed teaching the reading strategies throughout the content areas. The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (2009) described the Strategic Instruction Model where the teacher and students communicate across the content areas and work on reading skills based on students' ability levels. The four strategies in this model are visual imagery, self-questioning, word identification, and paraphrasing. The goal is to enhance students' level of understanding of the material being learned. Students are successful when the reading curriculum is self-directed, engages them in their learning process, and improves student motivation, self-perception, and reading comprehension (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Text-based collective learning is when the student is able to complete reading and writing tasks while working in small groups (Biancarosa, 2005).

Cooperative learning is a strategy that has been shown to improve reading comprehension for students in upper elementary through high school (Slavin, 1991). Cooperative learning is beneficial for students with learning disabilities and effective in teaching students reading comprehension (Stevens & Slavin, 1995). Students are provided direct instruction on comprehension strategies for identifying main ideas of passages, peers model for struggling readers while working in cooperative learning groups. Strategic tutoring is a strategy used to work on the students' weaknesses by providing specific tutoring in the target areas (Biancarosa, 2005). Students should be provided diverse texts so that they can interact with different types of text. Intensive writing is a key component in enhancing reading comprehension. Writing instruction,

with clear expectations and objectives, should be a part of the reading process. Writing is a key element which assists struggling readers in understanding what they have read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Reading and writing complement each other and promote meaning, critical thinking, and direct students to look at the relationships among ideas. Technology can assist with addressing literacy for struggling adolescents. Innovative ways to teaching reading include incorporating technology. Adolescents live in a technological society with video games and cell phones. School leaders explore reading intervention programs based on research based strategies when literacy practices are insufficient to help adolescents.

Reading Instruction in Middle Schools

The previous section demonstrated the many changes in reading instruction with an emphasis on instruction in the elementary grades when students learn to read. At the elementary level students learn to read, and in the middle school grades students read to learn. Thus, it is far more complex to teach reading to middle school students than to elementary students. Furthermore, when fourth-grade students struggle in reading, they begin a pattern of academic failure that continues throughout middle and high school (Blanton, Wood, & Taylor, 2007). In elementary school, teachers often devote two or more hours per day to teaching reading and writing, but in middle school there is usually only one 50-minute class devoted to language arts. These middle-school language arts classes usually focus on higher-level comprehension skills and writing. In the middle school, reading instruction focuses on acquisition and proficiency of the subject matter and not on the acquisition and proficiency in reading (Kozen, Murray, & Swindell, 2006).

Due to the NCLB Act and the emphasis on state assessments, middle school teachers focus on teaching students the standards that they should know by the end of the year and getting them to pass the various tests. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to find the time to teach students to read and comprehend the text if they are reading below grade level.

At the middle school, reading proficiency is the ability to understand and learn from grade-level texts. The most essential elements of reading proficiency include the ability to (a) read text accurately and fluently, (b) make sense of the content with adequate background knowledge and vocabulary, (c) use reading strategies, skills, and knowledge to improve understanding, (d) think and reason about the concepts and information in the text, and (e) motivation to learn from the text. These are critical component of reading comprehension for students in middle school. Adolescents are expected to enter middle school with the ability to understand the words, sentences, and paragraphs, and use their knowledge and thinking ability to learn from the text. Students study literature, mathematics, history, and science in middle school and use textbooks and other forms of written material to understand the content. Adolescents are expected to understand print and non-print resources across the disciplines, and they need general comprehension and study strategies (Draper, 2010; Lapp & Moss, 2012). The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in history/social studies, and science were adopted in 2010. This is due to an effort to fulfill the charge issued by states to create the next generation of K-12 standards. The goal is to ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy.

Essential skills for students in grades four to twelve are reading fluency, vocabulary, knowledge, reading comprehension strategies, motivation, and engagement. In order for students to continue to meet grade-level expectations for reading fluency, students must continue to increase the number of sight words they can recognize (Torgesen & Hudson, 2006). It is a necessity for students to add words to their vocabulary so they are able to maintain the ability to read grade-level text fluently. As students move from elementary to middle school and then to high school, vocabulary knowledge has an increasingly important role in supporting reading comprehension. Students become exposed to new vocabulary, and learn from increasingly technical expository text. Proficient readers use a variety of purposeful strategies to enhance their comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005). Adolescent readers use strategies to help them actively monitor their comprehension as they are reading. Some of the strategies include rereading in order to resolve confusion, making explicit connections from the text to prior knowledge and other parts of the text, and visualizing relationships and events in the text.

Middle school teachers have the task of meeting the needs of students with a wide range of reading skills. Some students have difficulty with decoding words. However, many of the students struggle in reading because they do not comprehend what they are reading. Most of the time, students are able to read the words accurately, but lack the strategies to comprehend what they read. These difficulties are exacerbated when they have a learning disability and do not speak English as their first language.

History of Reading Instruction

In the eighteenth century, education moved from homes to schools and textbooks were developed to teach reading. These texts emphasized instruction in the basic skills of decoding text. The first textbooks were the McGuffey Readers which consisted of a graded series of books which are now called basal readers. These first and second grade readers were specifically written to emphasize the sounds of the letters in words. The readers for older students were anthologies of stories drawn from numerous sources. The McGuffey Readers helped teach reading and emphasized values like being kind to animals, and the rich helping the poor. By the mid-1800s, teachers were able to get older students focused on more content because schools began to separate classrooms by grade level. Instruction in the eighteenth century tended to be teacher-centered with students doing mostly rote memorization.

The idea of reading for meaning continued to grow in importance throughout the Industrial Revolution. It was during World War I that officials surprisingly discovered that many of the U. S. soldiers could not read the training materials (Jacobs, 2008). Educators began to develop remedial instructional approaches and reading specialists became responsible for this instruction. Reading specialists were required to help struggling readers with basic skills, usually outside of the classroom. As a result, content teachers thought reading was a separate content, and the reading instruction was the obligation of the reading staff and not the teachers themselves. Edmund Huey, a pioneer in the psychology of reading in the 1900s, advocated embedding reading instruction in the content areas. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Progressive Education Movement advocated for instruction that focused on the interests of students and also

what science was discovering about teaching and learning. The stories included in basal readers emphasized particular sounds or other targeted reading skills. These stories were written with controlled vocabularies and were often of little interest to students and did not include characters reflective of various cultures and ethnicities. The “Dick and Jane” readers published by Scott Foresman in the 1950s used a “whole word” approach where words were repeated on each page enough times so that students could remember them (Reyhner, 2008). This was a method to teach reading according to behaviorist research. A “top down”, whole language method, is an approach based on constructivist learning theory where the reader constructs personal meaning for a text based on using their prior knowledge to interpret the meaning of what they are reading. The whole language approach draws from the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Some argued that whole language lacked a structure that has been traditionally provided by the scope and sequence, lessons, activities, and extensive graded literature found in the basal readers. Teachers had to develop their own curriculum, provide a literacy rich environment for their students, and had to combine listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The meaning of texts is emphasized by whole language teachers and not sounds of letters although phonics can become a component of the whole language classroom. The national Right to Read campaign introduced the slogan “Every teacher is a teacher of reading” in the 1950s in an effort to show how reading skills could support students’ learning in the content areas.

The whole word approach was attacked by phonics proponents led by Rudolph Flesh in his 1955 book, *Why Johnny Can’t Read*. He argued the whole word approach did not get students to read children’s stories which did not have carefully controlled

vocabularies. Phonics, a “bottom up” approach, is where students decode the meaning of a text. Phonics is drawn from the behaviorist learning theory that is associated with the work of Harvard psychologist B. F. Skinner. Supporters of phonics focus efforts in the primary grades and emphasize the importance of sounding out the letters in individual words in order to read. The English language does not have a one-to-one sound symbol relationship that facilitates this method. It is estimated that half of the words in the English language cannot be pronounced correctly using the phonics rules (Reyhner, 2008). An advantage to phonics instruction is that students who come to school with an already large vocabulary and learn the basics of phonics, then they can read a wide variety of children’s literature.

In 1965, educators were involved in investigating the best method to teach first grade students to read. Research studies known as The First Grade Studies made attempts to scientifically investigate reading methods using treatment groups, controlling variables, and conducting statistical analyses. Linguistic readers, basal readers, the language experience approach, and programmed readers were some of the instructional programs analyzed. Educators had a similar focus to No Child Left Behind and the Reading First Initiative and debates about the best way to teach young children to read. In the 1980s educators rebelled against worksheets and drills that came from the phonics approach. It became common knowledge that adolescents needed to learn meaning-based strategies to be able to learn the most from the content texts by the late mid-1980s.

In 1967, Jeanne Chall’s work, “Learning to Read: The Great Debate,” suggested phonics as a beginning approach, and in 1975 argued in the National Institute of Education (NIE) report that neither phonics nor look-say approaches were not enough

and that there must be a balance between them (Nichols, 2009). Multidisciplinary studies of reading were encouraged in the 1985 NIE report, "Becoming a Nation of Readers." It was recommended that the alphabetic principle and the meaning approach should be integrated in the 1998 National Reading Council (Kim, 2008). The 2000 National Reading Panel (2000) also supported balanced approaches to the five components of reading which include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (McCardle & Chhabra, 2005).

Historically, the disputes over reading instruction have gone back and forth to oral vs. silent reading and basal texts vs. literature texts (Smith, 2002). The whole language movement was advocated by Horace Mann in the nineteenth century, and at the turn of the century the McGuffey readers swung back to skills and drills (Nichols, 2009). Whole language instruction and direct instruction are the most prevalent instructional approaches to teaching reading skills to students, including students with disabilities (Wright & Jacobs, 2003). This type of instruction provides a child-centered instructional format where students learn to read and write through the use of texts such as short stories and novels. During whole language instruction, students read and write from whole texts and receive little, explicit instruction on decoding. It is based on the philosophy that literacy develops naturally.

The history of reading has shown that the reading approaches have gone back and forth from whole language to phonics. Teachers have continued to focus on providing students a literacy program which includes literary experiences and reading skills instruction, and have not adopted simplistic approaches to teaching reading such as phonics or whole language (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998).

Components of Effective Reading Programs

There are several components to effective reading programs. Ongoing formative assessments are a component of effective reading programs where students are assessed before, during, and after instruction occurs. Assessing students is essential for grouping students, instructional pacing, and support for individual needs (Diamond, 2006). Student progress can be monitored with frequent formal assessments and instruction can be adjusted as needed (Biancarosa, 2005). Also, a variety of assessment strategies should be integrated when designing reading instruction per the International Reading Association (2002). The success of an effective reading program is measured by student achievement. It is recommended that assessments be aligned with the reading program and include a way to track progress, and monitor the teacher's pace and use of the program (Diamond, 2006). Additionally, aligning assessments with instruction include screening assessments that provide information about the student's existing knowledge and skill base, ongoing assessments that monitor progress and adjust instruction, using summative assessments as benchmarks to test and track progress, using diagnostic assessments as pre-screening or progress monitoring to assess weaknesses (Diamond, 2006).

Fluency is "the ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading such as decoding" (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003, p. 96). Fluency should be increased to be successful readers. There is a direct relationship between fluency and reading comprehension. To optimize the reading process for adolescent readers, it is

recommended to provide organized reading groups, and incorporate supplemental programs and exposure to repeated readings (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). Middle school students, specifically those with learning disabilities have shown progress with reading intervention programs that have a fluency component.

Multi-Component Reading Intervention is a type of partner reading where students are paired with age-appropriate peers. The students participate in activities that allow for successful implementation of the intervention. Multi-Component Reading Intervention programs allow students to practice reading word lists and passages that are timed (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). Students have varying ability levels, diverse learning needs, and benefit from literacy programs with various levels of intensity.

Reading programs are developed to promote reading competence and are often based on research-based strategies. Critical components for developing effective reading models include (a) professional development that provides a solid knowledge base for teachers, (b) proven instructional tools, and (c) school systems that understand the importance of effective reading models in promoting student achievement and support implementation (Diamond, 2006). On-going professional development is necessary for effective implementation of reading models. Students benefit from explicit instruction that encompasses phonemic awareness skills, vocabulary component, decoding skills, and comprehension skills. Conversely, the following characteristics are specific to effective reading models: (a) academic and age-appropriate, (b) incorporate various learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds, (c) also incorporate various strategies and programs to address the student's needs and learning styles (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004).

Motivation, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing are components of effective reading models. Students at all ages need to be motivated, but it is extremely important that struggling adolescents remain engaged and motivated.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004), students must discern between what type of literature they are reading as well as establish if they are reading for a purpose or pleasure. Furthermore, students must be able to read quickly, accurately, and with appropriate expression. Fluency activities such as rereading passages encourage students to correct errors as they read independently are recommended for students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Vocabulary activities help students identify new words and concepts and students are able to build meaning with unfamiliar words.

Comprehension is a crucial component of an effective reading model. The following are necessary components for an effective reading model: (a) activities that activate prior knowledge, (b) cooperative learning activities that promote discussion time and allow for students to talk among each other, (c) expository structure which includes the main idea, supporting details, and persuasion skills, (d) a metacognition component for approaching unfamiliar text, (e) activities where students engage in higher level thinking, and allowing for multiple perspectives to allow students to develop critical thinking skills (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Direct, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness allows students to manipulate sounds and improve their understanding of word combinations. Word recognition activities, practicing words in various contexts, and a writing piece are included in effective reading models (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Students are able to express their thoughts and ideas and reflect on what they have read while making real world connections to the story (Alliance

for Excellent Education, 2004). Teaching reading to students can be a challenge as educators work towards students being motivated and immersed in their learning. When the goal is to improve reading skills, direct instruction facilitates this process.

Technology and Teaching

Across the nation educators are coming to the realization that reading instruction needs to be revitalized in order to compete with today's technological society.

Technology is a key component in addressing literacy issues of struggling adolescents. Students live in a technology driven society with the use of cell phones and video games. Technology is impacting society more and more as technology innovations evolve each day. It is imperative that technology be integrated across the curriculum. Effective technology components utilize sound design principles and offer individualized instruction for struggling students (Hasselbring & Goin, 2004). Specifically, the technology component provides practice in targeted areas, and support for understanding grade level text. An effective reading comprehension program should provide students with the experience with and instruction in the use of multimedia technologies (Brinkerhoff, Klein, & Koroghlanian (2001). Technology is a necessary component to improving the achievement of struggling readers (Biancarosa, 2005). Researchers insist for technology to be an effective instructional tool, the teacher must actively engage students in the reading instruction (Ivey & Fisher, 2005).

Reading Interventions

With the mandates of NCLB Act, districts are continuously looking for intervention programs that have scientific research to support their product. There are many multimedia intervention products available. The use of multimedia technology has

been incorporated in classrooms as instructional tools to help with reading comprehension. Computer reading programs have been created to help readers overcome obstacles that struggling readers face (Sorrell, 2004). To close the ever-widening gap between poor readers and their grade-level peers as quickly as possible students require intensive instruction in reading and language. Reading intervention grounded in research conveys to older readers the skills they missed in primary grades and can bring them to grade level in one to two years (Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander & Conway, 1997). The intervention must match the student's level of reading development, because each stage of growth requires an individualized focus (Curtis & Longo, 1999). While it is clear that no single intervention will ever meet the needs of all struggling readers and writers, technology appears to be a necessity of any effective adolescent literacy program. Technology plays an increasingly central role in our society and students today are living in a time when technological innovations are increasing at a fast pace.

It is recommended that middle school reading programs be assessed through the Middle Grades Reading Assessment developed by the Middle Grades Reading Network (Humphrey, 2002) which assesses eight areas. The areas include:

1. *Access to books.* Examines access to current, high-interest, and useful books and other reading materials in classrooms, homes, and libraries within the community.
2. *Encouragement to value reading.* Measures schools' efforts to create an environment where reading is valued, promoted, and encouraged.
3. *Time to read.* Focuses on the dedicated time during the school day for reading classes and independent reading.

4. *Skilled reader leaders.* Accounts for licensed reading teachers and school librarians who continually renew their skills and promote reading among their students.
5. *Public library support.* Examines efforts to engage students with public libraries through visits and support of programs for young adolescents.
6. *Community agency support.* Notes support of community-based programs that encourage students in all aspects of their reading development.
7. *Family support.* Examines efforts to encourage family reading activities through visits and support of programs for young adolescents.
8. *Reading role models.* Provides guidance to ensure that reading is a priority in students' lives and looks at the degree to which teachers and principals serve as role models.

Most effective reading programs promote instruction from research-based strategies. Classrooms include a small teacher-student ratio with no more than 15 students in each class with a minimum of one hour reading instruction. A master teacher is available to teach whole group, small group, and explicit, direct, one-on-one instruction as needed. A technology component, feedback, and error correction are also key elements. It is important to have high interest texts for the targeted group of students. Scholastic's READ 180 reading intervention program offers best practices in the use of computer based instruction for direct instruction in reading comprehension. The READ 180 reading intervention program is widely used in urban schools to address the literacy needs of adolescent students who are struggling in reading. The program is grounded in research that supports how students with learning disabilities and students with

disabilities who are ELLs benefit from explicit comprehension strategy instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Nokes & Dole, 2004; Pressley, 2000).

READ 180 Reading Intervention Program

READ 180 is a reading intervention program with more than ten years of research developed for students who read at a below-proficient level in fourth through twelfth grades. It was created by researchers at Vanderbilt University in a collaborative effort with the Orange County Public School System in Florida. The evolution of Scholastic READ 180 started in 1985 when Hasselbring and members of the Cognition and Technology group at Vanderbilt began their research on using technology as a tool to help struggling students. The researchers focused on how technology could impact students with learning disabilities and students who struggled to master basic reading skills (Scholastic, Inc., 2002). Their goal was to improve educational programs with the use of technology. The researchers developed a software program called the Peabody Learning Lab after receiving partial funding from the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. The Peabody Learning Lab consisted of sequenced and individualized instruction practice (Scholastic, Inc., 2002). During this period, the Peabody Learning Lab became the prototype for READ 180. The goal for Hasselbring and his team was to address the individual needs of students who have consistently experienced failure in reading by providing them opportunities to experience success from the beginning (Scholastic, Inc., 2002). The Orange County Schools collaborated with Vanderbilt University to launch a pilot literacy program using the

Peabody Learning Lab. Scholastic proceeded with developing READ 180 after analyzing the use of the programs in classrooms during the 1994-1995 school year. The READ 180 model included the following:

- 90 minute block,
- Daily teacher-led instruction,
- Whole group instruction,
- Intervention provided in small groups,
- Independent reading, and
- Use of technology with research based software (Scholastic, Inc., 2002).

Scholastic and Vanderbilt continued to partner in 1997 in an effort to replicate best practices. The following additions were made by Scholastic (2002):

- Organized content of the program on CDs, audio books, and leveled paperback books,
- Materials included curriculum themes from all academic content areas,
- Included leveled reading in the content practice component,
- Phonics scope and sequence,
- Direct instruction component with emphasis on phonics, word analysis, reading comprehension, spelling, and writing.

Between 1994 and 1999, the READ 180 pilot program was used with more than 10,000 students. Students experienced quantifiable improvement in the areas of reading achievement, especially positive attitudes and behaviors, and overall higher school achievement (Papalewis, 2004).

The READ 180 reading intervention program delivers individualized instruction to improve reading skills and combines research-based practices with the effective use of technology. It includes the use of technology which is essential in the twenty first century. The individualized instruction allows students to have success through the reading components by having modeled, instructional, and independent activities. The program incorporates state of the art technology to keep students interested and engaged with the program. It provides a simple way to organize the classroom activities and instruction. The program also includes three stages of instruction that is based on the individual reading levels of students. The READ 180 reading intervention program includes the following for students:

1. Background information to build mental models for texts;
2. Students able to read along with fluency modeled through text captioning;
3. Phonological and morphological structure of English language;
4. Culturally diverse literature and expository materials;
5. Modeled practice with decoding tips; and
6. Reading opportunities of connected text (Papalewis 2002, cited in Papalewis, 2004).

The model for the program includes a 90-minute class period and a reduced class size of 15 students or less. Students interact with the READ 180 software, and teachers provide daily modeled or independent reading practice and work with small groups of students or work with individual students. Other components of the model for the program include a computer area with five to eight computers for the READ 180 instructional software, a comfortable reading area with CD players and headphones for listening to the READ 180

audio-books, and a table for the teacher to work in small groups. The expectations for teachers include dividing the 90 minute reading time so that there are four 20 minute blocks of time. The lesson begins with whole group literacy instruction in which the teachers and students engage in shared reading, read aloud, or work on direct instruction skills. Students then work in small group rotations with the teacher, computer, or independent work. The last 20 minutes of the class include a ten minute wrap up and student reflection of their performance.

The goal for Scholastic was to create a program that addresses the needs of individual students while also motivating them to read. Specifically, the purpose was to meet a variety of learning styles and disabilities (Scholastic, Inc., 2002). The program consists of varied levels of differentiation throughout the reading model which includes audio books, video clips, paperbacks, and opportunities for students to look at, listen, and speak or record on a daily basis (Scholastic, Inc., 2002). The program provides students with multifaceted techniques when delivering instruction and students are engaged and develop intrinsic motivation as they experience success. Students are engaged in their learning with the individualized instruction and high interest materials. Individualized pacing, student choice, and mobility are important components of the program. Student's attitudes toward reading and school improve as students become motivated. Students in a special education setting benefit from structure, organization, and consistency. The READ 180 model is designed in 90 minute blocks with consistent routines which are crucial for special education students (Scholastic, Inc., 2002).

