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A Study of the Gauge Middle School Reading Intervention Program

Karen Shen Letson

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A Study of the Gauge Middle School Reading Intervention Program

By

Karen Shea Letson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education Administration
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

August 2012

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By

Karen Shea Letson

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Student achievement has become a main concern for schools in the United States. Emphasis has long been placed on reading, writing, and arithmetic; however, reading achievement remains insufficient. The passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001 required all students to be reading on grade level by 2014. With states and school districts striving to make adequate yearly progress, finding programs and practices that prove effective in improving student achievement has become a main priority for schools.

In an effort to improve reading achievement, a reading program was implemented at Gauge Middle School and studied for its impact. The Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2) and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) tests were analyzed to determine the impact of the program. The voices of the students and the voices of the teachers were considered important in understanding the impact. The reasons for this research include (a) determining whether the implementation of READ 180 increased student reading achievement and (b) understanding the perceptions of the students and teachers in READ 180.

A struggling reader is defined as a student who is experiencing difficulty learning to read. The literature on struggling readers indicated that a struggling reader will never

read on grade level, but they can make increases in their reading level. The data obtained from this research supports the literature review. After the participating in READ 180, the MCT2 scores did not increase; however, the SRI scores did increase for all the students.

Future research that replicates this study may be conducted with various grades and schools in Leese County School District to determine if the findings of the study can be duplicated. Also, research could address the age or grade at which to focus more intently on reading interventions. Students who are too low for READ 180 need an intervention or program. A high school reading intervention would benefit high school students and help reduce the dropout rate. Motivation and student behavior for middle and high school students requires more research.

DEDICATION

Each of us was born with wings and has the ability to go farther than we ever thought possible, to do things beyond our wildest imaginings.

Barbara Stanny

My path to excel was set in motion by my parents, Allen King and Gail Bolen. They instilled in me the desire to always go beyond the expected. With their love, leadership, and most importantly their support, I have been able to complete many goals including obtaining an advanced degree. Thank you for ALWAYS supporting me in every endeavor I have undertaken. I love you both very much.

I would also like to dedicate this to my husband, Randy, and my three very talented and amazing children; Cody, Anna Katherine, and Olivia. Thank you for always understanding when I had to work on some paper and not complaining when I read an article at a game instead of focusing entirely on you. Without your love and support, I would not have been able to complete the entire process. Thank you and I love you very dearly.

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Also a very special thanks to Dr. DeShannon Davis who offered much encouragement and “nagging” to finish the process and who constantly reminds me she finished first; my principal, Steven Havens who gave me advice and help; the administration, faculty, staff, and students at Gauge Middle School who participated in my study; my sisters Tracie Russell and Angela White who kept my children so I could go to class or work on this document; my grandmother Dorothy King who loves and

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson (1816) wrote, “Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe.” (para. 5) The national goal to guarantee every man is able to read has remained unattainable. According to Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, and Kolstad (1993), literacy is defined as “an individual’s ability to use printed information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (p. 2).

As described by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2009) educational reform has been a cornerstone of educational decisions. Reforms address poverty, gender or class inequities, or ineffectiveness of teaching method. The proliferation of reform at the state and local level has attempted to revolutionize how schools operate and students learn. Changes have been made in administration, curriculum, and outreach. The question becomes what efforts are necessary at the secondary level to guarantee that students become literate members of our society as described by Thomas Jefferson.

Scheffel, Shroyer, and Strongin (2003) noted that students who do not become proficient readers before leaving secondary school will more than likely be undereducated, underemployed, and underutilized in the global society of the 21st Century. Therefore it is crucial to research and implement literacy interventions at the secondary level.

During the 1980s, the reform movement made efforts to change schools from equity to excellence. The first major reform act was *A Nation at Risk* (USDE, 2009). This report outlined the failure of the American school system and standardization was a result of the report. In the 1990s, outcome based education and school-to-work were the adopted reform efforts. Each state adopted standards to use in the classroom and selected a performance-based assessment to measure the content students knew. In 1994, President William Clinton proposed Goals 2000: Educate America Act. According to the USDE (2009), this act strove to improve academic achievement by raising academic standards, high quality professional development, and expanding the use of computers and technology.