If the program is implemented with fidelity, results have shown that students do make gains in their reading comprehension skills (Pearson & White, 2004). In a study

conducted to evaluate the impact of the READ 180 program on general education students repeating the eighth grade in a large urban inner city school district, students made significant gains in reading and language arts on the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition. Detailed analysis of the participants in this study revealed that 78% of the students were identified as Hispanic and 42% were noted as limited English proficient. In this particular study, the READ 180 strategies were effective for English language learners (Papalewis, 2004).

In the 1999-2000 school year the Clark County School district in Nevada conducted a study with middle and high school students. The goal was to measure the effectiveness of the READ 180 program with special education students. Students who received Scholastic READ 180 instruction showed statistically significant improvement. They demonstrated gains of seven points or more on NCE. Gains of zero represented the expected growth on average that a student would experience in one academic year (Scholastic, Inc., 2002). During 2000-2002, the Des Moines Independent Community School District conducted research to evaluate READ 180's impact on accelerating the reading performance of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in special education. Ten middle schools were included in the sample and reading achievement growth was measured using pre and post-tests. Special education students that participated had Lexile gains of 15 words per minute in fluency. After one year of implementation, 18% of the students were dismissed from the special education reading class. Significant strides in vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension resulted in this particular study (Scholastic, Inc., 2002).

Educators aim to find appropriate reading interventions for special education students and school districts are determined to meet the individual needs of students with learning disabilities and diverse populations. Research has emphasized the components needed for successful intervention models or programs. Fidelity of implementation of the program and addressing individual student motivation and self-efficacy are essential to students learning to read. Systematic monitoring of student progress and program implementation in each classroom by school leaders is critical for sustaining on-model implementation of an adolescent literacy intervention (Salinger, Moorthy, Toplitz, Jones, & Rosenthal, 2010). Principals, teachers, and specialists should have easy access to data to inform district-wide, school-wide, and student-level decision-making (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010). The READ 180 reading intervention program provides data to assess student learning and inform instruction.

Leaders and Literacy

The role of school leaders has been redefined with the emphasis on K-12 accountability and the focus on student achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act has resulted in higher expectations for school districts to ensure reading proficiency for all. School leaders in middle schools must provide a clear message about the importance of literacy, and improve literacy outcomes by creating a climate that fosters engagement with content. School leaders must recruit, select, and retain teachers who share the school mission and the goal of improving adolescent literacy. According to numerous research studies about leadership in challenging or turnaround schools, it is important for school leaders to recruit and retain staff with the following qualities:

1. An unshakable belief in the potential of students to learn when they are given the right opportunities;
2. Having the instructional capacity to help at-risk learners; and
3. The patience, optimism, and persistence needed to create productive learning experiences for students who initially fail (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

Data related to the school's progress toward the goal of reading achievement for all students should be discussed at faculty meetings. Improving the classroom practices of teachers is another focus of instructional leadership (Leithwood, 2004). Instructional leaders have the ability to give teacher's feedback to their reading instruction and identify the professional development sessions necessary for teachers as they track student progress. A key task for school leaders is to track students' progress (Gray, 2000). A key factor, in the improvement of the culture and image of the school, teaching and learning, and curriculum, is the use of data by school leaders (West, Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005). Adolescents need instruction that meets their needs. It can be difficult to find a reading program that has all the components of reading and that meets the needs of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. There is a need for continued literacy instruction at the secondary level according to findings from the RAND Study Group. The RAND (2002) report emphasized the following issues with adolescent literacy:

1. High school graduates are expected to read complex material in order to be successful in the workplace.
2. In the United States, secondary students are scoring lower than students in

comparable nations.

3. There is a gap in literacy performance between ethnic groups, and students with limited English proficiency.
4. Teachers are not able to teach literacy strategies that are necessary for students' comprehension of content-specific text.

Components of the most effective reading interventions include: adequate training and professional development, coaching, and on-going classroom support, knowledgeable, supportive leaders who monitor classroom instruction, appropriate placement of students, low student-teacher ratios, and adequate time blocks (Diamond, 2006). It is important that school leaders expand their knowledge and skills in reading and study professional resources on reading instruction and curriculum. Attending professional development sessions on reading instruction and observing skilled teachers in reading are activities to assist school leaders. In addition, school leaders facilitate student learning by providing teachers the instructional tools required to implement and support the program (Diamond, 2006).

Creating and maintaining a positive school climate and culture of literacy in middle school supports the role of the school leader as an instructional leader. Teachers who feel supported by their school leaders are committed to teaching and learning and this impacts student achievement. School leaders can enhance student learning by implementing structures that maintain stability by supporting teachers to tolerate stress while responding to the demands of the school environment (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Increased student achievement will be the outcome when school leaders care for and support teachers.

This program evaluation enhanced the understanding of the value of the READ 180 reading intervention program. It assisted school leaders in evaluating how the READ 180 reading intervention program impacts reading experiences of students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Specifically, the program evaluation focused on how these students perceive the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension skills. In addition, this program evaluation helped school leaders determine whether or not the READ 180 reading intervention program is appropriate when working with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Chapter III

Introduction

This program evaluation examined administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension skills. Specifically, this study explored: 1) the perceived impact READ 180 reading intervention program has on students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading, 2) specific strategies from the R180 reading intervention program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 3) specific strategies from the R180 reading intervention program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 4) specific strategies from the R180 reading intervention program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 5) the influence of READ 180 on students' attitudes toward reading, 6) ELL student's perceptions of how the R180 program reflected their cultural backgrounds and met their language learning needs, and 7) students' perceptions of how technology facilitated their reading comprehension. Multiple methods were utilized for this program evaluation.

The bounded system for this program evaluation included six middle schools in a large, urban school district. Participants included administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers, READ 180 teachers, and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs and who have been in READ 180 for a minimum of one school year. The researcher intended for the six middle school administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers to participate in the study. All six administrators were

contacted via email. Four of the administrators agreed to participate in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These administrators were from Middle Schools 1, 2, 5, and 6. The administrator from Middle School 3 did not respond to multiple requests to participate in the study. The administrator from Middle School 4 shared that it was his first year supervising the READ 180 teacher and did not feel comfortable participating in the study. The administrator shared that he had a lot to learn about the READ 180 program. The administrator from Middle School 2 cancelled on the day of the interview. The researcher showed up to Middle School 2 on the mutually agreed upon date and time and the administrator was not at the campus. The researcher asked the campus secretary to call the administrator on his district cell phone and she did. The secretary shared that the administrator was not available after all. The researcher offered to reschedule, but the administrator shared via the campus secretary that he was not available. As a result of this cancellation, the researcher had three administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers participate in the study. One principal and two assistant principals participated in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

The number of READ 180 teachers for each middle school varies from one to two teachers per school each year. The number of teachers is determined by the central Special Education Department. They review the number of students that will need to be placed in the READ 180 class and then determine the number of READ 180 teachers needed at each middle school. For the 2013-2014 school year, each middle school had one READ 180 teacher. Principals at each of the six middle schools determine which campus administrator, the principal or the assistant principal, supervises the READ 180

teachers. The researcher asked the six middle school principals to identify the READ 180 teachers were once the study had been approved and permissions were obtained. The six middle school READ 180 teachers were invited and agreed to participate in the READ 180 teacher focus group. The focus group was set on a date and time that was mutually agreed upon by the teachers. However, on the day of the teacher focus group, only three READ 180 teachers attended and participated in the teacher focus group.

Fifty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities were invited to participate in the study. Despite multiple attempts by the researcher to obtain parent and student responses to participating in the study, thirty out of the fifty parents agreed to have their children participate in the study. Parents submitted their permission forms and students completed their assent forms. The researcher conducted six focus groups with these students. Focus groups consisted of two to ten students, were conducted at each middle school, and were held during the day.

Methods employed included surveys, demographic surveys, focus groups, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, archival data, and student documents during the spring semester of the 2013-2014 school year. Interview questions and focus group questions were piloted. The researcher conducted a trial run of the questions by having two adults and two adolescents read the questions to see if they understand what the questions are asking. These two adults and two adolescents were not participants of the study. The researcher also had a trial run of a focus group with a group of students before conducting the focus groups for the study.

The researcher employed descriptive statistics by examining archival data collected from a sample of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning

disabilities who participated in the READ 180 program for the 2013-2014 school year. The archival data set included student products and Lexile levels on the Scholastic Reading Inventory. A descriptive analysis compared the difference in Lexile levels to describe whether gains have occurred in reading comprehension levels. The researcher also examined documents using the READ 180 teacher's rubric to describe if students met benchmarks on their reading comprehension. According to Creswell (2009), researchers should actively incorporate validity strategies, such as triangulation, to enhance their ability to assess the accuracy of the findings. Data was triangulated through the different data sources which included surveys, demographic surveys, focus groups, the administrator in-depth, semi-structured interviews and student documents before being analyzed for answers to the research questions. The researcher utilized the constant comparison method to categorize, compare and theme data collected from focus groups and interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data was analyzed by identifying patterns and themes to determine how these patterns and themes helped answer the research questions. Research was conducted in an ethical manner to ensure the study's integrity by triangulating the data with multiple data sources.

Research Design

A multiple methods design was utilized for this program evaluation. A program evaluation enhanced the understanding of the value the READ 180 reading intervention program provides to seventh and eighth grade middle school students with disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with disabilities who are ELLs.

The purpose of a program evaluation is to provide information to relevant stakeholders so they make informed decisions about programs (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011;

Protheroe, 2009). Program evaluations may assist school leaders in decision making by providing data relating to school programs (Protheroe, 2009). In addition, they can help examine whether objectives and program goals are being achieved at the desired levels, determine the overall value of a program and its relative cost and value when compared with competing programs (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). This approach was appropriate for this research because it used multiple sources and multiple methods of data collection which is allowed for the study of a program and provided an in-depth understanding of the administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension (Creswell, 2007). The results of this program evaluation provided an analysis of the READ 180 reading intervention program to help understand the perceived impact of the program while justifying whether supplemental reading treatments further LD students' their confidence in, and motivation toward reading.

Research Questions

1. What perceived impact does the READ 180 reading intervention program have on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
3. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on improving reading

comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?

4. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by students to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
5. How were attitudes toward reading influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
6. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represented their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?
7. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Setting

The setting for the study was the ABC Independent School district (pseudonym). It is located in southwest Houston, Texas in an urban community. The ABC Independent School District is a large, urban, Texas Education Agency Recognized school district with a diverse student population of 45,000, and it employs approximately 6,100 teachers, administrators, and support staff (ABC website, 2013). This school district consists of 42 campuses, which includes 24 elementary schools, six intermediate campuses, six middle schools, two ninth grade centers, and four high schools. The ABC

Independent School District is an ethnically diverse school district with more than 80 languages and dialects spoken. The student population encompassing ABC Independent School District is uniquely diverse, with a growing ELL population. The ethnic breakdown of the district's student population consists of 32% African American, 12.9% Asian, 50.5% Hispanic, and 3.2% White. ABC Independent School district has 80.8% economically disadvantaged students, 35.9% Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, and 7.7% Special Education students who are all at risk. Six middle schools that provide the READ 180 reading intervention program to seventh and eighth grade students with learning disabilities were the chosen sites for this study. Students with learning disabilities in middle school receive 90 minutes instruction of the READ 180 reading intervention program daily. The six middle schools were chosen as the setting because this study is focused on seventh and eighth grade adolescent students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle schools students with learning disabilities who are ELLs who received the READ 180 reading intervention. Each of the participants attended one of the six middle schools offering READ 180 as a reading intervention.

Participants

Fifty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities were invited to participate in the program evaluation. The researcher made multiple attempts to obtain participation of the fifty students, but was unable to get all students to turn in their parent permission forms. As a result, a total of 30 seventh and eighth middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students who are ELLs participated in the study.

Students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLSs are placed in the READ 180 reading intervention program in fifth grade based on their previous year's reading comprehension levels derived from the Development Reading Assessment (DRA). Students with learning disabilities whose DRA results are two or more years below level in reading at the end of fourth grade are placed in the READ 180 reading intervention program for the following school year in fifth grade. Students participate in the READ 180 reading intervention program in fifth through twelfth grades, and are assessed three times a year using the Scholastic Reading Inventory to obtain a Lexile level. Once the students obtain a Lexile level in the 25th percentile, they are exited from the READ 180 reading intervention program. Thirty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLS and who participated in the READ 180 program for a minimum of one school year participated in this program evaluation. Surveys with close-ended questions for survey responses from students as well as demographic information was available after parental permission and student assent were obtained.

Principals at each of the six middle schools determine which campus administrator, the principal or the assistant principal, supervised the READ 180 teachers. The researcher asked the principal who the supervisor was once the study was approved and permissions were obtained. The researcher intended for the six middle school administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers to participate in the study. All six administrators were contacted via email. Four of the administrators immediately agreed to participate in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These administrators were from middle Schools 1, 2, 5, and 6. The administrator from middle School 3 did not respond

to multiple requests to participate in the study. The administrator from middle School 4 shared that it was his first year supervising the READ 180 teacher and did not feel comfortable participating in the study. The administrator shared that he had a lot to learn about the READ 180 program. The administrator from middle School 2 cancelled on the day of the interview. The researcher showed up to middle School 2 on the mutually agreed upon date and time and the administrator was not at the campus. The researcher asked the campus secretary to call the administrator on his district cell phone and she did. The secretary shared that the administrator was not available after all. The researcher offered to reschedule, but the administrator shared via the campus secretary that he was not available. As a result of this cancellation, the researcher had three administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers participate in the study. One principal and two assistant principals participated in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

The number of READ 180 teachers for each middle school varies from one to two teachers per school each year. The number of teachers is determined by the central Special Education Department by reviewing the number of students that will need to be placed in the READ 180 class. Each middle school had one READ 180 teacher in the 2013-2014 school year. The researcher asked the six middle school principals who the READ 180 teachers were once the study had been approved and permissions were obtained. The six middle school READ 180 teachers were invited and agreed to participate in the READ 180 teacher focus group. Three READ 180 teachers participated in the teacher focus group. However, on the day of the focus group only three READ 180 teachers participated in the focus group for the program evaluation.

Table 1 displays an overview of the number of the seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs, the READ 180 teachers, and administrators who participated in the study for each middle school.

Table 1

Overview of Participants: Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) and Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) who are English Language Learners (ELLs), READ 180 teachers, and Administrators

	<i>Students with LD</i>	<i>Students with LD who are ELLs</i>	<i>READ 180 Teachers</i>	<i>Administrators</i>
School 1	3	2	1	1 (Assistant Principal)
School 2	1	2	0	0
School 3	2	0	1	0
School 4	2	5	0	0
School 5	5	5	1	1 (Assistant Principal)
School 6	2	1	0	1 (Principal)
<i>Total</i>	15	15	3	3

Table 2 describes the demographics of the students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs who participated in the focus groups at each middle school.

Table 2

Demographics of Student Participants in Focus Groups

<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Students		
African American	13	43%
Asian	2	7%
Hispanic	13	43%
White	1	3%
Other	1	3%
Economically Disadvantaged	30	100%
English Language Learners	15	50%
Males	19	63%
Females	11	37%

Table 3 describes the demographics of the READ 180 teachers who participated in the focus group.

Table 3

Demographics of READ 180 Teacher Participants in Focus Groups

<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Teachers		
African American	2	67%
White	1	33%
Male	1	33%
Female	2	67%

Table 4 describes the demographics of the administrators who participated in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Table 4

Demographics of Administrator Participants in In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews

<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Teachers		
African American	1	33%
Hispanic	2	67%
Male	0	0%
Female	3	100%

Researcher's Role

The researcher is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants during qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). The researcher was an integral component to the program evaluation. The researcher had the following connection to the research being conducted:

1. The setting of the study was the school district in which the researcher is employed.
2. The participants in the study did not have any academic or social connections to the researcher.
3. The researcher is a member of the department in the central office that mandates the READ 180 reading intervention program for students with learning disabilities.
4. The researcher did not supervise or monitor implementation of the READ 180 reading intervention program.
5. In her role as a central office administrator, the researcher did not have direct contact or any contact with the participants in the study.

A program evaluation using multiple methods required interaction with students with learning disabilities who participated in the study, the parents of these students, READ 180 teachers, and administrators who supervised the READ 180 teachers. The methods of data collection included surveys, demographic surveys, focus groups, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and student documents. The researcher ensured that the information was gathered in a way that was reflective of the participants' perceptions. Frequency distributions were used to analyze students' survey responses. The constant comparison method was used to categorize, compare, and theme data collected from focus groups and interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research, and member checking is one validity strategy which enhances the ability of the researcher to assess the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2009). The researcher used the member checking technique to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the program evaluation. After the interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the researcher, and if themes emerged, the researcher had another person in the doctoral cohort look at the findings. Member checking was used in an effort to decrease the incidence of incorrect data and the incorrect interpretation of data.

Procedures

Critical attributes of a program evaluation involve establishing a clear purpose for the evaluation, engaging stakeholders, data collection, data analysis, and reporting the evaluation results. The following sections describes procedures for each area.

Purpose of Evaluation. It is important to have a firm understanding of the reason for the program evaluation. Determining and understanding the purpose of the

evaluation is one of the most important jobs the evaluator will have in the course of the program evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). The purpose of this program evaluation was to examine administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension skills. Specifically, this study explored: 1) the perceived impact READ 180 reading intervention program has on students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading, 2) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 3) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 4) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 5) the influence of READ 180 on students' attitudes toward reading, 6) ELL student's perceptions of how the READ 180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs, and 7) students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

Engaging Stakeholders. The researcher engaged relevant stakeholders in this study by scheduling a face-to-face meeting with the Director of Special Populations and another face-to-face meeting with the Director of Special Education. These meetings served the purpose of narrowing the focus and increasing the utility of the program evaluation. Engaging relevant stakeholders was an important step in the program evaluation process. The evaluator accessed information relating to stakeholder

concerns and identified future consumers of evaluation data when engaging stakeholders (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). A program evaluation will make a difference when the school leaders are aware and knowledgeable about what is going on.

Stakeholders are the individual(s) and organization(s) that are affected by the results of the assessment or evaluation. Stakeholders may include individuals involved in program operations, those served or affected by the program, and the intended users of the assessment or evaluation. The project sponsor is always a stakeholder (UT-Program Evaluation, 2011, p. 1).

It was essential that the evaluator identify the various stakeholders and audiences during the initial stages of the program evaluation to help ensure that the evaluation addressed appropriate concerns, and it assisted the evaluator in identifying potential users (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

A face-to-face meeting was held with the district leader responsible for purchasing READ 180, the Director of Special Education. The researcher inquired about the history of the decision to adopt READ 180 in the school district's Special Education Department. The researcher interviewed the special education director and asked her to share her thoughts on the purpose of the READ 180 reading intervention program, intended outcomes, and cost analysis of the program (Appendix A). She answered eight questions (Appendix A) which included the following:

In-Depth, Semi-Structured District Leader Interview Questions

1. Years in Public Education: _____
2. Years as Special Education Director: _____
3. Years Implementing the READ 180 Program: _____

4. How did you derive at the decision to adopt READ 180?
5. What were your perceptions about the purpose of the READ 180 program?
6. What were your perceptions about the intended outcomes of the READ 180 program?
7. What did you hope to accomplish with READ 180 versus other reading programs?
8. Have you considered the cost effectiveness of the program when looking to see if READ 180 accomplished what you thought?

In this large, urban school district, the Director of Special Populations reviews, approves or denies the research studies being proposed for the district. It was critical for the researcher to engage these particular stakeholders. The researcher explored with the stakeholders, the two directors, the needs of the district, discussed information about the program, explained the purpose of the program evaluation, and intended outcomes. The researcher asked the directors for input on the research questions and methods to determine what would produce the most useful information to drive the program evaluation, and consider if there were thoughts or concerns about the program and the evaluation.

Instruments. For this program evaluation, the researcher collected multiple forms of data which included interviews, focus groups, surveys, demographic surveys, and student documents. The researcher employed descriptive statistics by examining archival data and students' documents collected from a sample of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs who participated in the READ 180 program for the 2013-2014 school year. According to Creswell, unobtrusive data such as documents enables the researcher to obtain the words and language of the

participants (2009). The researcher looked at products of student work by accessing students' documents (Appendix J). READ 180 teachers are required to keep student documents in a student portfolio. A sample of students' work related to reading comprehension was examined to determine if students met benchmark on their reading comprehension. Specifically, the evaluator reviewed the Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up from each of the nine Workshops in the students' r Book. The rBook is the workbook students use and the workshops are the chapters/units in each workbook (rBook). Each rBook consists of nine Workshops and this provides a year's worth of reading instruction. READ 180 teachers assign a numerical grade, with a grade of 80-100 as mastery, to each Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up assignment. The student documents represented data "which are thoughtful in that participants have given attention to compiling them" (Creswell, 2009, p. 180). The use of unobtrusive data has the potential to highlight the ways in which students make meaning of their learning and helped the evaluator answer the research questions.