The United States federal government proposed a new reform, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), to respond to the ever-growing problem of illiteracy in the United States (USDE, 2009). Once the reform was signed, President George W. Bush stated,

Today begins a new era, a new time for public education in our country. Our schools will have higher expectations—we believe every child can learn. From this day forward, all students will have a better chance to learn, to excel, and to live out their dreams. (Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2002, p. 1)

According to the USDE (2009), President George W. Bush proposed NCLB, declaring that all children would be guaranteed a high quality education, and he promised that no child would be left behind. According to the USDE, NCLB established higher standards and greater accountability for all schools in the United States. According to the USDE, NCLB is comprised of greater accountability, more flexibility for states and communities, research based teaching methods, and more parental choices. Under NCLB,

teachers in core academic areas must be highly qualified in the subject. Also, schools must meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) as outlined in NCLB. Therefore, according to USDE, NCLB challenged the approach educators use to educate all students so they can achieve higher standards.

As Leese County School District (LCSD) began to analyze the criteria of NCLB, schools in the district were given the freedom to make site-based curriculum decisions (J. Tyler, a LCSD teacher, personal communication, September 18, 2006). At Gauge Middle School (GMS), the teachers and the principal at the school during the 2003-2004 school year discussed curriculum and structural changes that would best meet the needs of the students. The teachers and principal at the school then chose to specifically target at-risk students by implementing an extra tutorial classes in mathematics. The targeted students received an extra tutorial class in mathematics.

As mathematics achievement improved for the students who were targeted, however, reading achievement for all students steadily declined. Under NCLB, all students would be reading on grade level by 2014 (S. Dye, a LCSD administrator, personal communication, March 1, 2008). With the date steadily approaching, teachers and administrators at GMS looked at various programs to implement to improve reading. In 2007-2008, the district purchased a reading intervention program (READ 180) and implemented the program at one particular test site school. In 2008-2009, the reading program was implemented at all K-8 schools in the district. The reading program was implemented at GMS for the 2008-2009 school year (M. Scott, a LCSD administrator, personal communication, March 1, 2008). A primary purpose of this research was to determine if the reading program resulted in an increase in reading achievement.

According to the READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide (2005), the reading program is a comprehensive system that guides students toward reading successfully. READ 180 is a research-based reading intervention that has been proven successful at other schools. READ 180 is a 90-minute instructional class in which the students rotate through small group, instructional computer software and independent reading.

Statement of Purpose

According to Conley and Hinchman (2004), policymakers refer to the literacy problem facing adolescents as a crisis. Low achievement in literacy forms the foundation for many problems facing secondary students, teachers, and administrators. Addressing the relationship between literacy and current crisis in secondary schools, Brandt (2003) stated,

Literacy is changing because the economy is changing. The United States has become a so-called knowledge economy or informational economy, in which mental labor has replaced physical labor and making information and ideas has replaced things as our main economic pursuit. Human capital is now regarded as more valuable than land or even money, so literacy has become a hot commodity. (p. 245)

States and school districts are striving to close the achievement gap for all students. Under NCLB, all students would be on or above grade level in reading, math, and science by 2014 (USDE, 2009). With states and school districts striving to make AYP, finding programs and practices that prove effective in improving student achievement has become the main priority for schools.

Reading achievement was low across Leese County School District. The district purchased a reading intervention program and implemented the program at one test site school for the 2007-2008 school year. This school showed significant gains in reading achievement after implementing the reading program. The district purchased the reading program for all K-8 schools in the district for the 2008-2009 school year. A purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the reading program on reading achievement for struggling readers. Additionally, the study provided an opportunity for the voices of the student participants and the teachers in the reading program to be heard.

Research Questions

To clearly understand the purpose of this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. Did the implementation of READ 180 result in increased reading scores?
2. What are the perceptions of the READ 180 student participants?
3. What are the perceptions of the READ 180 teachers and administrators?

Rationale for the Study

According to Crosby (2008), schools affect people all over the country. One out of five Americans attends or works in a K-12 setting. People interact daily with byproducts of America's schools. Every person in the United States is impacted by education regardless of job situation. A nation's most precious resource is its children. Therefore, improvements in education become everyone's dilemma.

According to the National Institute for School Leadership (2009), the role of administration must be to lead, support, and assess literacy instruction. Administrators need to use literacy data to identify weak areas in instruction and ways to improve

literacy instruction. In all probability, the most significant role of administrators is to promote overall awareness of the importance of literacy instruction.

Reading achievement for students at GMS was extremely low. READ 180 was purchased to use with selected students. According to the READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide (2005), research shows that students who are enrolled in READ 180 significantly improve their reading achievement. This study analyzed the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) scores and Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition, (MCT2) language arts/reading subtest scores for the students to determine if there was a significant increase in reading achievement. Also, the voices of the student and teacher participants were included in the final determination of reading achievement for the READ 180 participants at GMS.

Theoretical Framework for READ 180

READ 180 was originally developed on the basis of the constructivist theory. According to Draper (2002), the principle behind constructivism is that learners construct their own connections and the context of the connection. Constructivism proclaims that experiences the learners go through assist in the learning process.

According to Scholastic (2000), Ted Hasselbring and the researchers with the Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt University developed READ 180 based on the situated cognition theory which evolved from constructivism. Lave (1988) noted that learning occurs in contexts and cultures within the situated cognition theory. The focus of READ 180 is on the process by which learning occurs and the context of learning.

According to Moore, Reith, and Ebeling (1993), the researchers of READ 180 investigated the correlation between situated cognition theory and their work on learning and the context of learning. The researchers discovered that situated cognition theory is a “useful framework that emphasized the importance of focusing on everyday cognition, authentic tasks, and the value of in-context apprenticeship training” (p. 2).

Motivational Theory for Middle School Students

School success depends on motivation. Motivation is described as the need or drive that moves behavior toward a specific goal. Setting, people, and task influences student motivation. According to Gambrell and Marinak (2009), researchers have identified factors that influence motivation for reading. These factors include self-concept and value of reading, reading materials, and the use of incentives.

According to Guthrie and Davis (2003), as students progress through elementary school to middle school, they become less motivated to read. Gottfried (1985)

documented that as students progress from fourth grade to seventh grade, their reading motivation decreases. According to Eccles et al. (1993), middle school and elementary school differ in many ways and the differences between the two schools contribute to a lack of motivation for many middle school students. Eccles et al. observed the following differences between elementary and middle school:

Middle schools are typically larger, less personal, and more formal than elementary schools. Middle grade teachers are often subject matter specialists and typically instruct a much larger number of students than do elementary teachers in self contained classrooms, making it less likely they will come to know students well, to believe students are trustworthy, and to grant them autonomy. Indeed,

middle grade teachers may believe it is difficult to affect the achievement of a large number of students, especially since they see them for a relatively small proportion of the school day, making it difficult to sustain feelings of efficacy.... Middle grade school classrooms, as compared to elementary school classrooms, are characterized by greater emphasis on teacher control and discipline; a less personal and positive teacher/student relationship; and few opportunities for student decision making, choice, and self-management. Second a shift to traditional middle grade schools is associated with an increase in practices such as whole class task organization and public evaluation of the correctness of work. There are also increases in between classroom ability grouping.... In traditional middle grade schools, teachers often believe it is time to get serious about instruction and performance evaluation. (pp. 558-559)

According to Eccles et al. (1993) middle school becomes a major transition for students. The students move from one classroom with one teacher all day to a complex system of moving classrooms and teachers all day. Many students struggle with this and become less motivated to learn.

Guthrie and Davis (2003) researched motivation theories and found the common idea behind all theories pertained to the context of the reading material. The type of context influenced how engaged the students were with reading. They proposed the engagement model of instruction which includes knowledge goals, real world interactions, an abundance of interesting texts, support for student choice and self-determination, direct strategy instruction, and collaboration. Using this model in the classroom would help students gain reading skills and foster their self-esteem. Once

students become motivated and want to continue to read, they will become successful readers.

Success in school depends on motivation. The older a student gets, the less motivated they become to learn especially if they struggle with reading. As students progress from fourth to seventh grade, their reading motivation decreases. Middle school is a transition period for students. They transition from staying with the same teacher in same classroom all day to changing classrooms and teachers all day. Once students become motivated, they will be successful in all areas of school. To become motivated to read and to stay motivated, the students must be provided with an abundance of interesting texts. Middle school students in this study were motivated by learning to read, and this motivation was reflected in improved school performance.

Limitations of the Study

Research validity (Glesne, 2006) refers to the trustworthiness of research. There are many factors that can influence the research investigation. Identifying the limitations within the study allows the reader to interpret and understand the research. The researcher must describe, confirm, expand, and inform the reader of all factors involved in the research.

According to Glesne (2006), the bias of the researcher, students, teachers, and administrators must be taken into account. The instruments used to measure reading achievement can affect the study. Although reading classes are incorporated into the curriculum at all grade levels at GMS, this study was restricted to the students enrolled in the READ 180 program. The student participants were enrolled in READ 180 based on their MCT2 scores eliminating concerns with student selection. Internal validity issues

associated with this study may possibly include history, maturation, and mortality. The students participated in the study for the 2008-2009 school year. Outside forces may possibly have influenced the participants that the researcher may not be able to control. Maturation of the students enrolled in the program may have also limited the results. The students have grown throughout the school year, thus the researcher could not control advances the participants have made. Mortality could not be controlled in the study. Students left the school throughout the study.