Archival data was also reviewed. The archival data set included Lexile levels on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) (Appendix K). Students took the SRI three times during the 2013-2014 school year. They took the SRIs at the beginning of the school year in September, middle of the school year in January, and at the end of the school year in May. The SRI uses the Lexile Framework for reading comprehension levels. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the difference in Lexile levels and to describe whether gains have occurred in students' reading comprehension levels on the Scholastic Reading Inventory.

The study was conducted in an ethnically diverse school district with more than

80 languages and dialects spoke and a growing ELL population. The researcher experienced language barriers with the Spanish speaking parents of the participants. The researcher is bilingual and assisted with interpreting for Spanish speaking parents. It was not necessary to obtain interpreters of other languages. The researcher translated the parent permission form from English to Spanish.

Data Collection. Permission was obtained from the Institutional Review Board for the University of Houston: Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) (Appendix B) and from the ABC Independent School District's Internal Review Board (IRB) (Appendix C) to ensure that all the participants in this research study were protected from potential harm and to obtain site approval. Consent from the three middle school principals (Appendix D), three READ 180 teachers (Appendix E), and thirty parents of the students participating (Appendix F) was also obtained. Spanish speaking parents were provided a Spanish permission form (Appendix G). The researcher explained the purpose of the study to parents by reading a script (Appendix H) when contacting them by phone. Since all the students were under the age of adult consent, an assent form (Appendix I) was given to each student participant. Seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs attending the six middle schools were asked to participate. These were students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLS who have received a minimum of one school year of the READ 180 reading intervention program. Multiple ethnicities and both genders were represented in this study.

Participants at each middle school were contacted once IRB approval was

received. Administrators and READ 180 teachers were initially contacted via email. Parents were consulted via telephone about the parameters of the study. A script including an introduction of the researcher, the purpose of the study, the participants' role in the study, and what the data will be used for was read to the students' parents. Then consent was obtained from the parents of the students participating in the study. The student participants were contacted after consent was obtained from their parents. The researcher visited each middle school and reviewed with students the parameters of the study during their READ 180 class. The researcher read a student-friendly script explaining who the researcher was, the purpose of the study, the participants' role in the study, and what the data will be used for. The researcher gave students the opportunity to ask questions in whole group or ask individual questions about the study. Once all questions had been answered, the assent form was given to each student participant.

In this study, there were no potential risks to the participants. Confidentiality was explained to the participants during the initial contact. The participants were informed that their demographic information from the surveys, and interview question responses, and focus group responses would be kept confidential through the use of coded designations. Coding is the process of organizing the information, segmenting the information into categories, and labeling the categories (Creswell, 2009). The code designation in the study assigned individual letters to the six middle schools, administrators, teachers, and students and a corresponding number beginning with the number one. For example, middle school one was assigned the letters MS and the number one, MS1 and so on until the sixth middle school, MS6. The administrator from each school was assigned the letters P (principal) or AP (assistant principal) and a

corresponding number. This assigned letter depended on who supervises the READ 180 teachers at each middle school. The READ 180 teachers were assigned the letter T and the number one. Students were assigned the letter S and the number one, two, three, etc. This was determined by the number of students participating in the surveys and focus groups at each middle school. This technique helped to ensure confidentiality.

Surveys. The researcher used surveys and demographic surveys in the program evaluation. A survey is another method of collecting and analyzing data. Surveys are used in program evaluation in a variety of ways. Some common uses of surveys include surveys of the intended targeted audiences for the program to learn of their perceived needs, or their attitudes that may be the focus of the program or other characteristics such as education, employment, age, location, etc. (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). The Association for Qualitative Research (2013) defines demographics as properties of a sample or individual that may be regarded as factual. They are often used to structure a research sample and may include age, sex, social class, working status, and geographic locations (Association for Qualitative Research, 2013). A total of thirty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs completed surveys with close-ended questions as well as demographic information. The researcher included common demographic items such as name, age, gender, race, etc. in the survey for this study. Students completed the surveys prior to beginning the focus groups. The researcher read to students the twenty-eight items (Appendix S) in the students' surveys which included the following:

Survey

1. School Name: _____

2. Teacher Name: _____

3. Gender: Male OR Female (CIRCLE ONE)

4. Ethnicity: (CIRCLE ONE)

African American

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American or American Indian

White

Other

5. In what grades have you been in the READ 180 classes? _____

6. What are the names of your READ 180 teachers? _____

7. Do you volunteer to read out loud during the READ 180 class? _____

8. Do you volunteer to read out loud in other classes? _____

9. Do you enjoy reading? _____

10. Do you feel successful when you are reading? _____

11. Do you like to read? _____

12. Do you go to the school library to read or check out books? _____

13. Do you go to the public library to read or check out books? _____

14. Do you go to the bookstore to buy books? _____

15. Do you read books at home? _____

16. Do you read for fun? _____

17. Do you enjoy reading at home?_____
18. Do you ask questions as you read?_____
19. Do you enjoy retelling what you read by talking or writing about it?_____
20. Explain._____
21. Are you able to make connections to your family and home life when you read the READ 180 stories/books and/or complete the activities?_____
22. If yes, explain how._____
23. Which helped you more to learn to read and comprehend what you read, the READ 180 program or your teacher?_____
24. Which part of the READ 180 rotation (teacher, computer, or independent reading) do you like best? _____
25. Explain why. _____
26. Which part of the READ 180 rotation (teacher, computer, or independent reading) do you find the most helpful?_____
27. Which part of the READ 180 rotation (teacher, computer, or independent reading) do you find the least helpful?_____
28. Explain why._____

Items 1-6 in the survey included demographic information, items 7-11 helped answer research question 1 “*What perceived impact does the READ 180 reading intervention program have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?*”, items 12-20 helped answer research question 5 “*How were attitudes toward reading perceived to be influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade*

middle school students with learning disabilities?”, items 21-22 helped answer research question 6 *“How do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the R180 reading intervention program represented their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?”*, and items 23-28 helped answer research question 4 *“What specific strategies from the R180 reading intervention program are perceived by students to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”*.

The researcher gathered demographic data on initial perception from students via survey. Preliminary analysis of survey results guided student focus groups.

Three READ 180 teachers and three administrators completed demographic surveys. Collecting demographic information enabled the researcher to describe how responses vary between groups. Participants of the study were asked by the researcher to record basic demographic data about themselves such as school history for students and work history for the READ 180 teachers and administrators. Demographic surveys were completed prior to beginning the teacher focus group.

The teacher demographic surveys (Appendix P) included the following:

Teacher Demographic Survey

1. School Name: _____
2. Teacher Name: _____
3. Gender: Male OR Female (CIRCLE ONE)
4. Ethnicity: (CIRCLE ONE)

African American

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American or American Indian

White

Other

5. Years Teaching in Public Education: _____

6. Grade Levels Taught in Public Education: _____

7. Years Teaching the READ 180 Program: _____

8. Grade Levels Taught Using the READ 180 Program: _____

Prior to the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, administrators completed demographic surveys (Appendix L) and answered the following questions:

Administrator Demographic Survey

1. School Name: _____

2. Name: _____

3. Administrator Supervising READ 180 Teacher

Principal OR Assistant Principal (CIRCLE ONE)

4. Gender: Male OR Female (CIRCLE ONE)

5. Ethnicity: (CIRCLE ONE)

African American

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American or American Indian

White

Other

6. Years as an Administrator in Public Education: _____

7. Years Supervising the READ 180 Teacher(s): _____

Interviews. Interviews involve asking questions and getting responses from participants and are a central part of program evaluations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Interviews have a variety of forms including individual, face-to-face interviews, and face-to-face group interviews and can be classified as structured, semi-structured, unstructured, informal, and focus groups (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were used in this program evaluation. A semi-structured interview allowed the participants to articulate their experiences in a natural, non-restrictive way. According to Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, the researcher can learn the multiple realities and perspectives that different individuals and groups bring to an experience only through hearing and interpreting the stories of others through interviews. The researcher was the interviewer and engaged the participants in semi-structured interviews which were conducted with three administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers in the middle schools in the ABC Independent School District. The researcher asked the participants to complete a brief demographic survey prior to the interview (Appendix L). Then, the researcher explained the interview process by reading a script (Appendix M) to each administrator being interviewed. The researcher had a list of six questions that were covered with the administrator (Appendix N) during the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These questions were prepared in advance by the researcher. The allotted time for these interviews was 45-60 minutes per participant. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the administrators were held during the day. The

scheduled date and time (45-60 minutes per participant) for these in-depth, semi-structured interview was chosen by each participating middle school administrator. The researcher used a digital recorder to record the interview meetings since semi-structured interviews typically involve open-ended questions and discussions may digress. The interview questions and responses were transcribed verbatim by a trained transcriber before analysis was conducted. The interviews allowed for clarification and permitted exploration and discovery (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

The researcher asked administrators to respond to the following questions (Appendix N) during the interviews held at the three middle schools:

Administrator Interview Questions

1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension?
3. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?
4. From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
5. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?

6. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Focus Groups. Focus groups are a method of gathering qualitative data from a group of individuals. Focus groups build on the group process in that they involve face-to-face interaction similar to an interview (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). The researcher invited the six middle school READ 180 teachers to the focus group for this study. On the day of the focus group, only three READ 180 teachers showed up and participated. The researcher had seven questions, prepared in advance, that were answered by the focus group (Appendix O). The focus group with the READ 180 teachers was conducted in a central location in the district. The researcher asked the READ 180 teachers to complete a demographic survey (Appendix P) prior to explaining the process for the focus group by reading a script to them (Appendix Q). The focus group managed its own discussion and time. The entire focus group discussion was audio taped and self-managed. The focus group had a discussion group facilitator who was trained on specific protocols in order to manage the discussion. The group identified a time keeper that tracked the time allotted for each of the questions. There were 8 minutes allotted for each of the seven questions. Finally, the group had a recorder who assured that the audio recording device was on and recording for the entire focus group. The eight minutes started after the question has been read to the group. The READ 180 teachers were dismissed from the process when all questions had been answered.

The three READ 180 teachers responded to the following questions (Appendix O) as they conducted their own focus group:

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension?
3. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?
4. From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
5. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?
6. From your perspective, how are students able to make connections to the text they read?
7. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Fifty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities were invited to participate in the study. Despite multiple attempts by the researcher for parent and student responses to participating in the study, a total of thirty seventh and eighth middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs and their parents

agreed to participate in the study and turned in parents' permission forms and students' assent forms grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade. The researcher conducted six focus groups with these students. Focus groups consisted of two to ten students, were conducted at each middle school, and were held during the day. The date and time of the focus group with READ 180 teachers and with the students was designated by the READ 180 teachers of each middle school. The researcher facilitated the student focus group discussions by introducing and describing the process by reading a student friendly script (Appendix R). Students were asked to complete a survey prior to beginning the focus group (Appendix S). The researcher read the survey items to the students. During the focus group, the researcher posed the questions and monitored the time to ensure that the questions were answered. Students were asked thirteen questions and were allowed approximately seven minutes per question (Appendix T). The researcher asked the focus group questions because the students participating in the study were middle school students with learning disabilities, and some students have difficulty reading the questions. The questions were asked in an interactive group setting for the focus groups. Focus groups were recorded using a digital recorder, and were transcribed verbatim by a trained transcriber before analysis was conducted.

Students responded to the following focus group questions (Appendix T) as they were each read aloud by the researcher:

Student Focus Group Questions

1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on your confidence in, and motivation toward, reading?

2. From your perspective, what parts of READ 180 help(ed) you understand what you read?
3. From your perspective, what has helped increase your Lexile level?
4. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 program helped you with your reading comprehension?
5. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 teacher helped you with your reading comprehension?
6. What is the name of the READ 180 teacher that helped you with your reading comprehension?
7. From your perspective, how were your attitudes toward reading affected by READ 180?
8. Is there a particular story/book you like?
9. How do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program help you speak in English?
10. How do you feel the READ 180 activities help you understand English grammar (writing rules)?
11. How do you perceive READ 180 help you write in English?
12. From your perspective, what are some strategies from READ 180 that helped you read better in English?
13. How do you perceive technology facilitating your reading comprehension in READ 180?

Data was collected and organized into files which included a file for each middle school. The researcher created a file for each focus group of students at each middle

school and a file for the focus group of the READ 180 teachers. The student surveys were filed in an individual student folder. The student folders were filed in numerical order from one to thirty. Interviews of the administrators who supervise the READ 180 teachers and their demographic surveys were filed separately as well as the READ 180 teachers' demographic surveys and focus group information. This process of organization allowed for the next step of coding information for data analysis. Appendix U displays how the interview questions and focus group questions supported the research questions.

The researcher organized the data provided by the participants and began the process for analysis. The constant comparison method for categorizing and comparing the data was utilized by the researcher for analysis purposes (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher analyzed the data by identifying patterns and themes to determine how these patterns and themes helped answer the research questions. Data coding was classified into the READ 180 reading intervention program's perceived impact on reading comprehension skills. Specifically, the study examined 1) the perceived impact READ 180 reading intervention program has on students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading, 2) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 3) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 4) specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills, 5) the influence of READ 180 on students' attitudes toward reading, 6) ELL student's perceptions of

how the READ 180 program reflected their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs, and 7) students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension. Data was color coded based on the responses of the participants (Creswell, 2009). The coding process allowed the researcher to determine the frequency of occurrence with relation to the perceptions of READ 180's impact on reading comprehension and an analysis of themes (Creswell, 2009). Triangulation involves the convergence of multiple data sources to determine if themes are established (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2011). The data from the surveys, demographic surveys, focus groups, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, archival data, and students' documents from this program evaluation was triangulated. The researcher employed categorical aggregation so that specific data from the responses from the surveys, demographic surveys, focus groups and interviews was collected for emerging issues, and to draw meaning across multiple instances of data (Creswell, 2007).

After transcribing the data from the interviews and the focus groups, the researcher coded the data into segments by finding the most descriptive words for topics and turning them into categories. The researcher formulated categories, revised the categories, reviewed the information collected to allow codes to emerge during the data analysis and identified themes (Creswell, 2009; Fitzpatrick, et al., 2011). Data was reviewed for accuracy and completion of data entry for survey data. All names of the district, campus, staff, parents, students, and any other identifying data were removed from the published findings. The researcher moved to answering the program evaluation research questions upon completion of the data collection and data analysis. The following chapter includes a description of the results of the surveys, demographic

surveys, student and teacher focus groups, administrator in-depth, semi-structured interviews, data analysis for the research questions, review of archival data, student documents utilized, and limitations of this program evaluation.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this multiple methods program evaluation was to examine students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are English Language Learners (ELLs). Data from surveys, demographic surveys, focus groups, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, archival data and students' products were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. What perceived impact does the READ 180 reading intervention program have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
3. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
4. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by students to have the greatest impact on improving reading

comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?

5. How were attitudes toward reading perceived to be influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?

6. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represented their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?

7. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitated their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Data Collection and Data Analysis

A series of steps were involved in collecting and analyzing data for this program evaluation. Initially, background information was obtained by the researcher by interviewing the district leader responsible for and in charge of the READ 180 reading intervention program. The researcher conducted an in-depth, semi-structured interview with the special education director in an effort to gain an understanding of the district's decision to adopt the READ 180 reading intervention program. She answered eight questions (Appendix A). During this interview, the district leader stated she had been in education for a total of 35 years and had served as special education director for the last 15 years. Due to students' mobility within the district and the lack of a consistent reading program across the district, she felt the need to adopt a reading program. She started with various other programs prior to implementing the READ 180 program for the last five

years. The special education director felt that it was her duty to teach students with learning disabilities to read. She explained how she struggled with reading as a young child and did not want other students to experience her struggles as a non-reader.

The computer software and the small group instruction were the components that attracted her to READ 180 and “the videos, a picture’s worth a thousand words,” and for her students in the district, “many lack experience.” She discussed how students are tech savvy and want to use computers. She surmised that the READ 180 program “provided a systematic instruction for students to acquire the skills needed to begin to use reading to learn versus learning to read.” She shared the challenges of keeping up with the latest version of the READ 180 program due to limited funding but did not regret using the majority of her federal funds [approximately two million over a four year period] on the READ 180 program and stated “You cannot put a price on teaching a student to read, because when they can read, you open up their world.” She shared that this program was a “game changer” for students because it is helping close the achievement gap in reading. As students increase their reading levels and are in the 25th percentile, they are exited from the READ 180 class and no longer participate in READ 180. Students are placed in reading classes with general education students.

The director of special education sees the READ 180 reading intervention program as beneficial to students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. She believes in the research behind the program and has seen the growth in reading students make. She shared that because of the positive results and the need for fidelity of implementation she has assigned one coordinator and four teacher facilitators to monitor the implementation of the program so that students continue to

benefit from all the components. Students in high school used to receive two English classes of READ 180. Due to students' success in reading, she recently made the change to one English class of READ 180 in high school. This has given students the opportunity to take another general education English class. She shared that she wants everyone to know that READ 180 changes students' lives and gets them ready for the real world. She is already looking at her budget for the next school year so that she can purchase the latest version of the READ 180 reading intervention program (READ 180 Next Generation).

Data Collection

This program evaluation included multiple methods of data collection and data analysis. The multiple methods of data collection included surveys with close-ended questions for survey responses from students as well as demographic information; teacher and administrator demographic surveys; student focus groups; teacher focus group; administrator in-depth, semi-structured interviews with open ended questions; archival data which included Lexile levels and students' products. First, the researcher gathered survey data and demographic data to explore students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the READ 180 reading intervention program on improving reading comprehension in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Secondly, the researcher conducted focus groups and individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Six focus groups were conducted with a total of thirty seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities which included fifteen seventh and eighth grade students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. In

addition, data from one focus group with three READ 180 teachers who are currently utilizing the reading intervention program and three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the administrators who supervise the READ 180 teacher at their middle school were collected. Lastly, the researcher gathered archival data and student products.

Data Analysis for Research Questions

The first research question was explored to determine the perceived impact the READ 180 reading intervention program had on the confidence in, and motivation towards reading in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Research questions two, three, and four were explored to determine the specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program administrators, teachers, and students perceived to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Research question five was explored to determine how students' attitudes toward reading were influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program. Research question six explored the cultural relevance of the READ 180 reading intervention program materials. Lastly, research question seven was explored to determine the perceived impact of technology in facilitating students' reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program. The following section describes the data analysis for each research question.

Research Question 1: *What perceived impact does the READ 180 reading intervention program have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for*

seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”

Student Survey Results (RQ 1). All students’ survey items were analyzed to determine the frequency of responses. Table 5 describes the frequency of responses and percentages to students’ survey items for research question 1 on confidence in, and motivation toward reading followed by focus group responses, and in-depth, semi-structured interview responses.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Student Survey Responses for Confidence and Motivation Toward Reading (Research Question 1)

<i>Items</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities (N=30)</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (N=15)</i>
	<i># (%)</i>	<i># (%)</i>
Do you volunteer to read out loud during the R180 class?	Yes 16 (53.33%) No 14 (46.66%)	Yes 10 (67%) No 5 (33%)
Do you volunteer to read out loud in other classes?	Yes 9 (30%) No 21 (70%)	Yes 3 (20%) No 12 (80%)
Do you enjoy reading?	Yes 22 (73%) No 6 (20%) NR 2 (7%)	Yes 10 (67%) No 5 (33%)
Do you feel successful when you are reading?	Yes 28 (93%) No 2 (7%)	Yes 14 (93%) No 1 (7%)
Do you like to read?	Yes 20 (67%) No 10 (33%)	Yes 9 (60%) No 6 (40%)

Note. NR = no response

Table 5 illustrates how students perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program impacted their confidence in and motivation toward reading based on their responses to survey items 9-11. A higher percentage of students responded positively to the perceived impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on their confidence in and motivation towards reading. For the eighteen student males, 69% responded yes and 31% responded no to items 9-11 about enjoying reading, feeling successful in reading, and liked to read. For the twelve student females, 83% responded yes and 17% responded no to items 9-11 about enjoying reading, feeling successful in reading, and liked to read.

A review of the surveys for the 30 student participants indicated that students did perceive that their confidence in and motivation toward reading was impacted by the READ 180 reading intervention program according to their survey responses for items 9-11. The majority of the students responded that they enjoyed reading, felt successful in reading, and liked to read. However, 21 out of the thirty students responded that they did not like to volunteer to read in other classes and only sixteen out of the thirty students responded yes to volunteering to read in the READ 180 class. Although students perceive that their confidence in and motivation toward reading was impacted by READ 180, they did not volunteer to read in other classes and sixteen volunteered to read in the READ 180 class. This data set included all the students who participated in the focus groups.

Student Focus Group Results (RQ 1). *“What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on your confidence in, and motivation toward reading?”* The six focus groups consisted of a total of 30 seventh and eighth grade

middle school students with learning disabilities of which 15 students were seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. These students have participated in the READ 180 reading intervention program for a minimum of one school year.

The majority of the students shared they perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program had impacted their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Students responded yes to this focus group question and stated that they did perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program impacted their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Of the 30 total participants in the focus groups, there were two students in Focus Group 3 that perceived the READ 180 program did not impact their confidence in, and motivation toward reading; one of these students shared that the program had things he already knew. A student in Focus Group 5 shared that the program did not give him confidence but motivated him and gave him a goal to become a better reader so that he could get out of the READ 180 class. This student was motivated to improve his reading comprehension so that he could be placed in a general education reading class. He shared how he did not like being in the READ 180 class because the other students knew he was in the special education reading class. Twenty-seven out of the 30 students perceived that the READ 180 reading intervention program impacted their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Students appeared to be confident and smiled as they responded to the question during the focus groups.

Based on the information shared in the focus group portion of this study, students conveyed the message that the READ 180 reading intervention program was indeed influencing their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. In fact, the students

responded “yes” in unison as soon as the researcher asked the question. The researcher had to probe students and asked them to share what impact they perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program have on their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Students’ comments included:

- “It helped us to believe that we can do it.”
- “It’s been great.”
- “It helps us understand what we are reading.”
- “It helped me a lot. To like, improve my reading. To make me a stronger reader.”
- “Because over time, I’ve learned more difficult words over the years.”

Teacher Focus Group Results (RQ 1). *“What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”*

The three READ 180 teachers responded positively to their perceived impact on confidence in, and motivation toward reading. READ 180 teachers’ comments included:

- “I think the impact is very strong, significant. Kids come in motivated to see their SRI scores. That little bit of boost gets them know. I can do this. I’m a success.”
- “And if, if the kids come in focused and they’re focused on a daily basis, I really do believe that they do see that, that ability to see that yes, I’m actually going somewhere from here. They feel confident in their reading and what they are accomplishing.”
- “It’s all geared towards their specific Lexiles so I believe that’s a big boost to their motivation, and then also, the confidence goes with that.”
- “Some kids are excited about hearing the constant, positive reinforcement when

they're in the software. When they compete against each other they kind of get excited about it. It motivates them."

- "And the recording of the computer, where the guy talks and says great job, you're doing well, that constant motivation I think that really makes a major impact on them doing well."

READ 180 teachers and administrators also perceived that the confidence in, and motivation toward reading was diminished for students who had been in the program since fifth grade. Out of the 30 seventh and eighth grade students, 50% had been in the program for three to four years and the other 50% for one to two years. READ 180 teacher comments about students who had been in the program since fifth grade included:

- "Motivation and confidence, in my opinion upon what I've seen is also broken down, diminished when you have kids who have been in the program for too long."
- "You know because the software seems redundant, you know year after year and if there is no growth, they do get discouraged."
- "And so, you have an eighth grader and now they're just done with it, they're done with it."

The READ 180 teachers shared that a limitation of the READ 180 reading intervention program was the program's materials. Teachers shared that students who have been in the program for more than two years get frustrated and tired of using the same materials like the books and the computer software. Consideration for the use of supplemental materials was a recommendation from the teacher focus group.

Administrator In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interview Results (RQ 1). *“What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward, reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”*

During the in-depth, semi-structured interview, the two assistant principals who had supervised the READ 180 reading intervention program longer perceived a positive impact of the program in students’ confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Two out of the three administrators responded positively. The third administrator shared her disposition on how the program had limited choices in what students read and she perceived minimal growth by students. However, overall she thought the program was doing what it was intended to do. It is important to note that this administrator, the principal, was in her first year of supervising the READ 180 teacher. It was noticed by the researcher that she was not familiar with the program, program history, and its results. This may have contributed to her perceiving the students had minimal growth in reading. The principal noted that she did not have data to support her belief about minimal growth. She shared her biases of the program and how students did not have a choice in what they read.

Administrators discussed the stigma associated with being in the READ 180 reading intervention class which is only offered to special education students. Administrators noted that this age group was already sensitive because they realize that they are not reading as fast as their peers. This resulted in students starting to feel the stigma associated with being in the READ 180 class. One administrator suggested

changing the READ 180 model so that students in the program could have the second hour in a general education reading class and not in the READ 180 class.

Qualitative analyses were conducted to determine how students, teachers, and administrators responded to the perceived impact the READ 180 reading intervention program had on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs.

Two primary themes emerged during the student focus groups, READ 180 teacher focus group, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with administrators, and student survey results for items 7-11. The themes are:

1. Students, teachers, and administrators believed that the READ 180 reading intervention program did impact students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading. They believed the program helped students with their confidence in, and motivation toward reading.
2. Students liked and enjoyed reading. This resulted in them feeling successful in their reading.

Students who struggle in reading typically lack motivation (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007).

Specifically, students with learning disabilities tend to be poor readers, are less motivated to read, and lack the confidence to read (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). When students are not motivated, teachers must try to engage students in their learning. Students do not have confidence in their reading when they are struggling. Even though the students participating in the program evaluation are struggling in reading, they liked and enjoyed reading. They felt successful in their reading. Self-efficacy and motivation have a

significant role in student achievement and their motivation to read (Bandura, 1994; Protheroe, 2004; Vacca, 2006). Students' perceived beliefs will affect their motivation to read and attitudes toward reading. Students with high self-efficacy are more willing to approach their learning (Protheroe, 2004). In this study, middle school students with learning disabilities and middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program does influence their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Students' belief in their ability to read and feeling successful is affecting their motivation to read and attitudes toward reading in a beneficial manner which is supported by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1994).

Research Questions 2, 3, and 4. *“What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by students (RQ 4) to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?” “What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by teachers (RQ 3) to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?” “What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by administrators (RQ 2) to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”* Each group of participants was asked questions related to what specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program were perceived by them to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with disabilities.

Student Survey Results (RQ 4). All students' survey items were analyzed to determine the frequency of responses. Table 6 describes the frequency of responses and percentages to students' survey items for research question 4 on the specific strategies perceived by students to have the greatest impact on improving their reading comprehension skills followed by focus group responses, and in-depth, semi-structured interview responses.

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages of Student Survey Responses for Specific Strategies with Greatest Impact on Improving Reading Comprehension (Research Question 4)

<i>Items</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities (N=30)</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (N=15)</i>
	<i># (%)</i>	<i># (%)</i>
Which helped you more to learn to read and comprehend what you read, the READ 180 program or your teacher?	R180 Program 7 (23.33%) R180 Teacher 14 (46.66%) Other: Both 7 (23.33%) None 1 (3.33%) No Response 1 (3.33%)	R180 Program 1 (6.66%) R180 Teacher 7 (46.66%) Other: Both 5 (33.33%) None 1 (6.66%) No Response 1 (6.66%)
Which part of the READ 180 rotation: teacher, computer, or independent reading (IR) do you like best?	Teacher 5 (16.66%) Computer 8 (26.66%) IR 8 (26.66%) Other: Reading Center 6 (20.00%) All 3 rotations 1 (3.33%) None 2 (6.66%)	Teacher 2 (13.33%) Computer 4 (26.66%) IR 2 (13.33%) Other: Reading Center 4 (26.66%) Reading Center and Teacher 1 (6.66%) None 2 (13.33%)
Which part of the READ 180 rotation: teacher, computer, or independent reading (IR) do you find the most helpful?	Teacher 11 (36.66%) Computer 3 (10.00%) IR 5 (16.66%) Other: Reading Center 4 (13.33%) Teacher and Computer 1 (3.33%) All 3 rotations 1 (3.33%) None 1 (3.33%) Nothing 2 (6.66%) No response 2 (6.66%)	Teacher 4 (26.66%) Computer 0 (0%) IR 3 (20.00%) Other: Reading Center 3 (20.00%) None 1 (6.66%) Nothing 2 (13.33%) No response 2 (13.33%)
Which part of the READ 180 rotation: teacher, computer, or independent reading (IR) do you find the least helpful?	Teacher 5 (16.66%) Computer 14 (46.66%) IR 6 (20.00%) Other: Reading Center 1 (3.33%) None 4 (13.33%)	Teacher 1 (6.66%) Computer 8 (53.33%) IR 3 (20.00%) Other: Reading Center 1 (6.66%) None 1 (6.66%) No response 1 (6.66%)

Table 6 illustrates how students responded when asked survey items related to the specific strategies from READ 180 perceived to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills. The students did not all respond with the options provided in the survey items. Therefore, there are many items that were categorized under *Other* by the researcher. When looking at the survey responses for item 23, more students perceived that the teacher helped them more to learn to read and comprehend what they read, and found the teacher to be the most helpful when responding to which READ 180 rotation they found the most helpful. Fourteen out of the 18 male students perceived the teacher was the most helpful and seven out of the twelve females perceived the teacher as being the most helpful. ELL students (46.66%) also found the teacher to be the one who helped them more to learn to read and comprehend what they read and an additional 33.33% of the ELL students responded that both the teacher and the READ 180 program helped them more to learn to read and comprehend what they read.

Students responded to the survey item 24 about the rotation they liked best with mixed results and had varied responses. For this survey item, a higher number of students responded the Computer and Independent Reading at 26.66% each, the Reading Center 20%, followed by the Teacher 16.66%. For the ELL students, they responded they liked best the Computer and Reading Center at 26.66%, followed by Teacher, Computer, and None all at 13.33%.

When responding to the survey item 26 about which part of the READ 180 rotation they found the most helpful, ELLs had mixed responses even though the response for Teacher (26.66%) was slightly higher from the responses of Independent

Reading and Reading Center each at 20%. Twenty percent of ELL students found nothing helpful from the READ 180 rotations and two students chose not to respond to this survey item.

The majority of the students responded that the computer was the least helpful rotation in the READ 180 program when responding to survey item 27. Approximately 47% of the thirty students found the computer to be the least helpful and 53% of the ELL students with learning disabilities found the computer to be the least helpful.

Student Focus Group Results (RQ 4). *“From your perspective, what parts of READ 180 help(ed) you understand what you read?” “From your perspective, how has the READ 180 program helped you with your comprehension?” “From your perspective, how has the READ 180 teacher helped you with your reading comprehension?” “What is the name of the READ 180 teacher that helped you with your reading comprehension?”*

Students in Focus Group 1 perceived that the books in READ 180 were the easiest part to read and that the zones (i.e., reading zone, word zone, and spelling zone) were the parts of READ 180 that helped them understand what they read. Students perceived that reading on the computer helped them increase their Lexile level. One student shared that it helped him find out words that he didn’t know before. Students perceived that reading the books out loud with the teacher helped them with their reading comprehension. Two students remained silent and did not respond to the questions. They nodded their heads in agreement with the student who was speaking. Students in Focus Group 2 perceived that the spelling, independent group, the computers, and every rotation were the parts of the program that helped them understand what they read and helped increase their Lexile levels. Students shared that by reading and practicing reading with the teacher and

independent reading helped them with their reading comprehension. The students in Focus Group 3 perceived that the parts of the READ 180 program that helped them with words they did not know and it helped them sound out words. Students perceived that the teacher and using the computer helped them increase their Lexile level. They perceived that the READ 180 reading intervention program gave them definitions and helped understand what a word means. Students also shared that their teachers helped them with difficult words, they could ask them what the words mean, and the teachers would tell them what the word is. The two students who participated in Focus Group 4 perceived that the independent reading station with their teacher was the part of the READ 180 program that helped them understand what they read. The female student shared that, “When you’re with the teacher, the teacher can direct you, and she could help you, as you stumble over a word that you don’t know.” Both students perceived that the independent practice was what helped them increase their Lexile level. The students shared how the teachers help them read better and how teachers break down words for them. The female student shared how the teacher helps her with definitions but the READ 180 program has helped her with her comprehension because it makes her want to ask questions. Students in Focus Group 5 stated that the reading zone, success zone, computer, spelling zone, word zone, and the teacher were the parts of the READ 180 reading intervention program helped them understand what they read. When students were asked what they perceived helped them increase their Lexile level, students laughed and one student responded “patience.” Two students shared that the program had not helped them at all. One student responded that recording the reading passage, two students responded that the rotations and a third student agreed that the rotations helped

them increase their Lexile level. Another student shared that practicing word for word reading had helped him increase his Lexile level. Students were asked how they perceived the READ 180 program had helped with their reading comprehension, one student responded “pass” and another student replied “tough question” while another students replied “hmmm, no.” One student shared that when they are at independent reading they can ask the teacher how to pronounce a word and things like that. Another student responded that the teachers were the ones they perceived helped them with their reading comprehension when asked about how the READ 180 program helped with their reading comprehension. Students laughed and giggled when asked from their perspective how the READ 180 teacher had helped them with their reading comprehension. Students shared that the teachers always made it fun, comfortable, and that it was nice to talk to the teacher. One student responded that he did not know which one to say while the rest of the students stated that both teachers helped with their reading comprehension. Students shared that their teachers made reading fun, they helped them sound out words when they were stuck, and that their teachers gave them courage. “They give us courage. They take it slow or fast or however fast we need to go.” Most of the students in the focus groups referred to the two adults in the classrooms as teachers. However, the READ 180 class consists of a teacher and a paraprofessional. The students in Focus Group 6 perceived that the computer software and the warm up activities helped them understand what they read. They perceived the rotations and the teacher helped them increase their Lexile level. Students perceived that the READ 180 teacher helped them because of the vocabulary homework they are assigned, reading out loud with her, and the warm up activities. One student noted that the teacher took her time with them.

Students perceived that the program helped them read better and write better but discussed the benefits of working with their teacher.

The majority of the students perceived that the teacher was the specific strategy of the READ 180 reading intervention program that had the greatest impact on improving their reading comprehension skills. Students' comments about the teacher or paraprofessional in the READ 180 class included:

- “Because I feel like she is there for any questions or concerns I have.”
- “Because she pulls us to read more.”
- “I can ask questions when we are reading.”
- “She helps us break down the words we don’t know.”
- “They help more.”
- “Because they are lovely and careful of teaching and helping us.”
- “Because my teacher is very nice.”
- “And she takes her time with us.”
- “She always makes it fun, comfortable, it’s nice to talk to her.”
- “They make reading fun.”

Teacher Focus Group Results (RQ 3). *“From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension?” and “From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?”*

The READ 180 teachers perceived that the computer software was one of the materials that assisted students with their reading comprehension but perceived that the “human touch” from the teacher was the strategy that assisted students. During the

READ 180 teacher focus group, the teachers shared how the computer software helped with the comprehension piece but that the questions asked were basic level comprehension questions. The teachers also perceived that the warm-up activity gives students the background knowledge needed and the target reading strategy that leads to the workshop activity. Teachers felt that the warm-up activity was an essential piece that gave students the key words needed and shared how teachers were the able to help students make connections and hopefully the comprehension would follow.

The READ 180 teachers perceived that they were the specific strategy of the READ 180 reading intervention program that had the greatest impact on improving the students' reading comprehension skills. Teachers' comments about themselves or their paraprofessionals in the READ 180 class included:

- “As the human intervention, we’re the ones that have to say you can do it.”
- “As a human, you can understand why they see it that way and you think, okay, you know what, you do understand it.”
- “When you’re reading the passage with them, you’re stopping and clarifying and you get the big ideas, and their point of views, and so you can pretty much get the discussion going around in your small group as to what the kids are getting from it and where you need to, maybe, refocus.”
- “I’ve kinda let my para take that role, but I do see that the questioning, the probing questions, that she is asking.”
- “Whenever they do get to the small group with me and my para, I can ask the questions and I know I have to scaffold.”

- “You know what we bring to the classroom. Our knowledge, our background, our understanding to be able to always assess the kids, in reaching them wherever they are.”
- “During our small group I can provide students the scaffolding needed and I am better able to ask probing questions.”
- “I bring an understanding to assess my students and I reach them by making connections.”
- “We are able to provide more direct teaching.”
- “We’ve got to take our time, and I’ve got to make sure that each one of you us understanding the purpose and the big idea here.”
- “That they bring to the program the human touch to say you can do this.”
- “We’re the ones that have to say you can do it and pull them aside, call the parent, or write them a note.”

Administrator In-depth, Semi-Structured Interview Results (RQ 2). *“From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension?” and “From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?”*

During the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, administrators were asked what materials and what teaching strategies they perceived assisted students with their reading comprehension. The principal at middle School 6 responded that the station work, books at their Lexile level, and the teacher’s rotation were the materials and teaching strategies that assisted students with their reading comprehension. She perceived that students did benefit from being able to work with the teacher and paraprofessional in a small group

setting and they could ask questions. She felt students benefited most from the adults. The assistant principal at middle School 1 perceived that the computer and the teacher rotation were the materials and teaching strategies that assisted students with their reading comprehension. She felt that the rotation where the students sit with the teacher or paraprofessional and they help the students through their reading was the teaching strategy that assisted students in their reading comprehension the most. The administrator at middle School 5 perceived that all aspects of the READ 180 reading intervention program included materials and strategies that assisted students with their reading comprehension. She noted that she was calling it the wrong name but that she perceived that the reading circle with the teacher where students were able to talk about what they read, apply their skills, and check for understanding were the strategies that assisted students with their reading comprehension the most. The assistant principal shared that she thought having the two block period (90 minutes), having the two teachers physically in the classroom, with a teacher and a paraprofessional was beneficial for students. The administrator felt that having two adults in the classroom was a positive set up of the READ 180 class. Students were able to get more individualized instruction or small group instruction from one of the adults. The administrator shared that the small class size allowed for students to build relationships, support each other, and through competition or encouragement could cause each other to want to be stronger.

Overall, the administrators perceived that teachers were the specific strategy of the READ 180 reading intervention program that had the greatest impact on improving the students' reading comprehension skills. Administrators' comments included:

- “Having the two teachers physically in the classroom, with a teacher and a para, students can build relationships in, and support each other.”
- “Students benefit from the reading circle where they can talk about their observations and doing the predictions, and the comprehension with the teacher.”
- “I think that really helps when they sit with the teacher and read. That helps them too, because the teacher is like, are you sure that’s what you just read?”
- “The part where the teacher or paraprofessional helps them through their reading.”
- “When teachers establish the right environment, I think, students provide that kind of support to each other.”
- “When students get to talk about what they read, they’re actually applying the skill and able to talk out loud to check their own understanding. I think that’s the most valuable.”

Tables 7 demonstrates the two primary themes that emerged for research questions 2, 3, and 4 with the numbers of respondents mentioning each of the primary themes. The data set also includes all students who participated in the focus groups.

Table 7

Themes from Student Surveys, Student and Teacher Focus Groups and Administrator Interviews for Research Questions 2, 3, 4.

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Number of Respondents Mentioning Item (N=36)</i>
1. Help provided by the teacher or paraprofessional.	Students N=21 Teacher N=3 Administrator N=3 Total N=27
2. Students respond to a supportive climate and caring adults.	Students N=21 Teacher N=3 Administrator=3 Total N=27

Research Question 5: *“How were attitudes toward reading influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”*

Student Survey Results (RQ 5). All students’ survey items were analyzed to determine the frequency of responses. Table 8 describes the frequency of responses and percentages to students’ survey items for research question 5 followed by focus group responses, and in-depth, semi-structured interview responses.

Table 8

Frequencies and Percentages of Student Survey Responses for Attitudes Toward Reading Influenced by READ 180 (Research Question 5)

<i>Items</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities (N=30)</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (N=15)</i>
	<i># (%)</i>	<i># (%)</i>
Do you go to the public library to read or check out books?	Yes 11 (37%) No 19 (63%)	Yes 3 (20%) No 12 (80%)
Do you read books at home?	Yes 16 (53%) No 13 (43%) Other: Yes and No 1 (3%)	Yes 7 (47%) No 8 (53%)
Do you read for fun?	Yes 18 (60%) No 12 (40%)	Yes 9 (60%) No 6 (40%)
Do you enjoy reading at home?	Yes 15 (50%) No 14 (47%) NR 1 (3%)	Yes 6 (40%) No 8 (53%) NR 1 (7%)
Do you ask questions as you read?	Yes 16 (53%) No 14 (47%)	Yes 8 (53%) No 7 (47%)
Do you enjoy retelling what you read by talking or writing about it?	Yes 9 (30%) No 21 (70%)	Yes 2 (13%) No 13 (87%)

Note. NR = no response.

Table 8 illustrates survey item responses for attitudes toward reading influenced by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with disabilities. There were mixed results when responding to the survey items. About half of all the students responded that they did go to the school library to read or check out books, but very few responded that they went to the public library to read or check out books. Sixty-percent of students responded that they read for

fun. Fifty-percent of students responded that they enjoyed reading at home. In reviewing the survey responses about students asking questions as they read, 53% responded *Yes*. For the survey item about enjoying retelling what they read about by talking or writing about it, 70% of the students responded *No*.

When reviewing responses for ELLs, 60% read for fun, but only 40% responded that they enjoyed reading at home. Interestingly, 87% of the seventh and eighth grade middle school students who are ELLs noted that they did go to the bookstore to buy books. The majority of the ELLs (87%) marked *No* when responding to the question about retelling what they read about by talking or writing about. Fifty-three percent of the students responded that they did ask questions as they read.

Students' responses to these survey items provided mixed results. The researcher did not explore whether students had the means to get to the public library and whether or not they responded *No* because of lack of access. Also, the majority of students did not go to the bookstore to buy books. The students participating in the study are economically disadvantaged. Their responses may also be due to lack of access or lack of funds but this was not further explored by the researcher. When it comes to students using reading comprehension strategies such as retelling, talking, or writing about what they read, the majority of the students responded they did not enjoy this. Approximately half of the students did ask questions as they read.