This study involved about 50 students out of over 725 students at GMS. The threat to external validity in this study was population validity. The study analyzed the students reading results in READ 180 from GMS; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to another population. The results and conclusions from this study cannot be generalized to other middle school populations.

Delimitations of the Study

The participants for this study were students with reading difficulties in grades six through eight in GMS, a rural middle school of about 725 students. GMS is located in North Mississippi in Leese County School District. Student selection for READ 180 was based on the students' MCT2 scores from the previous year.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study, terms unique to the READ 180 program were used. For the purpose of clarification of terms that might not be familiar to the reader, the following definitions are offered.

Comprehension. Students in the READ 180 program are engaged in activities that address main idea, summarize, sequencing, read for detail, make conclusions and

inferences, cause and effect, analyze character, plot, and setting. Students are engaged in activities to enhance comprehension skills and strategies (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Fluency. Within the READ 180 materials, students engage in activities to recognize words automatically (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Lexile Framework. A framework used to measure readers and texts on the same scale to determine reading level (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition (MCT2). The MCT2 is a criterion-referenced reading/language arts and mathematics assessment. The MCT2 measures student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics in Grades 3-8 including special education students in which their IEP specifies goals aligned with Grades 3-8 (Mississippi State Department of Education, 2009).

Modeling. The READ 180 teacher demonstrates the process of how to do something instead of explaining the process (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Oral Cloze. The teacher reads a selected text aloud. The students read silently as the teacher reads aloud. The students supply the omitted words at the appropriate time (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Phonics. Within the READ 180 classroom, students focus on phonemic or word structure elements (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Quickwrites. READ 180 component that tests students' comprehension of reading and writing skills addressed during small and whole group instruction (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

rBook. The READ 180 rBook is an interactive student worktext. Worktext is used in small group instruction for reading skills, vocabulary and word study, and writing and grammar (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Reading Aloud. The READ 180 teachers read selected books aloud to the students (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Reading Counts Quizzes. Read 180 comprehension accountability quiz students take as books are completed in the program. The quizzes assess independent reading for each student (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

READ 180 instructional software. The READ 180 computer program students use to work through vocabulary and comprehension skills. The software is used to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of each student in the READ 180 program (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

rSkills test. READ 180 test that monitors student comprehension of key skills covered during small and whole group instruction. The key skills of comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar skills are standards aligned. The test is used to measure growth of each student and to regroup students according to growth potential (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM). The READ 180 learning management system which manages each component of the program for the teacher. SAM allows the teacher to customize each lesson for each individual student (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Scholastic Reading Grouping Report. The READ 180 report designates the appropriate intervention needed for each individual student. The report is used to begin READ 180 at the appropriate designated level and to group students for small group rotations (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). The READ 180 baseline reading level placement test is used to determine reading level and place students appropriately in the program. SRI is also used to monitor students throughout the program to make sure students are improving their reading level (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Scholastic Reading Performance Report. The READ 180 program report details the normative data and includes percentiles, stanine, and performance standards (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Shared Reading. The READ 180 teacher reads selected text aloud to the students. The students follow along with the selected text as the teachers read the text (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

Skills Practice. In the READ 180 classroom, the students practice literacy skills. Skills practice involves students in activities that reinforce previous reading skills (READ 180 Leadership and Implementation Guide, 2005).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of participating in a reading program on reading achievement for struggling readers. Additionally, the study provided an opportunity for the voices of the student participants and the teachers in READ 180 to be heard. This chapter provided a review of the related literature identifying characteristics of struggling readers and interventions for struggling readers.

Administrator Responsibilities

Booth and Roswell (2002) noted that school administrators face many challenges in meeting the literacy expectations for the 21st Century. Literacy has become the most important item on an administrator's agenda. Bauman (1984) stated long ago that a successful school literacy program is directly connected to an effective administrator. The administrator can lead by example by continually improving the literacy program which demonstrates to all stakeholders that "literacy is not something extra on the plate, it is the plate, the foundation upon which academic learning and successful student performance depends" (Meltzer & Ziemba, 2006, p. 26).