Student Focus Groups Results (RQ 5). *“From your perspective, how were your attitudes toward reading affected by READ 180?”*

During the focus groups, students were asked to share from their perspectives how their attitudes toward reading were affected by READ 180. Students in Focus

Groups 3, 4, and 5 perceived that their attitudes toward reading were not affected while students in Focus Groups 1, 2, and 6 perceived their attitudes were affected by READ 180. One student in Focus Group 1 shared that his attitude was good and sometimes bad. Another student shared that his attitude toward reading was okay. Several students shared their attitudes were good and one student shared great in Focus Group 2. Students in Focus Group 6 responded in unison that no, they did not perceive their attitudes toward reading were affected by READ 180. One student shared that he didn't like to read back then but that now reading was easy. The student went on to share, "I like to read." Another student shared that he did not like to read and only read when he had to. When students in Focus Group 3 were asked the question, they responded "no" in unison when asked if they perceived that their attitudes were affected by the READ 180 program. Students made comments like, "nah, not really, we still hate it." Students in Focus Group 4 perceived that their attitudes were not affected by READ 180. These two students felt that they never had problems in reading. Students in Focus Group 5 perceived that their attitudes were negatively affected by READ 180. Students shared comments such as "bad, it was frustrating, and as soon as I got in here, I wanted to get out." Another student shared it was kind of easy and another shared that it went from bad to good. This student shared how being in this class was wearing him out because they have deal with the other students from the school. The students shared how the general education students know that they are in the special education class because they are in READ 180 and by the location of the READ 180 class. They shared how their READ 180 class was not near the other reading classes. Students were candid in sharing how just because they are struggling in reading, it doesn't mean other students have to make fun of them.

Responses from the focus groups yielded mixed results. Some students perceived that READ 180 did not influence their attitudes toward reading comprehension while other students thought it did. When tabulating students' responses, the researcher found that three of the focus groups thought READ 180 did influence their attitudes and three of the focus groups thought it did not.

Teacher Focus Groups Results (RQ 5). *“From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?”*

READ 180 teachers were asked to share from their perspective how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 program for their seventh and eighth grade students. The teachers felt that the READ 180 program did affect their students' attitudes towards reading and that students looked at it as something helpful and positive. One teacher shared how when she fills in the gaps, especially for the students at a BR 0 Lexile level, students attitudes change into positive attitudes. The teacher commented that students really enjoy what they are reading and that “an entire world opens up” for them while in the READ 180 class. The teacher shared how students would come in to class excited because they are thinking in the class. Teachers shared that students' attitudes are positive because the program is colorful, more fun, and that they are able to walk around the class during the rotations. Teachers shared that students are excited with positive attitudes because they know they can do the work. Students enjoy the different activities in the READ 180 rotations.

One teacher did share that there was a huge variance between the old system and the new system in the READ 180 program. She shared her request to maybe get the

updated version of READ 180. Then the other two teachers discussed how there are so many components of the READ 180 program that they have not used. One teacher mentioned how he has not used all the audio books and they were on the shelf. The three teachers agreed how all students would be just fine if they, the teachers, really used every component of the READ 180 program. Teachers were honest about not getting to all that is included in the READ 180 reading intervention program and how some of the materials were new in unopened packages.

Findings from the teacher focus group indicate that they perceived READ 180 did influence students' attitudes towards reading. Teachers shared students were motivated by the continuous reinforcement and immediate feedback students received by them and by the computer. They shared how students experience success in their READ 180 class. Teachers also commented on how students who have been in the program longer may not be as motivated and may not want to participate. They commented how these students' attitudes may be influenced negatively because they use the same books and materials over and over again.

This particular focus group question caused the teachers pause. The researcher perceives that the last comment made during the focus group was shared because the teacher's had an "aha" moment when stating, *"Students would be just fine if we really used every component of the READ 180 program."*

Administrator In-depth, Semi-Structured Interview Results (RQ 5). *"From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?"*

During her interview, the principal from middle School 6 shared that she did not think students' confidence level is high. She shared how students have requested to be moved out of the READ 180 class because they feel identified and singled out. She noted that some students may be in the program because that is where they need to be. During her walk-throughs and looking in to the READ 180 classes, she observed students engaged, on-task, and working in their rotations. She believed that students probably had a good attitude when working with the adults in READ 180 because they received more individualized instruction. She shared that the district's expectation of no more than twelve students in each READ 180 class with a teacher and para was a benefit. Yet, she did not feel proud of students being in this class and where students are in their reading levels. She emphasized how students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs needed to be in the general education reading class. The principal reiterated that the few students she interacted with did not want to be in the READ 180 class.

The assistant principal from middle School 1 perceived that students' attitudes toward reading depended on the student and their own personal choice. She explained that attitudes toward the program depended on how long the students had been involved in the program. She felt the length of time in the program influenced students' attitudes toward READ 180, reading in general, and the relationship with their READ 180 teacher. This particular administrator had previously worked as an administrator at a high school and also supervised the READ 180 teachers. She mentioned how she definitely saw the difference in middle school students and high school students. She shared middle school students were much more eager and excited than were the high school students. She

perceived READ 180 did influence students' attitudes toward reading for middle school seventh and eighth grade students but not as much for high school. The relationship between the teacher and students was integral to how students' attitudes were influenced.

The assistant principal at middle School 5 perceived that attitudes toward reading being affected by the READ 180 program depended on the culture and climate of the classroom. She shared that the program is just a program and that it came back to the teaching. The administrator noted of significance the application of the parts of the program and how the program was utilized. She emphasized how teachers who love students are excited about seeing growth in their students and they motivate students. This administrator felt that you could have the best curriculum, but if it is not properly implemented that it was just material. She felt the teacher was the most critical piece when it came to reading instruction and influencing students' attitudes.

There were mixed results to students' survey responses student and teacher focus group responses, and administrator interview responses for attitudes toward reading influenced by READ 180. In reviewing their survey responses and focus group responses, students had mixed results. Some students perceived their attitudes toward reading were influenced by READ 180 while others did not. Students presented themselves as confident and successful readers when participating in the focus groups. They felt supported by their READ 180 teachers and knew that if they had difficulty, their teachers were there to help them. Students' perceptions were that they could read and comprehend what they read due to the teacher and the READ 180 program. According to the social learning theory, student's beliefs in their ability to succeed will affect their attitudes and motivation (Bandura, 1994). Even though students responded with mixed

results for the questions about their attitudes toward reading being influenced by READ 180, they appeared to be motivated and had positive attitudes toward reading when responding to the surveys and focus group questions. The READ 180 teachers perceived that they influenced students' attitudes toward reading along with the READ 180 program while all three administrators perceive that the teachers are the ones influencing students' attitudes toward reading.

Research Question 6: *“How do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?”*

Student Survey Data Results (RQ 6). All students' survey items were analyzed to determine the frequency of responses. Table 9 describes the frequency of responses and percentages to students' survey items for research question 6 on how seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs followed by focus group responses, and in-depth, semi-structured interview responses.

Table 9

*Frequencies and Percentages of ELL Student Survey Responses for READ 180
Representing their Cultural Backgrounds and Meeting Their Language Learning Needs
(Research Question 6)*

<i>Items</i>	<i>Students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (N=15)</i>
	<i># (%)</i>
Are you able to make connections to your family and home life when you read the READ 180 stories/books/and/or complete the activities?	Yes 1 (7%) No 14 (93%)
If yes, explain how.	No response 15 (100%)

Table 9 illustrates survey item responses on how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs. Ninety-three percent of the students responded *No* to making connections to their family and home life when they read the READ 180 stories, books, or complete the activities.

Student Focus Group Results (RQ 6). *“Is there a particular story/book you like?” “How do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program help you speak in English?” How do you feel the READ 180 activities helped you understand English grammar rules (writing rules)?” “How do you perceive READ 180 helped you write in English?” “From your perspective, what are some strategies from READ 180 that helped you read better in English?”*

In order to answer research question 6 on how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs, the researcher asked students if there was a particular story/book they like, how they perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program help them speak in English, how they felt the READ 180 activities helped them understand English grammar (writing rules), how they perceived READ 180 helped them write in English, and what they perceived were the strategies from READ 180 that helped them read better in English. The majority of the students were able to name a book or story that they liked. They named stories and books such as *The Watchers*, *UFOs*, *Money Hungry*, *Waiting Till The Dark*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Somewhere in the Darkness*, *Holes*, *Amanda Hitton*, and *Frankenstein*. Many students could not recall the name of a story or book that they liked. When students were asked if they perceived the READ 180 program helped them with their writing, most of the students in the six focus groups responded yes. One of the ELL students in Focus Group 6 shared how the READ 180 program did help him speak English and how he used to only speak Spanish because his grandparents only spoke Spanish. Another student shared that the READ 180 program helped him speak better in English. For the most part, students felt that their writing improved because of the Spelling Zone and Reading Zone. Students perceived that READ 180 did meet their language learning needs.

When looking at students' survey data and their focus group responses, there were mixed results. Fourteen out of the 15 middle school seventh and eighth grade students with learning disabilities who are ELLs shared on their surveys that they were not able to

make connections to their family and home life when they read the READ 180 stories/books/and/or complete the activities. However, during the focus groups, several students shared that the program did help them speak better in English, write better in English, how they improved in their reading, and how they could not read before and now they can. On the survey responses, students perceived READ 180 did not meet their cultural backgrounds and during the focus groups they shared that READ 180 did meet their language needs.

Teacher Focus Group Results (RQ 6). *“From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural background and meets their language learning needs?” and “From your perspective, how are students able to make connections to the text they read?”*

During the READ 180 teacher focus group, one teacher shared that she had seen her ELL students really succeed. She perceived that the READ 180 program did service ELL students’ culture and language. She explained that the oral component benefits students because they had to speak, listen, and interact. The second READ 180 teacher shared that the peer share, turn and talk and the warm up activity were components that helped the ELL students. The third teacher shared how the program is designed to build their background knowledge, discussing academic vocabulary, and that the stories were culturally diverse. Teachers felt students could relate to the stories because they were culturally diverse. The teachers perceived that the READ 180 program had the oral language component embedded in the program and this assisted ELL students with learning disabilities. They also discussed how the anchor videos gave students the

opportunities to see real, live pictures of students talking that look like the students they service. A teacher gave an example of how an anchor video from one of the workshops had to do with girls living in a shelter with their mom. A lot of her students connected with the story because they had been through Katrina and lived in shelters or had come to America for the first time and also lived in shelters. The teachers felt that the ELL students were able to make real world connections to the anchor videos in the program. Another teacher shared that they read a story about an immigrant from Mexico and that her ELL students were able to discuss similar experiences to those of the girl in the story. The READ 180 teachers shared that the majority of their students came from Mexico while fewer came from the other countries.

Administrator In-depth, Semi-Structured Interview Results (RQ 6). *“From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural background and meets their language learning needs?”*

During the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, administrators were asked how they perceived seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program represented their cultural background and met their language learning needs. All three administrators felt that this question was a hard one to answer. The principal from middle School 6 stated that she had not spoken directly to the ELL students about this piece of the READ 180 program representing their cultural background and meeting their language needs. She shared that most of the ELL students were in the beginner ESL level class but special education students were in the READ 180 class. The principal shared that she did not

know if enough language was being spoken, or if enough dialogue was happening to acquire the spoken language. She also shared that she knew there was reading and independent work on the computer in the READ 180 program but did not know that the ELL strategies were really being impacted. The assistant principal from middle School 1 shared that she did not know if READ 180 represented their cultural background and met their language learning needs. She explained how ELL students were double behind because they did not know the language or were behind in the language and then on top of that they had a learning disability. She felt that an ELL student without a learning disability might make more progress with the program. The assistant principal from middle School 5 shared that this was also a hard question to answer because she was not that familiar with the materials and how they related to students' culture. She discussed the difficulties in determining whether students had a cognitive issue vs a language issue. The administrators' lack of familiarity with the program came up again during this interview question. This resulted in the limited response when discussing ELLs and the READ 180 program. The researcher attempted to solicit more input from the administrators but they were ready to move on to the following question.

This research question also generated mixed results when participants were asked their perceptions about READ 180 representing students' cultural backgrounds and meeting their language learning needs. During the surveys, ELLs responded that they could not make connection to their families and home life when reading the stories and completing the assignments in the READ 180 class. On the contrary, during the focus groups, ELL students responded *yes* and stated that READ 180 did represent their cultural backgrounds and met their language learning needs. Students shared how they

were learning to read and write in English in this class. They mentioned several of the zones that they felt were helping them read and write in English. Some of the zones they mentioned were the spelling zone, skill builder, and vocabulary. The READ 180 teachers perceived the program did represent students' cultural backgrounds and met their language learning needs but were unable to elaborate on their responses. The recurring theme of teachers and administrators not being familiar with the materials arose again when they answered this question. One of the teachers stated she had not seen all the anchor videos in the program to know if they all represented students' cultural backgrounds but thought that one of the videos did represent their cultural backgrounds. The READ 180 teachers perceived the activities had the oral language component, academic vocabulary activities, and the stories did represent students' cultural backgrounds.

Research Question 7: *“How do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?”*

Student Focus Group Results (RQ 7). *“How do you perceive technology facilitating your reading comprehension in READ 180?”*

During the six focus groups, students were asked how they perceived technology facilitated their reading comprehension in READ 180. Students varied between yes and no but more students responded yes. Some students in Focus Group perceived technology did facilitate their reading comprehension and some did not. One student in Focus Group 1 shared that she had to record reading a story and sometimes her page was three pages long and how that helps with reading a chapter book. Another student shared

that the technology piece did not help him. Other students remained silent and did not respond to the question. Students in Focus Group 2 shared that the technology “helped them real good.” Other students shared that the computer, reading, spelling, and the READ 180 computer system was the technology that helped them. One student replied yes and one no to technology facilitating their reading comprehension in Focus Group 3. Students in Focus Group 4 also perceived that the computer and the spelling helped them because they learned new words. Students in Focus Group 5 shared that they felt that technology did not facilitate their reading comprehension. The student explained that he liked to learn from the teacher because he “felt like he could grasp it better than just on the computer.” Other students agreed and shared they preferred the teachers because the teachers know them better and saw all the problems they were struggling with while the computer kept doing the same thing over and over again. Students in Focus Group 6 perceived that technology did facilitate their reading comprehension because, “Nowadays, we can do more stuff on technology.” The students shared it was cool that they could be on the computer and still learn.

Students responded to this survey item with mixed results. Some students responding yes and some students responded no. In summary, more students in the focus groups perceived that technology did facilitate their learning. The recurring theme of working with the teacher emerged during the focus groups with students.

Teacher Focus Group Results (RQ 7). *“From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?”*

During the focus group, the READ 180 teachers shared that some students liked the computer software and some wanted to skip it. The teachers perceived that many students enjoyed the technology but those that had been in the program longer did not. The teachers shared how the positive feedback from the computer software was a piece students enjoyed during the READ 180 class. Teachers shared they saw student light up, smile, and seemed motivated when they were given the positive feedback on the computer.

Administrator In-depth, Semi-Structured Interview Results (RQ 7). *“From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?”*

Administrators were asked how they perceived that seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program. Principal 1 from middle School 6 stated that she had seen the program at the high school level and currently at the middle school level. She stated students were not defiant or opposed to the program or the computer piece but that she could not give a specific answer. The assistant principal from middle School 1 stated that she perceived the students saw the technology piece as lacking. She perceived for this group of teenagers, they did not see the technology piece of READ 180 as cool anymore. The assistant principal from middle School 5 stated that she perceived that all seventh and eighth graders loved technology. However, she was unclear if students knew the purpose of the technology or computer software rotation.

There were mixed results when discussing the technology component of the READ 180 program. During the focus groups, the majority of the students perceived the technology facilitated their reading comprehension even though several said it did not. Yet, on the student surveys they noted that the computer was the least helpful. Students were asked to identify which rotation of the READ 180 program they found the least helpful and then explain why. The computer was the least helpful in the survey for 47% of the students. Out of the ELL students in the study, 53% found the computer the least helpful. Students explained why and some of their responses are listed below:

- “Because it is slow”
- “Because it goes too slow for me and takes too much time”
- “Because they talk about things I already know”
- “Because it teaches me what I already know”
- “Because we already know it and it replays over again”
- “Because it is boring”
- “Because some people already know how to do it and the computer reteaches it so what’s the point”
- “Because it doesn’t help me that much”
- “It didn’t break down the words”
- “Because the computer has words I don’t know”
- “Because if we need help it can’t help us”
- “On the computer we can do things to make it think we are doing things”

The READ 180 teachers perceived technology facilitated students’ reading comprehension and that the immediate feedback was a positive. Despite it being

beneficial, the READ 180 teachers felt that students who had been in the program for a long time did not like it and some students wanted to skip the computer rotation.

During this interview question with the administrators, it was again made clear to the researcher that the administrators were not familiar with all the components of the program. This highlighted again to the researcher the need for increased communication and training between the central office staff and the campus administrators who supervise the READ 180 teacher. One administrator confessed that she was not familiar with the technology component and could not answer the question. The other administrators shared that the students probably did not perceive the technology to facilitate their reading comprehension due to teenagers' needs of always looking for the latest new thing. One administrator shared that students are consistently ready for the new and updated cell phone, Ipad, computer, etc. She discussed how technology is all around us and students expect new things all the time. The administrator shared that in the case of the READ 180 program students are using the computer software for a couple of years by the time they get to middle school. She shared that students are not as engaged on the computer by the time they get to middle school because they have used the same software year after year.

Archival Data

The researcher gathered archival data to obtain rich information from multiple data sources for the program evaluation. Unobtrusive data such as artifacts and documents provide additional insight as all multiple sources of data are triangulated (Creswell, 2009). The archival data included students' documents and a sample of students' Lexile levels for the 2013-2014 school year. The students' documents were

reviewed to describe how students are performing in their reading comprehension.

Lexile levels were reviewed to describe if students are increasing in their Lexile levels from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year.

Students' Documents. A sample of students' documents which were one of their READ 180 reading intervention program assignments related to reading comprehension was reviewed to describe if students met the benchmarks on their reading comprehension assignments. Specifically, the researcher examined the Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up from each of the nine workshops in the students' rBook. The rBook was the workbook students used in the READ 180 class when they were not on the computer using the READ software. Activities for whole group, small group, and independent work are included in the rBook. The workshops are the chapters/units in each rBook which includes nine Workshops. A year's worth of reading instruction is provided in each rBook. READ 180 teachers assigned a numerical grade, with a grade of 80-100 as mastery, to each Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up assignment which consists of five multiple choice reading comprehension items in each assignment.

The review of these student documents indicated that students were successful in these comprehension assignments and met the benchmarks. On the sample of documents reviewed most of the students received a score of 100. The researcher inquired about how these assignments were completed. The READ 180 teachers shared that they completed these assignments with the students. This was a whole group activity where the teacher guided the students on the assignment instead of letting students complete the assignment independently. This was the reason that could explain why all students had a score of a 100 which indicated they met benchmark on their comprehension. It was unclear to the

researcher if students were improving in their reading comprehension based on these assignments because the teachers guided and assisted student with these assignments. Some students had the entire unit/chapter blank or had not completed the Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up assignments. The researcher asked the READ 180 teachers why students rBooks had blank units/chapters or incomplete assignments. Teachers shared that either students were absent or they didn't get to the unit. Two examples of the student documents reviewed by the researcher are located in Appendix I.

Figure 1 is another example of the artifacts reviewed by the researcher. The theme for Workshop 8, *Turning Points*, is about having to start over after going through hard times.

Figure 1: Workshop 8: Students' Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up Assignment


WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

Comprehension

► Fill in the circle next to the correct answer. 100

- Jonathan Fong liked his life in Taiwan because _____.
 - ☒ A he was popular and had lots of friends
 - ☐ B no one liked him
 - ☐ C he couldn't speak the language
 - ☐ D the weather was nice
- During his childhood, Ekiwah felt left out because _____.
 - ☐ A he was smarter than everyone else
 - ☐ B he didn't get along with his parents
 - ☒ C he couldn't climb trees and play outside
 - ☐ D all of the above
- Which of the following is an example of how fame changed Ekiwah's life?
 - ☐ A He was lonely.
 - ☒ B He had many friends and admirers.
 - ☐ C He couldn't walk.
 - ☐ D He had to stay inside.
- How are Waila and Dali different?
 - ☐ A They are both from the Dominican Republic.
 - ☐ B They are sisters.
 - ☒ C They had different reactions to their mom's imprisonment.
 - ☐ D They both care about their mom.
- When did Waila and Dali become close with their mom?
 - ☐ A right before their mom went to prison
 - ☒ B after their mom had gone to prison
 - ☐ C after the girls had gone to prison
 - ☐ D after the girls had graduated from high school










Here's a tip.
Read over your answers carefully. Double-check that you filled in the answers in the correct places.



Workshop 8: Turning Points

Figure 2 demonstrates the workshops in the rBooks used at the middle schools in the study and the reading comprehension objectives addressed in each workshop. The rBooks's nine workshops are arranged by themes which Scholastic asserts are related to the experiences of ELLs (2009).