According to the National Institute for School Leadership (2009), the role of administration must be to lead, support, and assess literacy instruction. Administrators must first assess literacy in their schools using the previous five years of school data in literacy. Administrators need to use the literacy data to identify weak areas in instruction and ways to improve literacy instruction. The National Institute noted that in all

probability the most significant role of administrators is to promote overall awareness of the importance of literacy instruction.

Jones, Burns, and Pirri (2010) noted that effective leaders make a positive impact on student learning. Research has shown that leadership effects student progress. According to the Jones et al., leadership falls second only to teaching in terms of making a positive impact on student achievement. Teachers and students succeed because of the ability of the leader to focus on the best initiatives for success. The leader sets the literacy culture of the school. Literacy is the most important issue facing educators today.

Literacy

Proliteracy (2009) defined literacy as the ability of individuals to read, write, and use technology at a level that provides each the skills necessary to be successful. In the world, 774 million adults are illiterate. Among the industrialized nations, the United States ranks fifth in literacy skills. In the United States it is estimated that 30 million people 16 and older cannot read on an eighth grade level.

Literacy skills are essential for success in a complex and technological world. Students must become independent readers, writers, and thinkers. Students must learn to access, understand, and use different types of information (Moore, Bean, Birdshaw, & Rycik, 2005). According to the National Institute for School Leadership (2009), adolescents will be required to read and write now more than previous generations. Students will need advanced literacy skills in order to perform simple personal skills and to manage the wealth of information which they are bombarded with during their every day routines. Literacy skills are also needed to help drive their imagination so the adolescents can develop new technologies.

According to the International Reading Association (2002), the literacy requirements for students in the 21st Century are constantly increasing in complexity. Elkins and Luke (1999) noted the 21st Century demands call for different strategies than previously used to teach literacy to secondary students. Moore et al. (2005) stated the following about literacy in the 21st Century:

Adolescents will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imagination so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial. Continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed. (p.3)

The following statements help define the vision for adolescent literacy and provide a framework for the rights of adolescent readers as recommended by Moore et al. (2005) through the Commission on Adolescent Reading of the International Reading Association: (a) adolescents deserve access to a wide variety of reading material that they can and want to read; (b) adolescents deserve instruction that builds both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials; (c) adolescents deserve assessment that shows them their struggles as well as their needs and that guides their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers; (d) adolescents deserve expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum; (e) adolescents deserve reading specialists who assist individual students having difficulty learning to read; (f) adolescents deserve teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences, and respond to their characteristics; and (g) adolescents deserve homes,

communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed.

Moore et al. (2005) noted schools are to teach students the academic skills they need to be successful in the technological world. Students learn differently and teachers must accommodate the instructional lessons to the differing abilities of students. Each student brings his/her own unique set of abilities, perceptions, and needs into the classroom. The school environment must be receptive to these differences to ensure a learning environment for all students. An effective school program links the students with resources, materials, and services in the most beneficial way possible.

According to Moats (1999), reading is a fundamental aspect of life and teaching reading is the most important responsibility of a school. Everyone needs to be able to read and function in his or her everyday routine. Moats indicated that if a child does not learn the basics of reading, then more likely he/she will never learn to read. If a child does not learn the basics of reading early in his/her childhood, then chances are he/she will not do very well in school.

Moats (1999) also noted some children may learn to read despite the lack of the fundamental teaching of reading. Some children, however, will never learn to read unless a teacher using effective reading instructional approaches teaches them. Reading is a skill that a child must acquire; it is not a natural instinct.

According to Moore et al. (2005), it has become increasingly clear that the traditional aspect of teaching reading does not encompass all the skills students need to be literate in today's society. As teachers recognize the complexity of students becoming literate, they also recognize different patterns of organizing comprehension skills.

Reading is not something that is natural or easy for a child to understand (Starch 1915). Anything someone can do to help the child understand the basics will greatly improve the child's education. As Starch stated:

In every branch of instruction in the public schools we need a definite standard of attainment to be reached in at the end of each grade. If we had such standards and if we had adequate means of precisely measuring efficiency, it would be possible for a qualified person to go into a schoolroom and measure the attainment in any or all subjects and determine on the basis of his measurements whether the pupils are up to the standard, whether they are deficient and in what specific respect. (p. 14)

This quote seems applicable to NCLB and the standards of 2009; however, the quote was written nearly 100 years ago. According to Norton (2007), in 1915, the average eighth grader read 240 words per minute. In 2005, the average eighth grader read 150 words per minute (Norton, 2007). The reading proficiency skills of students in the United States seem to have deteriorated.