Figure 2: rBook Workshops-Stage B

<p>1. Social Studies Nonfiction</p>  <p>The New Americans Comprehension: Main Ideas and Details</p>	<p>2. Science Nonfiction</p>  <p>When Disaster Strikes Comprehension: Sequence of Events</p>	<p>3. Literature</p>  <p>Identity Crisis Comprehension: Story Elements</p>
<p>4. Social Studies Nonfiction</p>  <p>Stolen Childhoods Comprehension: Summarize</p>	<p>5. Life Issues Nonfiction</p>  <p>Under Pressure Comprehension: Problem and Solution</p>	<p>6. Literature</p>  <p>Poe: The Master of Horror Comprehension: Story Elements</p>
<p>7. Science Nonfiction</p>  <p>Alien Invaders Comprehension: Cause and Effect</p>	<p>8. Life Issues Nonfiction</p>  <p>Turning Points Comprehension: Compare and Contrast</p>	<p>9. Nonfiction and Literature</p>  <p>The Streets of Harlem Comprehension: Make Inferences</p>

Each of the workshops consists of different themes. Immigrant experiences in the United States are the theme for workshop 1, *The New Americans*. Extreme weather is the theme for workshop 2, *When Disaster Strikes*. Workshop 3, *Identity Crisis*, is about a girl who ran away. Workshop 4, *Stolen Childhoods*, is about kids in Malaysia who work in

garbage dumps. Workshop 5, *Under Pressure*, is about teens under peer pressure.

Workshop 6, *Poe: The Master of Horror*, is about Edgar Allen Poe, the first person to write horror stories. Workshop 7, *Alien Invaders*, is about animals from other countries that cause havoc in their new homes. Workshop 8, *Turning Points*, is about starting over after a hard time, and workshop 9, *The Streets of Harlem*, is about the Harlem neighborhood.

Results of the students' surveys of the ELLs participating in the study indicated that 93% of the ELLs were not able to make connections to their family and home life when they read the READ 180 stories, books, and/or completed the activities. It appears that the ELLs are not finding the READ 180 curriculum relevant to their backgrounds and personal life experiences. Culture influences student learning and culturally relevant pedagogy facilitates learning by using their cultures as a tool for learning (Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Gay, 2000; Hoover & Patton, 2005). Students perceived they were not able to make connections to their backgrounds. Survey responses of ELL students indicate they perceived that the READ 180 program did not represent their cultural backgrounds because they were not able to make connections to their family or home life.

Students' Lexile Levels. A sample of students' Lexile levels for the 2013-2014 school year were collected to describe if there were gains on Lexile levels on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). Upon review of the Lexile levels (Appendix K), the researcher noted that approximately 33% of the students have increased their Lexile level from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. About 67% have minimal gains, decreased in Lexile level, or did not increase. Even though the review of the Lexiles

indicates that students are performing extremely below proficiency standards, the majority of the students enjoy reading and feel successful in reading.

The SRI is the assessment taken on the computer to assess students' reading and obtain a Lexile level. There are many factors that may be contributing to the higher percentage of students not increasing their Lexile levels. Students must be monitored when taking an assessment on the computer to ensure that they do not quickly choose their answers to move on to the next item and finish. Students need to understand the importance of this assessment. The researcher did not further examine the Lexile levels with the teachers. Researchers may want to further investigate teacher's perceptions about the SRI and Lexile levels. In addition, state assessment results and progress in school should be examined to determine how the Lexile levels correlate to student performance in other areas.

Limitations of the Program Evaluation

This program evaluation has several limitations. Researcher bias may be one possible limitation due to the qualitative aspects of the study. However, all efforts were made by the researcher to conduct this study in an ethical manner and with integrity by triangulating the data with multiple data sources. Another possible limitation was that some of the students had limited language and verbal skills. The students participating in the study were students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. It appeared to the researcher that most students were extremely shy. Therefore, they did not feel comfortable elaborating or expanding on their responses. The researcher attempted to get students to respond with additional information by

repeating the question or reframing the questions. Some students did elaborate or expand on their response, but many students did not.

The sample size of the participants is another limitation of this multiple methods program evaluation. Results cannot be generalized to all settings. The researcher intended to have the six middle school READ 180 teachers and the administrators who supervise them participate in the program evaluation. At the teacher focus group only three teachers showed up to the focus group even though all six teachers had agreed to participate. One administrator never responded to multiple requests to participate on the study, one refused to participate, and one administrator cancelled his participation on the day of the interview. As a result, the researcher had three administrators participate in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews and not all six as originally planned. Even though a small sample of teachers and administrators participated in the program evaluation, the researcher felt she would get rich information from the sources of data and proceeded with the study. The researcher felt she could proceed with study even though there was a small sample size because she was using multiple sources of data. The multiple sources of data allowed the researcher to gain in-depth perspectives of the perceptions of READ 180. When looking at all the pieces holistically and triangulating the data, the researcher felt she would still get enough information. Due to the small number of teachers and administrators participating in the study, this program evaluation may not be used as generalizations of teacher's and administrator's perceptions of the influence of the READ 180 reading intervention in reading comprehension of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs.

In addition, the administrators' lack of knowledge about the READ 180 reading intervention program is another limitation of the program evaluation. Even though the researcher interviewed the administrators who supervise the READ 180 teacher, the administrators were not familiar with all the components and materials of the READ 180 reading intervention program. The administrators were not able to respond to research question 6 on students perceiving the READ 180 reading intervention program representing their cultural backgrounds and meeting their language learning needs. They were honest and shared that they were not familiar with the program to be able to answer the question but assumed that the program did represent students' cultural backgrounds and met their language learning needs.

Conclusion

The surveys, demographic surveys, student focus groups at each middle school, READ 180 teacher focus group, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with administrators provided beneficial results about the perceived impact of the READ 180 program. Throughout the survey data, focus groups, and interviews, the participants shared similar views about the perceived impact of the READ 180 program. Students, teachers, and administrators perceived the READ 180 helped in students' reading comprehension but emphasized the teacher helped too. Archival data from sample of student documents and products which included students' Lexile levels and Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up from each of the nine workshops in the students' rBook was also collected to provide further insight on the research questions. A review of the workshops indicated that students had 100s on these assignments. A review of a sample of the Lexile levels indicates that few students showed an increase in their Lexile

levels. Chapter 5 provides the following: a discussion of the results, implications for district and school leaders, implications for further research, and recommendations regarding the implementation and merit of READ 180.

Chapter V

Discussion of Results

Introduction

In the twenty-first century adolescents need advanced levels of literacy when entering adulthood (International Reading Association, 2002). As the literacy demands increase for students, there are an increasing number of adolescents in middle school who are having difficulty in reading. The achievement gap in reading continues to widen as the adolescents in middle school move on to high school. It is difficult for adolescents to earn a high school diploma when they are not proficient in their reading (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). Educators face the challenge of closing the achievement gap in reading and often look to reading intervention programs as a solution to the adolescent crisis in reading. Students with learning disabilities in reading need intensive reading instruction or they fall further behind each year (Drummond, 2005). Even though there are numerous reading programs designed to address adolescents' deficits in reading, there is a lack of evidence surrounding the efficacy of these reading programs (RAND, 2002). The READ 180 reading intervention is one program that claims to meet the needs of struggling adolescent readers, specifically students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are English language learners (ELLs). This program evaluation was conducted in order to contribute to the body of knowledge on literacy development of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs and to assist school leaders in evaluating how

students, teachers, and administrators perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program influences students' reading experiences.

Results of the program evaluation indicated that students, teachers, and administrators perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to be beneficial in helping to improve students' reading comprehension. Motivation is a key factor when providing reading interventions to adolescents who are struggling in reading. Based on the discussions during the focus groups, it appeared that students were actively engaged during the learning process while in the 90 minute READ 180. Students enjoyed and liked reading, and felt successful in their reading comprehension. When students are motivated and feel confident, they are more likely to read and comprehend what they read (Bandura, 1994). Ultimately, students will close the achievement gap in reading and become proficient readers. Even though the participants in the study were struggling readers, and adolescents who struggle in reading lack the confidence to read and are not motivated to read, the adolescents in this study perceived that they were improving in their reading comprehension (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). The seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program impacted their confidence in, and motivation toward reading. The READ 180 teachers perceived that the READ 180 reading intervention program did influence students' confidence in, and motivation towards reading.

When it came to which part and which teaching strategies of the READ 180 reading intervention program they found most helpful, students responded that the teachers or the paraprofessionals in the READ 180 class were the most helpful. Even

though students responded that they perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program to help them, the majority perceived the teachers or paraprofessionals as the most beneficial. It became more prevalent that the teacher is the most effective when providing reading instruction. The quality of the teacher and what the teacher does matters more to students than the READ 180 program. The READ 180 reading intervention program is the tool that helps teachers be available to provide more explicit instruction for the varying reading levels of students. READ 180 is the vehicle that assists teachers in the class. The teacher is essential and the quality of the teacher is critical when working with adolescents who are struggling in reading. The READ 180 teachers shared similar beliefs as the students about the specific strategies to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension. The READ 180 teachers perceived they were the specific strategy that had the greatest influence on improving reading comprehension. The administrators concurred with the READ 180 teachers and one emphasized the importance of the quality of the teacher. Overall, students, teachers, and administrators perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program helped in improving students' reading comprehension.

Findings from the teacher focus group indicate that they perceived READ 180 did influence students' attitudes towards reading. Teachers shared how students experience success in their class. They commented on how students who have been in the program longer may not be as motivated because they use the same books and materials over and over again. The researcher surmises that the READ 180 teachers realized they could do so much more on influencing students' attitudes towards reading if they used all the

resources at hand. Students would have access to more audiobooks, assignments, and activities on the computer.

English language learners are most successful when their cultural backgrounds are recognized and scaffolding is provided by their teachers (Vacca & Vacca, 2005). When looking at the survey data and their focus group responses, there were mixed results. ELL students shared on their surveys that they were not able to make connections to their family and home life when they read the READ 180 stories/books/and/or complete the activities. Culturally relevant pedagogy emphasizes the need to make learning more effective and appropriate by teaching students using their experiences and backgrounds (Gay, 2000). Students were unable to make meaningful connections to their culture, family, or home life when reading the stories in the READ 180 program. This is a critical piece when teaching anyone.

The Schema Theory emphasizes students being able to combine their background knowledge with their new knowledge when students are learning and comprehending what they read (Anderson, 1994). During literacy instruction, students should be able to construct new ideas based on their current or past knowledge while learning (Bruner, 1990). This was not evident based on the survey responses of the middle school seventh and eighth grade students who are ELLs. However, during the focus groups, several students shared that the program did help them speak and write better in English. Students perceived that READ 180 did meet their language learning needs, but did not represent their cultural backgrounds.

Reading instruction for ELLs can be a challenging task for teachers due to students having to learn English and the curriculum. The researcher was anticipating the

teachers would discuss this topic, but they did not. The READ 180 teachers perceived that the READ 180 program represented students' cultural backgrounds and met their language learning needs. However, they did not delve in deeply to how the program did this. In spite of one of the teachers giving an example of an anchor video to support her response to this question, the example of the anchor video was not specific to ELLs. The teachers were upfront about not having watched all the anchor videos to be able to respond about the program representing their cultural backgrounds but did share that students were able to make connections to some of the stories they read. Teaching that utilizes the backgrounds, experiences, and cultural knowledge of diverse students makes learning more appropriate and effective (Gay, 2000). Culturally relevant pedagogy affirms and validates students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs.

The administrators' lack of familiarity with the program was evident with their limited response when discussing ELLs and the READ 180 program. The researcher attempted to solicit more input from the administrators but they were ready to move on to the following question. It appeared that the administrators were rushed through the process. This is an important topic that should be further explored due to the increase in English language learners across the nation.

Technology is a major component of the READ 180 reading intervention program. The READ 180 reading intervention program allows to teacher to work with students on critical areas in reading comprehension while the computer software allows students to have additional practice on other areas of need. Students' responses towards the technology component of the program also yielded mixed results. On their survey

responses, many students listed the computer as the least helpful of the program. However, during the focus groups, students responded that they perceived that the technology in READ 180 did facilitate their reading comprehension.

Research indicates that students who are motivated are engaged and this is an important part of adolescent literacy instruction (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). During the focus groups, teachers perceived that most students enjoyed the computer rotation and enjoyed the computer software activities. Students are more likely to use their reading comprehension strategies when they are enjoying reading and are motivated (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The READ 180 teachers perceived that technology facilitated students' reading comprehension.

Effective reading programs include explicit instruction in reading comprehension instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Nokes & Dole, 2004; Pressley, 2000). The READ 180 software is designed to provide explicit, individualized reading instruction to students during the computer rotation. Perceptions of the participants varied when it came to technology which was referring to the READ 180 software facilitating students' reading comprehension. Students perceived the computer is not providing the individualized instruction that they need because it either provides activities they already know or the activities are too difficult and the computer cannot help them. Their comments highlight the importance of the teacher providing the instruction to students. Students' responses have alluded to the teacher throughout the program evaluation. Within the READ 180 model, teachers are able to provide explicit,

direct instruction on strategies and provide the differentiation students need.

Differentiated instruction allows the teachers to meet the needs of their students (Tomlinson, 2013). The goal of the READ 180 teachers is to find out what adolescents understand, what they need to learn, and the instruction that needs to be provided in their classroom (The Texas Reading Initiative, 1997). Teachers are able to provide students explicit, direct instruction and facilitate their learning by working with students at their reading levels. The technology component and direct, explicit, comprehension instruction are two of the research based strategies identified to help improve adolescent literacy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).

The READ 180 teachers are not utilizing all of the program's materials and may not be teaching the program as scripted. This may have an effect on the growth or lack of growth in students' reading comprehension levels. Fidelity of implementation of the program is a limitation of the study. During the focus groups, the READ 180 teachers admitted that there was so much of the program that they had not tapped in to. They discussed that there were lots of materials in the cabinet that they had not reviewed or used with their students.

There were inconsistencies when triangulating the data from the multiple sources. Students had mixed results when it came to the technology component of the READ 180 program. They noted that their computer was the least helpful rotation on their surveys. The READ 180 software is intended to offer students individualized practice on specific reading skills. During the focus groups, they shared that technology did facilitate their reading comprehension. This was the opposite of what they shared on their surveys. It is unclear if the mixed results are due to computer technological problems. Another

limitation of the program evaluation is that the researcher did not explore if the computers work, if the R180 software is always working and available, or if internet network outages occur and how this affects students when they are at the computer rotation. These may be contributing factors to how students feel about the computer rotation of the READ 180 reading intervention program.

After reviewing the sample of workshop assignments, it was unclear to the researcher if students were improving in their reading comprehension. Students had checkmarks indicating that all items were correct with a 100 at the top of the page. Students may feel successful in their reading comprehension because they receive 100s on the comprehension assignments in their rBooks. The Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up assignments are designed to assess students' reading comprehension. Despite this, teachers are guiding and instructing students as they complete the comprehension assignments. Therefore, the students who complete the five multiple choice reading comprehension items with their READ 180 teachers receive a grade of a 100. This reiterates the inconsistencies with implementation of the READ 180 reading intervention program and highlights the need for campus administrators and central special education staff to monitor fidelity of implementation of the program.

The Comprehension Workshop Wrap-Up assignments were also reviewed to ascertain if the materials met the language learning needs of ELLs and to ascertain if students' cultural backgrounds were reflected in the topics of each workshop. According to Scholastic, the READ 180 reading intervention program is designed to promote active engagement with activities for all students, students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs (2009).

Upon review of these themes to ascertain if students' cultural backgrounds were reflected in the topics, the researcher was unable to discern if all themes are such that ELL students have similar experiences and can relate to them. The theme in Workshop 1, *The New Americans*, is probably the only one that the researcher felt ELLs may perceive represents their cultural background. It is about a girl that leaves Mexico to come to America and her experiences as an immigrant. The majority of the ELLs in the study are Spanish speaking students and they may have similar experiences as the girl in the story. However, there are many Spanish speaking countries in Latin America and not all ELLs came from Mexico. ELLs may have also connected with the theme in workshop 8, *Turning Points* about starting over after a hard time. Though, this is a theme that all students may relate to because 81.7% of the students in the district are economically disadvantaged. Despite students being able to connect to this theme, it does not necessarily represent ELLs cultural backgrounds as noted by the publisher.

The following section describes how the results of the program evaluation have implications for instructional leadership and the support for literacy at the district level as well as at the school level.

Implications for Leaders

Educational leaders can make a difference in student learning. Research has shown that highly motivated teachers are more successful when it comes to student performance and student outcomes (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Therefore, it is essential for educational leaders to create and maintain a positive climate and culture of literacy at the district level and school level.

District Leaders. First, district leaders must ensure that a culture of literacy exists. This may involve revisiting the district's priorities and creating a district goal that focuses on reading in all classes including math, science, and social studies classes. The district may need to review the reading proficiency levels of all students to determine if the district's literacy curriculum is addressing the needs of all students starting in pre-kindergarten up to middle and high school. Reading development and creating proficient readers begins with children then extends to adolescents and adulthood (Rand, 2002). A review of the district's data on how students are performing in reading will give them insight on the number of students who need reading interventions.

Districts have a tremendous undertaking when addressing the gaps in reading for adolescents, specifically seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle schools students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Not only do school districts need to address adolescents' behaviors, motivation and confidence in their learning, they also have to ensure that school leaders at the campus level are instructional leaders who are facilitating teaching and learning. The Wallace Foundation conducted a detailed analysis on empirical research and related literature on how effective leadership makes a difference in student learning and concluded that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction when reviewing all the factors that impact student learning in schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). District leaders must ensure that administrators are familiar with the district's curriculum and interventions available in the district. The administrators supervising the READ 180 program and who participated in the program evaluation were not familiar with the materials of the program. They had surface

knowledge about READ 180 and the components of the program. In fact the administrator who was the principal had suggestions for changing the READ 180 model. Changes to the curriculum or content of a reading intervention program may impact the intended outcomes. District leaders must ensure that campus administrators are given READ 180 overviews, are provided training on the READ 180 model, and that they understand all the components. The READ 180 teachers may need on-going training on all the components of the READ 180 reading intervention program. District leaders will need to follow up with the teachers throughout the school year. They must monitor that the READ 180 teachers use all of the components of the program not just some of them. The researcher's findings of the program evaluation when exploring perceptions about READ 180 found students, teachers, and administrators perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program helped in improving students' reading comprehension.

An emphasis on literacy at the district level will influence the importance given to literacy instruction and fidelity of implementation of reading intervention programs at the school level. The district leaders must ensure that the central office staff is monitoring the implementation of READ 180, are visible, and available to administrators at the campus level. On-going dialogue is crucial to successful implementation of any program or initiative. District leaders may also want to offer collaboration and debriefing meetings on the status and progress of the students receiving READ 180.

Communication among district leaders, central office staff and school leaders is the first step to fidelity of implementation of the program and making data-driven decisions in the best interest of students. Providing additional training to the READ 180 teachers should also be considered. The district leaders must ensure that the READ 180

teachers understand how to use the materials in the program. Teachers are not using all the materials in the program and this could be due to not knowing all that is included in the program. If teachers are more familiar with all the materials, they are more likely to use them during instruction. In essence, this will benefit students and result in improvement in reading comprehension.

School Leaders. One of the primary roles of a school leader is to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the goal of improving student achievement (Leithwood, et al., 2004; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2005; RAND, 2005). School leaders play a significant role in identifying or ensuring implementation of reading programs for their struggling adolescent readers (RAND, 2005; Vacca 2006). For this reason, it is important for school leaders to have knowledge of research-based practices and the components of such reading programs designed and utilized for specific groups of students including seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. School leaders should ensure implementation of reading programs or initiatives at their campuses. “In Creating a Culture of Literacy: A Guide for Middle School and High School Principals,” several key elements are noted as necessary of school leaders when supporting adolescent literacy programs which include:

1. Being supportive and committed.
2. Providing research-based professional development for their teachers, including themselves.
3. Hiring effective teachers that model and provide explicit instruction to improve reading comprehension in all content areas, and who have the skills to provide

strategic, accelerated instruction to struggling readers.

4. Facilitating balanced informal and formal assessments that guide the learning of students and teachers (National Association of Secondary School Principals, (2005).

School leaders must allow teachers to collaborate, plan, work together, and help each other. Establishing a culture of literacy in schools is the first step to working towards closing the reading achievement gap of adolescents in middle schools. Hence, it is critical for school leaders to have laser-like focus on reading instruction in their schools (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Particularly, school leaders must be familiar with the 90 minute model of READ 180 and the program's components and may need to spend more time in the READ 180 classes. Scholastic (2009) emphasized the need for On model implementation of the READ 180 reading intervention program in order for the students to benefit and see results in the closing the achievement gap in reading. Increased collaboration between school leaders and district leaders will benefit all stakeholders, but most of all improve students' reading achievement. This collaborative culture will result in improvement in the teaching and learning of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students who are ELLs.

Implications for Further Research

There continues to be a need for research concerning students with learning disabilities who are ELLs and adolescents in general. The study was limited in sample size. Future research with a larger ELL sample size may produce more valid results. With the growing ELL population, studies focusing on this particular group of students

are needed and necessary. Furthermore, more research is needed on the specific strategies that assist ELL students and the language proficiency of ELLs during READ 180 and after they receive the intervention.

This program evaluation can be used as a catalyst to further investigate the cost-effectiveness of the READ 180 reading intervention program. Further examination of the cost-benefit analysis of other reading interventions available in this school district compared to READ 180 should be considered. Even though participants perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program improved students' reading comprehension, the data on how many students with learning disabilities close the achievement gap in reading each year was not examined. It is not clear how many students exit the READ 180 class when they reach the 25th percentile on their Lexile level. The data on how many students are moved to the general education reading class each year was not reviewed or a part of the study. This would be something to further research to determine if the READ 180 reading intervention program is giving the results it claims of closing the achievement gap in reading for students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Furthermore, research should identify all costs and benefits involved in the implementation of the program and monies spent per student and the benefits associated with the program. Districts implementing the READ 180 program are charged with hiring, training, purchasing materials, upgrading the computer's memory, and the monitoring of the READ 180 teachers to ensure the program is implemented with fidelity. Is it worth spending two million dollars in four years when comparing it to the number of students reaching the 25th percentile each year? Of the students reaching the 25th percentile, how many students are ELLs? Further research

could also include a longitudinal study to follow these students through high school. It would be interesting to find out how these students performed in high school and to find out if they did or did not need additional reading interventions and support. This information should be of interest to all stakeholders involved.

Recommendations

Every school year there are some changes to campus administrators due to a variety of circumstances. The district leaders and central office staff may want to offer yearly READ 180 overviews for the new administrators or the administrators that are new to supervising a READ 180 teacher. District leaders may also want to initiate READ 180 campus walk-throughs with the campus administrators. Walk-throughs are an excellent instructional strategy that helps enhance student achievement. There are many benefits to walk-throughs. They allow for discussion about what is observed and not observed in the READ 180 class. Campus administrators would have easy access to ask the “experts” questions about the READ 180 program. Walk-throughs would also aid them in becoming more familiar with all the materials and the components of the READ 180 intervention reading program.

Conclusion

This study was initiated for the purpose of contributing to the body of knowledge of literacy development for adolescents, specifically seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. The researcher intended to explore if the READ 180 reading intervention program was perceived to impact reading comprehension. The findings of this program evaluation provided useful information

about administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions about the READ 180 reading intervention program. The findings are particularly important to the participants in the study as well as other school districts that may be in the process of purchasing commercially available reading intervention programs. Due to the millions of dollars spent on READ 180, further analysis of the costs and benefits should be of great interest to all stakeholders. Today elected officials, public administrators, and the public at large are extremely concerned with the cost of programs in schools (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). For this reason, program evaluations are of significance to all in society and they help in determining if the program outcomes are worth the cost.

According to the findings of the program evaluation of the READ 180 reading intervention program, the results appear promising and positive. Students, teachers, and administrators perceived the READ 180 reading intervention program impacted students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading. Overall, the students were engaged and enjoyed the program, but they also stated the teacher was the best facilitator of their learning while in the READ 180 class. Constructivists suggest that learning is more effective when students are engaged in their learning and actively processing their new learning with current or past knowledge (Bruner, 1990). If students with learning disabilities feel successful and enjoy reading, they will be motivated to read even though they are struggling readers (Roberts et al., 2008). One must determine if it is the program or the teacher that is making a difference in students' reading comprehension. The response is that both are making a difference in the lives of students with learning disabilities. The READ 180 teachers are using the reading intervention as a tool to assist them in being able to provide explicit, small group instruction which is necessary for

students with learning disabilities (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander & Conway, 1997). During the READ 180 class, teachers are providing students with learning disabilities who are ELLs the explicit academic language instruction, scaffolding, writing support and the teacher support they need (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004) and the ELL students perceived the program met their language learning needs. Working with older students who are struggling in reading can be a challenging task for teachers. Getting their behaviors under control so that students are ready to learn can be difficult if students do not like what they are working on in the READ 180 class. However, this was not the case for the students who participated in the program evaluation. The majority of the students appeared motivated and excited and perceived themselves as being able to read and comprehend what they read. They had positive feelings towards reading and this is something to celebrate. Because they enjoyed reading and believed they were successful in reading, this will eventually lead to competence in reading (Bandura, 1990; Protheroe, 2004, & Vacca, 2006). Self-efficacy and motivation plays an important role in student's reading achievement. Students are closer to their goal of closing the gap in reading when they have a positive attitude, feel supported by their teachers, and are willing to do the work in the READ 180 class.

One weakness of the READ 180 program perceived by the teachers and administrators was that the students who had been in the program a long time needed something else. They shared that these students were not as motivated and eager to be in the READ 180 class. Consequently during the teacher focus group, the READ 180 teachers acknowledged that if they used all the materials in the program that all students would be fine. It appeared that they came to the realization that they could do so much

more in influencing these students' attitudes toward reading while using the READ 180 reading intervention program. Ensuring that the READ 180 reading intervention program is implemented with fidelity is a key factor in closing the reading achievement gap of adolescents. This was a recurring theme throughout the program evaluation.

There is limited amount of research on the benefits of READ 180 for adolescent students with learning disabilities and adolescents with learning disabilities who are ELLs, which made this study valuable and useful to the field of research. This program evaluation added to the body of knowledge on the literacy development of adolescents by exploring students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the READ 180 reading intervention program influence on the reading comprehension of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs. Results of this study should be used to further discuss the use of commercially available reading interventions in school districts and the influence of the READ 180 reading intervention program on reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities and them meeting local, state, and national reading proficiency standards. The READ 180 program evaluation supports that the program along with the teacher positively affects students and their reading behaviors. Seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities who are ELLs feel confident, motivated, and successful in reading. Students, teachers, and administrators perceive that READ 180 influences students' reading comprehension. Further research is needed to address the growing population of seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities who are ELLs.

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Appendix A

In-Depth, Semi-Structured District Leader Interview Questions

In-Depth, Semi-Structured District Leader Interview Questions

1. Years in Public Education: _____
2. Years as Special Education Director: _____
3. Years Implementing the READ 180 Program: _____
4. How did you derive at the decision to adopt READ 180?
5. What were your perceptions about the purpose of the READ 180 program?
6. What were your perceptions about the intended outcomes of the READ 180 program?
7. What did you hope to accomplish with READ 180 versus other reading programs?
8. Have you considered the cost effectiveness of the program when looking to see if READ 180 accomplished what you thought?

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

May 30, 2014

Sylvia Idrogo
c/o Dr. Robin McGlohn
Curriculum and Instruction

Dear Sylvia Idrogo,

The University of Houston's Institutional Review Board, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (1) reviewed your research proposal entitled "A Program Evaluation of READ 180 Reading Intervention Program: Administrators', Teachers', and Students' Perceptions of the Impact of READ 180 on Seventh and Eighth Grade Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities in One Large Urban School District" on April 18, 2014, according to federal regulations and institutional policies and procedures.

At that time, your project was granted approval contingent upon your agreement to modify your protocol as stipulated by the Committee. The changes you have made adequately fulfill the requested contingencies, and your project is now **APPROVED**.

- Approval Date: May 30, 2014
- Expiration Date: May 29, 2015

As required by federal regulations governing research in human subjects, research procedures (including recruitment, informed consent, intervention, data collection or data analysis) may not be conducted after the expiration date.

To ensure that no lapse in approval or ongoing research occurs, please ensure that your protocol is resubmitted in RAMP for renewal by the **deadline for the April, 2015 CPHS meeting**. Deadlines for submission are located on the CPHS website.

During the course of the research, the following must also be submitted to the CPHS:

- Any proposed changes to the approved protocol, prior to initiation; AND
- Any unanticipated events (including adverse events, injuries, or outcomes) involving possible risk to subjects or others, within 10 working days.

If you have any questions, please contact Samoya Copeland at (713) 743-9534.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Daniel O'Connor, Chair
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (1)

PLEASE NOTE: All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document, if one is approved for use. All research data, including signed consent documents, must be retained according to the University of Houston Data Retention Policy ([found on the CPHS website](#)) as well as requirements of the FDA and external sponsor(s), if applicable. Faculty sponsors are responsible for retaining data for student projects on the UH campus for the required period of record retention.

Protocol Number: 14347-01

Full Review: ☒ Expedited Review: ☐

316 E. Cullen Building Houston, TX 77204-2015 (713) 743-9204 Fax: (713) 743-9577
COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Appendix C

District Approval of Research Study

District Approval of Research Study

April 29, 2014

Dear Ms. Sylvia Idrogo,

Your request to conduct research in the _____ Independent School District has been approved. The title of the project is *A Program Evaluation of READ 180 Reading Intervention Program: Administrators', Teachers', and Students' Perceptions of the Impact of READ 180 on Seventh and Eighth Grade Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities in One Large Urban School District*.

All student names, district name, and other identifying data must be removed from the published findings. You must obtain permission of the campus principals prior to conducting any research. Please note that you must capture written parental permission for their children to participate. Once parent permission is obtained, you will need to obtain assent from the middle school students participating.

We would like to have a copy of the completed research with the option to have you present your findings to _____ staff.

We appreciate your interest in doing research in _____.

Thank you,

Director of Special Populations

Appendix D

Administrator Consent Form

Administrator Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF READ 180 READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM: ADMINISTRATORS', TEACHERS', AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF READ 180 ON SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ONE LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston. This project is part of a doctoral thesis. This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Robin McGlohn.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you uncomfortable.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in, motivation, and attitudes toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students, teachers, and administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

The study will be conducted the spring semester of the 2013-2014 school year.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of six administrators invited to participate in this study. The researcher will be interviewing you. The allotted time for these interviews will be 45-60 minutes per participant. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews will be held before school, during the day, or after school. The date and time of each in-depth, semi-structured

interview will be designated by the principal and/or assistant principal of each middle school participating in the study. The researcher will use a digital recorder to record the interview meetings. The interview questions and responses will be transcribed verbatim. The researcher will ask the administrator to complete a demographic survey prior to the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand how students feel about the READ 180 program and how they perceive it has helped them with their reading comprehension. The research in this study will help other students in the future by providing the district information on the administrators' perceptions of the READ 180 program. It will help the district consider future implementation.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO TAPES

If you consent to take part in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tape can be used for publication/presentations.

- ☐ I agree to be audio/video taped during the interview.
 - ☐ I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
 - ☐ I do not agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
- ☐ I do not agree to be audio taped during the interview.

You may participate in the study if you choose not to be audio taped during the interview.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project.
3. I may also refuse to answer any question.
Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Sylvia Idrogo at 281-498-8110, ext. 4777. I may also contact Dr. McGlohn, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-2927.

Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be explored to the

University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713-743-

9204). All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the University of

Houston are governed by requirements of the University and the federal

government.

SIGNATURES

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions to my satisfaction. I give my consent to participate in this study, and have been provided with a copy of this form for my records and in case I have questions as the research progresses.

Study Subject (print name): _____

Signature of Study Subject: _____

Date: _____

I have read this form to the subject and/or the subject has read this form. An explanation of the research was provided 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.

Principal Investigator (print name and title): _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date:

Appendix E

Teacher Consent Form

Teacher Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF READ 180 READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM: ADMINISTRATORS', TEACHERS', AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF READ 180 ON SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ONE LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo from the the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the University of Houston. This project is part of a doctoral thesis, and is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Robin McGlohn.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you uncomfortable.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in, motivation, and attitudes toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students, teachers, and administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

The study will be conducted in the spring/summer of 2014.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of approximately 6 participants (READ 180 teachers) invited to participate in a focus group. The focus group will be held at a central location in the district. Participants will complete a demographic survey prior to the focus group questions. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The focus groups questions and responses will be audio taped and transcribed. The focus group will take 48 minutes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand how students feel about the READ 180 program and how they perceive it has helped them with their reading comprehension. The research in this study will help other students in the future by providing the district information on the teachers' perceptions of the READ 180 program. It will help the district consider future implementation.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO TAPES

If you consent to take part in this study, you are also giving permission to be audio taped during the study. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

- ☐ I agree to be audio taped during the focus group.
 - ☐ I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
 - ☐ I do not agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.

If you do not agree to being audio taped, you are not giving consent to participate in the study.

I agree to participate in this research project:

- ☐ YES ☐ NO

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any

question.

3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Sylvia Idrogo at sidrogo@uh.edu. I may also contact Dr. McGlohn, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-2927.

The project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9204.

Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be addressed to the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713-743-9204). All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the University of Houston are governed by requirements of the University and the federal government.

SIGNATURES

I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions to my satisfaction. I give my consent to participate in this study, and have been provided with a copy of this form for my records and in case I have questions as the research progresses.

Study Participant (print name): _____

Signature of Study Participant: _____

Date: _____

The participant has read this form. An explanation of the research was provided and questions from the participant were solicited and answered to the subject's satisfaction. In my judgment, the participant has demonstrated comprehension of the information.

Principal Investigator (print name and title): _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F

Parent Permission Form

Parent Permission Form

PROJECT TITLE: A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF READ 180 READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM: ADMINISTRATORS', TEACHERS', AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF READ 180 ON SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ONE LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Your child is being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston. This project is part of a doctoral thesis. This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Robin McGlohn.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Your child's participation is voluntary and you or your child may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled. Your child may also refuse to answer any question.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in, motivation, and attitudes toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students, teachers, and administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

The study will be conducted in the spring/summer of 2014.

PROCEDURES

A total of approximately 10 students at each middle school will be asked to participate in this project. Your child will be one of approximately 10 students asked to participate at the middle school he/she attends.

I, the researcher will go to each middle school and go to the READ 180 class to pick up the students participating in the study. We will go to a classroom that is available for our use. Your child will sit with a group of students who are also participating in the study. They will complete a demographic survey, a few questions on how long they have been in READ 180, their READ 180 teacher's name, grade, age, etc. Then they will sit with the group of students participating in the study and answer a few questions about the READ 180 program. I will read the items on the survey and the questions for the focus group. The focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Students will participate in this study during the last week of the 2013-2014

school year during their READ 180 class. Their instruction will not be compromised because students are working on enrichment activities during this time of the school year. The focus group will take 78 minutes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's identity will be held in confidence. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your child's participation in this project. Each participant's name will be paired with a code number by Sylvia Idrogo, the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the participant's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

In this study, there are no possible harmful effects. A possible risk is that your child may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed in talking in the focus group or in completing the survey. Your child does not have to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer. I will not share your child's personal information with anyone. I will make up names of the school district, middle school, administrators, teachers, and students so no one will know who I am talking about when I write the results. I may need to share the results with the superintendent and board members so that they can decide if we should continue to use the READ 180 program, but they will not know which students answered the questions.

BENEFITS

While your child will not directly benefit from participation, his/her participation may help investigators better understand how students feel about the READ 180 program and how it has helped them with their reading comprehension. The research in this study will help other students in the future.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in professional and/or scientific journals. It may also be used for educational purposes or for professional presentations. However, no individual participants will be identified.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that parental consent is required of all persons under the age of 18 participating in this project. I understand that my child will also be asked to agree to participate.
2. All procedures have been explained to me and I have been provided an opportunity to ask any questions I might have regarding my child's participation.
3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me.
4. Any benefits have been explained to me.
I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Sylvia Idrogo at sidrogo@uh.edu. I may also contact Dr. Robin McGlohn, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-2927.
5. I have been told that my child or I may refuse to participate or to stop his/her participation in this project at any time before or during the project. My child may also refuse to answer any question.

The project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9204.

ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY CHILD'S RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204).

All information that is obtained in connection with this project and that can be identified with my child (student) will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. Information gained from this study that can be identified with my child (student) may be released to no one other than the principal investigator and her faculty sponsor. The results may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations without identifying my child (student) by name.

NAME OF CHILD (STUDENT): _____

If you consent for your child (student) to take part in this study, you are also giving permission for your child to be audio taped during the study. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

- ☐ I agree for my child to be audio taped during the focus group.
- ☐ I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
- ☐ I do not agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.

If you do not agree to your child being audio taped, you are not giving consent for your child to participate in the study.

I agree to allow my child (student) to participate in this research project:

☐ YES ☐ NO

Date: _____ Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Appendix G

Spanish Parent Permission Form

Formulario de Permiso del Padre/Madre

TITULO DEL PROYECTO: EVALUACIÓN DEL PROGRAMA DE INTERVENCIÓN DE LECTURA LLAMADO READ 180 (R180): PERCEPCIÓN DE DIRECTORES(AS), MAESTROS(AS), E ESTUDIANTES SOBRE EL IMPACTO DEL PROGRAMA READ 180 EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DE LA SECUNDARIA DEL SÉPTIMO Y OCTAVO NIVEL CON DISCAPACIDADES EN UN GRAN DISTRITO ESCOLAR URBANO.

Su hijo esta invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación conducido por Sylvia Idrogo del Departamento de Currículo e Instrucción de la Universidad de Houston. Este estudio es parte de una tesis doctoral. El estudio será conducido bajo la supervisión del Doctor Robin McGlohn.

DECLARACIÓN DE AQUELLOS QUE NO DESEAN COLABORAR

La participación de su hijo/a es voluntaria. Usted o su hijo/a puede negar participación o retirarse en cualquier momento sin sanción o pérdida de beneficios que le corresponden a su hijo/a. Su hijo/a no será obligado/a a contestar cualquier pregunta.

PROPOSITO DEL ESTUDIO

El propósito del estudio es para examinar la percepción de los estudiantes, maestros(as), y directores(as) sobre el impacto del programa de intervención de lectura llamado Read 180 (R180) en:

- la confianza, motivación, e actitud del estudiante con respecto a la lectura,
- las estrategias específicas del programa R180 percibido por los estudiantes, maestro(as), y directores(as) que tienen el impacto mas grande en la habilidad de comprensión de lectura,
- la percepción de los estudiantes que están aprendiendo el idioma de ingles (ELL) y cómo el programa R180 refleja el bagaje cultural y cumple con las necesidades del aprendizaje del lenguaje,
- la percepción del estudiante en la facilitación de comprensión de lectura por medio de la tecnología.

El estudio se conducirá en tiempo de primavera/verano del 2014.

PROCEDIMIENTO

Aproximadamente un total de 10 estudiantes en cada escuela secundaria se le pedirá participar en este proyecto. Su hijo/a será uno/a de esos 10 estudiantes solicitados para participar de la escuela secundaria en cual el/ella asiste.

Yo, la investigadora, iré a cada escuela secundaria y sacare del salón Read 180 a los estudiantes participando en el estudio. Ellos completarán una encuesta demográfica, con preguntas como, cuanto tiempo han estado en el programa, el nombre de el/la maestro/a de Read 180, el nivel en cual están, la edad que tienen, etc. Después ellos se sentarán en un grupo de estudiantes participando en el estudio y contestarán unas pocas preguntas acerca del programa Read 180. Yo les leeré las cosas en la encuesta y las preguntas del

grupo focal. El grupo focal será grabado y se va a transcribir. Los estudiantes participaran en este estudio la última semana del año escolar del 2013-14, durante su clase de Read 180. Su instrucción no será comprometida porque los estudiantes estarán trabajando en actividades de enriquecimiento durante este tiempo del año escolar. El grupo focal durara 78 minutos.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

La identidad de su hijo/a será confidencial. Tomaremos todos los esfuerzos para mantener la confidencialidad de la participación de su hijo/a en este proyecto. El nombre de cada participante se va a emparejar con un número de código por Sylvia Idrogo, la investigadora principal. Este número de código va aparecer en todas las materias escritas. La lista que empareja el número de código con el nombre de los participantes no estará con las materias del estudio y solamente será disponible a la investigadora principal. La confidencialidad se va a mantener dentro de los límites de la ley.

RIESGOS/INQUIETUDES

En este estudio, no hay ni un efecto negativo. Un riesgo posible es que su hijo/a se sienta inquieto/a o tenga vergüenza hablando en el grupo focal o en completar la encuesta. Su hijo/a no será obligado/a a contestar ni una pregunta si el/ella no quiere. Yo no voy a divulgar la información personal de su hijo/a con nadie. No usare los nombres verdaderos del distrito, las escuelas secundarias, los directores (as), los maestros (as), y los estudiantes para que nadie sepa de quien estoy hablando cuando yo escribe los resultados. Quizás necesite brindar información de los resultados con el superintendente y los miembros de la junta directiva, para que ellos decidan si continuaremos el programa Read 180, pero no sabrán cuales estudiantes contestaron las preguntas.

BENEFICIOS

Aunque su hijo/a no va a beneficiar directamente por su participación, puede ayudar a los investigadores para comprender como los estudiantes se sienten acerca del programa Read 180, y como les a ayudado con la comprensión de lectura. La investigación de este estudio le ayudara a otros estudiantes en el futuro.

ALTERNATIVAS

Participación en este proyecto es voluntaria y la única alternativa para este proyecto es negar colaboración.

DECLARACIÓN DE PUBLICACIÓN

Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser publicados en un diario profesional o científico. También se pueden usar para propósitos educacionales o presentaciones profesionales. Aun, los participantes no se van a identificar.

DERECHOS DEL SUJETO

1. Yo entiendo que mi consentimiento de padre es requerido para todas las personas que son menores de 18 años y que participen en este proyecto.
2. Todos los procedimientos se me han explicado y me han dado la oportunidad de hacer cualquier pregunta que yo tenga acerca de la participación de mi hijo/a.

3. Cualquier riesgo o inquietud se me ha explicado.
4. Cualquier beneficio se me ha explicado. Yo entiendo que si tengo cualquier pregunta, yo puedo contactar a Sylvia Idrogo al correo electrónico, sidrogo@uh.edu. También puedo contactar al Doctor Robin McGlohn, patrocinador de facultad, al número de teléfono 713-743-2927.
5. Yo estoy informado/a que mi hijo/a o yo podemos negar participación o poner un alto a su participación en este proyecto en cualquier tiempo antes de o durante el proyecto. Mi hijo/a también no será obligado/a a contestar cualquier pregunta.

El proyecto fue revisado por el Comité de la Universidad de Houston para la Protección de Sujetos Humanos (713) 743-9204.

CUALQUIER PREGUNTA ACERCA DE LOS DERECHOS DE MI HIJO/A COMO UN SUJETO DE ESTUDIO SE PUEDE HACER AL COMITÉ DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE HOUSTON PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE SUJETOS HUMANOS (713-743-9204).

Toda la información obtenida en conexión con este proyecto y que se puede identificar con mi hijo/a (estudiante) se va a mantener confidencial dentro de los límites de la ley. La información obtenida por este estudio que se puede identificar con mi hijo/a (estudiante) no será divulgada a nadie más que la investigadora principal o el patrocinador de facultad. Los resultados pueden ser publicados en diarios científicos, publicaciones profesionales, o presentaciones educativas sin identificar mi hijo/a (estudiante) por nombre.

NOMBRE DEL NIÑO/A (ESTUDIANTE):

Si usted da su consentimiento para que su hijo/a (estudiante) tome parte en el estudio, también da permiso para que se graben en casete durante el estudio. Si esta de acuerdo, favor de indicar si los casetes se pueden usar para publicaciones/presentaciones.

- ☐ Yo estoy de acuerdo que graben en casete a mi hijo/a durante el grupo focal.
- ☐ Estoy de acuerdo que los casetes se pueden usar en publicaciones/presentaciones.
- ☐ Yo NO estoy de acuerdo que los casetes se puedan usar en publicaciones/presentaciones.

Si usted no esta de acuerdo que graben a su hijo/a, usted tampoco da consentimiento para que su hijo/a participe en el estudio.

Yo estoy de acuerdo en que mi hijo/a participe en este estudio:

☐ SI ☐ NO

Fecha: _____

Nombre _____ del

padre/madre/tutor: _____

Firme de padre/madre/tutor: _____

Appendix H
Script for Parents

Script for Parents

Your child is being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston.

Your child's participation is voluntary and you or your child may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. Your child may also refuse to answer any question.

The purpose of the study is to examine students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in,, motivation, and attitudes toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students, teachers, and administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

The study will be conducted this spring semester of the 2013-2014 school year.

A total of approximately 10 students at each middle school will be asked to participate in this project. Your child will be one of approximately 10 students asked to participate at the middle school he/she attends.

I, the researcher will go to each middle school and go to the READ 180 class. Your child will sit with a group of students who are also participating in the study. They will complete a demographic survey, a few questions on how long they have been in READ 180, their READ 180 teacher's name, grade, age, etc. Then they will sit with the group of students participating in the study and answer a few questions about the READ 180 program. The focus groups will be recorded and transcribed.

Your child's identity will be held in confidence. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your child's participation in this project.

In this study, there are no possible harmful effects. While your child will not directly benefit from participation, his/her participation may help investigators better understand how students feel about the READ 180 program and how it has helped them with their reading comprehension. The research in this study will help other students in the future.

The results of this study may be published in professional and/or scientific journals. It may also be used for educational purposes or for professional presentations. However, no individual participants will be identified.

Thank you for speaking to me. A consent form will be sent home for you to complete as well as the assent form that your child will be asked to complete. Thank You.

Appendix I
Student Assent Form

Student Assent Form (will be read aloud to students)

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sylvia Idrogo, a doctoral student at the University of Houston.

You can say no if you do not want to participate in this study. Adults cannot make you participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to participate in the study now, but change your mind about it later, you can stop being in the study, and no one will be mad at you. Your parents have been asked permission for you to participate.

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research is a way to learn information about something. Researchers study different subjects the way you study English or math as a subject in school.

There are many reasons people choose to be in a research study. Sometimes people want to help researchers learn about ways to help people or make programs better.

Take the time you need to decide if you want to be in this study. You can ask Sylvia Idrogo any question about this research study. You may also ask your READ 180 teacher any question you may have about the study and your teacher will contact Sylvia Idrogo.

WHY AM I DOING THIS RESEARCH?

In my research I want to learn about your confidence in, motivation, and attitudes toward reading. I want to learn more about the READ 180 program and what parts helped you with your reading.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE STUDY

I will come to your READ 180 class and we will go to another classroom. You will sit with a group of students who are also participating in the study. You will complete a demographic survey, a few questions on how long you have been in READ 180, your READ 180 teacher's name, grade, age, etc. You will then sit with the group of students participating in the study and answer a few questions about the READ 180 program. I will read to you the information on the survey and will read the questions you need to answer with your group.

COULD GOOD THINGS HAPPEN TO ME FROM BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The research in this study will help other students in the future. What I learn in this research will not help you know. When I finish the research, I hope to know more about what you think about the READ 180 program and if you think the READ 180 program helped you with your reading comprehension.

COULD BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO ME FROM BEING IN THIS STUDY?

In this study, there are no possible harmful effects. A possible risk is that you may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed in talking in the focus group or in completing the survey. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer. I will not share your personal information with anyone. I will make up names of the school district, middle school, administrators, teachers, and students so no one will know who I am talking about when I write the results. I may need to share the results with the superintendent and board members so that they can decide if we should continue to use the READ 180 program, but they will not know which students answered the questions.

DO I HAVE OTHER CHOICES?

You can choose not to participate in this study, and you can decide you no longer want to be in the study at any time. You may choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or worries about the research, you can contact Sylvia Idrogo at sidrogo@uh.edu before, during, or after your completion of the survey. If you wish to talk to someone else or have questions about your rights as a participant, call the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at (713) 743-9204.

The project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9204.

DOCUMENTATION OF PARTICIPANT'S ASSENT

I agree to participate in this study called: A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATORS', TEACHERS', AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE READ 180 READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM ON SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ONE LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Printed Name of minor participant: _____

Signature of minor participant: _____

Date: _____

ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

Appendix J

Student Documents

WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

Comprehension

► Fill in the circle next to the correct answer.

1. In "Louisa, Please Come Home," when does Louisa run away?

- ☒ A her birthday
- ☐ B New Year's Day
- ☐ C her sister's wedding day
- ☐ D the day before her sister's wedding

2. Which pair of words best describes Paul?

- ☒ A loud and smart
- ☐ B humble and brave
- ☐ C sneaky and cruel
- ☐ D funny and irresponsible

3. How does Louisa deal with the problem of her parents not recognizing her?

- ☒ A She turns on the radio.
- ☐ B She marries Paul.
- ☐ C She goes back to her new life.
- ☐ D She proves her identity.

4. Which of these will most likely happen in the future?

- ☒ A Louisa will prove her identity to her parents.
- ☐ B Louisa will quit her job.
- ☐ C Louisa will call her sister.
- ☐ D Louisa will keep living with Mrs. Peacock.

5. How are the two poems on pages 70–71 similar?

- ☒ A They are both about Louisa.
- ☐ B They are both about identity.
- ☐ C They are both about frogs.
- ☐ D They are both about going to school.



Here's a tip.

For short-answer questions, restate the question in your answer. This helps focus your answer.

Workshop 3 - Identity Crisis

WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

Comprehension

► Fill in the circle next to the correct answer.

1. Children who work in dumps look mainly for _____.

- ☐ (A) toys and old clothing
- ☐ (B) cucumbers and blueberries
- ☒ (C) scrap metal and plastic bags
- ☐ (D) coffee beans

2. In the U.S., there are an estimated _____ teens who are migrant workers.

- ☐ (A) 150,000
- ☐ (B) 50,000,000
- ☐ (C) 1,500
- ☒ (D) 15,000

3. Which sentence gives the best summary of "Child Labor Around the World"?

- ☐ (A) Child labor isn't a widespread problem.
- ☐ (B) Child labor only happens in America.
- ☒ (C) Child labor is an international problem that needs a solution.
- ☐ (D) Child labor is bad, but there's nothing we can do.

4. Why did the Kenyan government start charging money for children to go to school?

- ☐ (A) They thought kids would work harder if school wasn't free.
- ☒ (B) Because the economy was bad, the Kenyan government needed the money.
- ☐ (C) Coffee farmers wanted more kids to work in the fields.
- ☐ (D) Schools became very expensive because they had computers.

5. What happened when Kenya made schools free again?

- ☐ (A) All the students dropped out.
- ☒ (B) Many children stopped working and enrolled in schools.
- ☐ (C) Coffee planters protested.
- ☐ (D) Students couldn't afford the bus fare to school.

Here's a tip.

Look for questions that ask you to give a personal response. These questions require an opinion, not just facts.



Appendix K
2013-2014 Lexile Levels

2013-2014 Lexile Levels

Student	Years in R180	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
1	1	491	340	327
2	3	187	232	310
3	3	532	689	706
4	3	BR (0)	BR (0)	BR (27)
5	3	622	737	804
6	4	510	431	577
7	3	470	120	250
8	2	185	365	331
9	1	482	693	701
10	3	BR (0)	BR (30)	BR (92)
11	2	256	302	311
12	2	287	118	191
13	2	525	546	579
14	3	458	403	432
15	3	383	395	299
16	3	838	784	816
17	3	466	544	516
18	1	596	596	552
19	1	BR (0)	360	278
20	3	696	709	701
21	4	BR (0)	BR (0)	BR (87)
22	3	423	471	546
23	2	548	522	521
24	2	529	655	832
25	4	752	814	818
26	1	BR (0)	108	BR(93)
27	1	680	777	758
28	1	416	474	479
29	2	683	792	765
30	1	378	529	513

End of Year Proficiency Lexile Ranges

Grade 1	100-400
Grade 2	300-600
Grade 3	500-800
Grade 4	600-900
Grade 5	700-1000
Grade 6	800-1050
Grade 7	850-1100
Grade 8	900-1150
Grade 9	1000-1200
Grade 10	1025-1250
Grade 11	1050-1300
Grade 12	1050-1300

Appendix L

Administrator Demographic Survey

Administrator Demographic Survey

1.School Name: _____

2.Name: _____

3.Administrator Supervising READ 180 Teacher

Principal OR Assistant Principal (CIRCLE ONE)

4.Gender: Male OR Female (CIRCLE ONE)

5.Ethnicity: (CIRCLE ONE)

African American

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American or American Indian

White

Other

6.Years as an Administrator in Public Education: _____

7.Years Supervising the READ 180 Teacher(s): _____

Appendix M
Script for Administrators

Script for Administrators

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo. During this portion of the study, you will be asked to complete a short 5 minute demographic survey. Immediately following the survey, you will participate in a 45-60 minute individual interview. There will be six questions asked in the interview. There will be ten (10) minutes allotted for each question.

As a participant in this interview, you will have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- how students' attitudes toward reading were affected,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may refuse to answer any question.

The interview will be recorded using an audio recorder.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix N

Administrator Interview Questions

Administrator Interview Questions

1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension?
3. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?
4. From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
5. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?
6. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Appendix O

Teacher Focus Group Questions

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
2. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension?
3. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?
4. From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?
5. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?
6. From your perspective, how are students able to make connections to the text they read?
7. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?

Appendix P

Teacher Demographic Survey

Teacher Demographic Survey

1.School Name: _____

2.Teacher Name: _____

3.Gender: Male OR Female (CIRCLE ONE)

4.Ethnicity: (CIRCLE ONE)

African American

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American or American Indian

White

Other

5.Years Teaching in Public Education: _____

6.Grade Levels Taught in Public Education: _____

7.Years Teaching the READ 180 Program: _____

8.Grade Levels Taught Using the READ 180 Program: _____

Appendix Q

Script for READ 180 Teachers

Script for READ 180 Teachers

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo. During this portion of the study, you will be asked to complete a short 5 minute demographic survey. Immediately following the survey, you will participate in a 60 minute focus group with approximately 6-8 middle school READ 180 teachers. There will be eight questions asked in the focus group. Seven (7) minutes will be allotted for each question.

As a participant in this focus group, you will have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- how students' attitudes toward reading were affected,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may refuse to answer any question.

The focus group will manage its own discussion and time. The entire focus group discussion will be audio taped and be self-managed. The focus group will have a discussion group facilitator who will be trained on specific protocols in order to manage the discussion.

Additionally, each group is asked to identify a time keeper that will track the time allotted for each of the questions. There will be 7 minutes allotted for each of the eight questions. Finally, each group will have a recorder who will assure that the audio recording device is on and recording for the entire focus group. The 7 minutes will start after the question has been read to the entire group.

You will be dismissed from the process when all questions are answered.

In just a minute, you will be given a short 5 minute break before beginning the survey and focus group. Get into your group and determine who will serve as the facilitator, timekeeper, and recorder for your group. During the 5 minute break, I will ask that the facilitator, timekeeper, and recorder join me up at front for a quick training in the protocols for your specific job role. Please now determine who is willing to assume each of the three roles. (Allow 2-3 minutes for groups to determine who will serve in the roles, then break for a 5 minute break).

NOTE TO RESEARCHER: During the break, train each role by utilizing the script on the next page. After the break, allow 5 minutes to complete the survey. After the 5 minutes, launch each of the focus groups into separate rooms to complete the focus groups.

TRAINING SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR, TIME KEEPER, AND RECORDER

Thank you for your willingness to serve in one of the three necessary job roles to complete this focus group. Just to assure that we have each role represented for each focus group, who are our facilitators? Time keepers? Recorders?

I will now share the protocol for each of the job roles so that you are clear on exactly what you will be doing during the focus group.

FACILITATOR: As a facilitator, you will both facilitate and serve as a participant in this study. Your role is simply to read the question aloud to the entire group. Once the question is read, it is up to the members of the group to interpret the question and respond to the question. You may also respond as a participant in this study. Please do not interpret the question for members of the group or lead members of the group to respond in a certain way. You are simply to read the question and allow others to respond. If a member of the group asks what is meant by the question, respond by saying, “My role is to simply read the question as is written; interpretation is up to the participants in the group.” Once the time is up, allow the individual who is speaking to finish their thought, but do not allow others to add additional responses. Say, “Time is up, so we will now move on to the next question.” There are eight questions, and each question will be given seven (7) minutes for responses.

TIME KEEPER: As a time keeper, you will serve as both a time keeper and a participant in this study. Your role is to start the time AFTER each question is read and allow 7 minutes for response from the group to each question. Once the 7 minutes is up, you will say, “Seven minutes is up, please finish that thought, and we will move on to the next question.” Time (7 minutes) will be kept for each of the questions, repeating the process above. If a member of the group continues to keep speaking beyond their final thought or another person tries to add comments, it will be up to the facilitator to remind the group or group member that it is time to move on to the next question. Immediately following the survey, you will participate in a 60 minute focus group with approximately 6-8 members in a group. There will be eight questions asked in the focus group. Seven (7) minutes will be allotted for each question.

RECORDER: As a recorder, you will serve as both a recorder and a participant in this study. Your role is to start the recording and to keep recording for the entire hour of the focus group without interruption. It will be important to periodically check the device to assure it is still recording without stopping the recording. In the unlikely event that the recording stop (i.e. batteries die, etc.), please immediately speak up and ask the group to PAUSE while the issue is resolved or the battery is replaced. This should not be the case, but the protocol is in place in the unlikely event of this happening. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix R
Script for Students

Script for Students

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project conducted by Sylvia Idrogo. During this portion of the study, you will be asked to complete a short 5 minute demographic survey. Immediately following the survey, you will participate in a 90 minute focus group with approximately 6-10 middle school students who are in the READ 180 class at your middle school. I will read the 33 questions and you will be allowed approximately 3 minutes per question.

As a participant in this focus group, you will have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the impact of the READ 180 reading intervention program on:

- students' confidence in, and motivation toward reading,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- the specific strategies from the R180 program perceived by students to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension skills,
- how students' attitudes toward reading were affected,
- ELL student's perceptions on how the R180 program reflects their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs,
- students' perceptions of technology facilitating their reading comprehension.

The focus group will be recorded using an audio recorder.

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time.

You may refuse to answer any question.

The focus group will end when all the questions are answered or when the 90 minute time is up.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix S
Student Survey

Student Survey (will be read aloud to students)

1. School Name: _____
2. Teacher Name: _____
3. Gender: Male OR Female (CIRCLE ONE)
4. Ethnicity: (CIRCLE ONE)
 African American
 Asian
 Hispanic or Latino
 Native American or American Indian
 White
 Other
5. In what grades have you been in the READ 180 classes? _____
6. What are the names of your READ 180 teachers? _____
7. Do you volunteer to read out loud during the READ 180 class? ☐ yes ☐ no
8. Do you volunteer to read out loud in other classes? ☐ yes ☐ no
9. Do you enjoy reading? ☐ yes ☐ no
10. Do you feel successful when you are reading? ☐ yes ☐ no
11. Do you like to read? ☐ yes ☐ no
12. Do you go to the school library to read or check out books? ☐ yes ☐ no
13. Do you go to the public library to read or check out books? ☐ yes ☐ no
14. Do you go to the bookstore to buy books? ☐ yes ☐ no
15. Do you read books at home? ☐ yes ☐ no
16. Do you read for fun? ☐ yes ☐ no
17. Do you enjoy reading at home? ☐ yes ☐ no
18. Do you ask questions as you read? ☐ yes ☐ no
19. Do you enjoy retelling what you read by talking or writing about it? ☐ yes ☐ no
20. Explain. _____
21. Are you able to make connections to your family and home life when you read the READ 180 stories/books and/or complete the activities? ☐ yes ☐ no
22. If yes, explain how. _____
23. Which helped you more to learn to read and comprehend what you read, the READ 180 program or your teacher? _____
24. Which part of the READ 180 rotation (teacher, computer, or independent reading) do you like best? _____
25. Explain why. _____
26. Which part of the READ 180 rotation (teacher, computer, or independent reading) do you find the most helpful? _____
27. Which part of the READ 180 rotation (teacher, computer, or independent reading) do you find the least helpful? _____
28. Explain why. _____

Appendix T

Student Focus Group Questions

Student Focus Group Questions

1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on your confidence in, and motivation toward reading?
2. From your perspective, what parts of READ 180 help(ed) you understand what you read?
3. From your perspective, what has helped increase your Lexile level?
4. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 program helped you with your reading comprehension?
5. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 teacher helped you with your reading comprehension?
6. What is the name of the READ 180 teacher that helped you with your reading comprehension?
7. From your perspective, how were your attitudes toward reading affected by READ 180?
8. Is there a particular story/book you like?
9. How do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program help you speak in English?
10. How do you feel the READ 180 activities help you understand English grammar (writing rules)?
11. How do you perceive READ 180 help you write in English?
12. From your perspective, what are some strategies from READ 180 that helped you read better in English?
13. How do you perceive technology facilitating your reading comprehension in READ 180?

Appendix U

Table of Questions

Table of Questions

Research Questions	Semi-structured Interview Questions for Administrators	Focus Group Questions for READ 180 Teachers	Focus Group Questions for Students
1. What impact did the READ 180 reading intervention program have on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on the confidence in, and motivation toward reading for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. What impact do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program to have on your confidence in, and motivation toward reading?
2. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by administrators to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension? 2. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?	1. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension? 2. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?	1. From your perspective, what parts of READ 180 help(ed) you understand what you read? 2. From your perspective, what has helped increase your Lexile level? 3. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 program helped you with your reading comprehension? 4. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 teacher helped you with your reading comprehension? 5. What is the name of the READ 180 teacher that helped you with your reading comprehension?

Research Questions	Semi-structured Interview Questions for Administrators	Focus Group Questions for READ 180 Teachers	Focus Group Questions for Students
3. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by teachers to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension? 2. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?	1. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension? 2. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?	1. What READ 180 materials do you perceive assist you with your reading comprehension? 2. What READ 180 strategies do you perceive assist you with your reading comprehension?
4. What specific strategies from the READ 180 reading intervention program are perceived by students to have the greatest impact on improving reading comprehension skills in seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension? 2. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?	1. From your perspective, what READ 180 materials assist students with their reading comprehension? 2. From your perspective, what READ 180 teaching strategies assist students with their reading comprehension?	1. From your perspective, what parts of READ 180 help(ed) you understand what you read? 2. From your perspective, what has helped increase your Lexile level? 3. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 program helped you with your reading comprehension? 4. From your perspective, how has the READ 180 teacher helped you with your reading comprehension? 5. What is the name of the READ 180 teacher that helped you with your reading comprehension?

Research Questions	Semi-structured Interview Questions for Administrators	Focus Group Questions for READ 180 Teachers	Focus Group Questions for Students
5. How were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. From your perspective, how were attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180 reading intervention program for seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities?	1. From your perspective, how were your attitudes toward reading affected by the READ 180?
6. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?	1. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs?	1. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school ELL students with learning disabilities perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program represents their cultural backgrounds and meets their language learning needs? 2. From your perspective, how are students able to make connections to the text they read?	1. Is there a particular story/book you like? 2. How do you perceive the READ 180 reading intervention program help you speak in English? 3. How do you feel the READ 180 activities help you understand English grammar (writing rules)? 4. How do you perceive READ 180 help you write in English? 5. From your perspective, what are some strategies from READ 180 that helped you read better in English?
7. How do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?	1. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?	1. From your perspective, how do seventh and eighth grade middle school students with learning disabilities perceive technology facilitating their reading comprehension in the READ 180 reading intervention program?	1. How do you perceive technology facilitating your reading comprehension in READ 180?