According to the USDE (2009), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) first began testing reading proficiency in 1971. Since then reading proficiency among U.S. students has remained stable. On the NAEP in 2004, 38% of all fourth grade students in the United States scored below basic in reading. National and international assessment results validate that the majority of high school graduates cannot read well. By the time students reach eighth grade, patterns of success or failure in school are established and 43% read at or below the basic level. Therefore, reading instruction requires significant improvement if students are to achieve in today's society.

Reading Instruction

According to Wren (2003), the main factor effecting student achievement in reading is instruction not socioeconomic differences. The history of reading education has relied on two main instructional approaches which have been referred to by many different names. The two approaches encompass phonics and whole language, which are the names used for the two approaches. The phonics and whole language approaches are completely different and require different skill approaches.

Wren (2003) noted educators have struggled with these approaches for years. Educators refer to themselves as balanced reading instructors. However, using a balanced approach will not necessarily increase reading performance. Educators know the effectiveness of either approach has never been proven. Even though the reading instruction pendulum has changed numerous times, reading performance among the United States children has remained stagnant. Wren (2003) also noted that about 40% of fourth graders score below average on the NAEP assessment. Regardless of the type of approach used to teach reading, reading performance among our children has remained stable. Literacy will improve when teachers understand how to diagnose individual student reading needs and develop appropriate lessons and interventions.

According to Wren (2003), by the time students reach second or third grade, most students should be reading proficiently. After the third grade, students should be reading to learn. No student in middle or high school should be learning to read. However, students struggle with reading beyond third grade. Based on the NAEP report, Wren noted that one in four 12th grade students read at the “below basic” level. Teaching reading has become more than just an elementary school problem. Middle and high

school teachers must know how to implement reading interventions for struggling readers.

According to Moore et al. (2005), effective reading instruction makes a profound impact on achievement. Fisher and Ivey (2005) quoted William S. Gray from 1937 that every teacher is a teacher of reading. According to Fisher and Ivey, the long ago phrase and the decades of reform acts and programs that have followed have not significantly increased the reading achievement of adolescents. Barry (2002) noted that secondary teachers refuse to accept their responsibility as reading teachers stating they lack time, skill, and support.

According to Connors (1997), Cuban (1989), Hillcock (1986), and Wade and Moje (2000), researchers have conducted studies over the past two decades on literacy skills at the secondary level. The findings from the studies were consistent. Secondary teachers engage students in very little literacy activities. Secondary teachers do not require students to read real world material. Secondary teachers devote little or no class time to demonstrate how to be a good content area reader or writer and students are not engaged in discussion material read.

Wren (2002) found problems in teaching reading at the secondary level. First, secondary teachers are not reading teachers. Secondary teachers do not receive reading instruction, and their emphasis is placed on a specific content area not reading. Second, secondary teachers typically only teach a student for 45 to 50 minutes a day, thus making it difficult to teach reading. Third, secondary students who are struggling with reading do not want to learn to read.

According to Cooper, Chard, and Kiger (2006), there are many children who struggle with reading. With NCLB and Reading First Legislation (USDE, 2009), all

students are expected to meet tough academic standards. Cooper et al. noted teachers must identify the reading difficulties of their students, but teachers must first understand how to diagnose reading strengths and weaknesses. A literacy plan must then be developed from assessment data and implemented with the students. This is not an easy task. The authors noted standardized tests do not supply the necessary information to make instructional decisions. In order for teachers to develop a literacy plan, they need research-based diagnostic assessment tools and instructional methods to target specific needs of individual students.

Instead of advocating reading remediation, Cooper et al. (2006) suggested that teachers use interventions developed on the diagnosis of each student's reading difficulties. The researchers developed the Prevention-Intervention Framework, which is composed of five components: assess and diagnose, teach/reteach, practice, apply, and reassess. Using this approach allows teachers to scaffold readers who struggle and to provide the necessary components to become competent readers.

According to Cooper et al. (2006), motivation is a nuisance to the majority of struggling readers. Knowing how to read motivates students to read more. Rewards may motivate students to read for a short period of time, but rewards will not work over an expanded period of time. According to Cooper et al., over time and with the specific targeted interventions, students will learn to read and become motivated to read more.

Struggling Readers

According to Chall and Curtis (2003), a struggling reader is defined as a student who is experiencing difficulty learning to read. There are nine areas in which students can struggle when learning to read. The areas are: (a) background experiences; (b) oral

language; (c) decoding, including phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge; (d) fluency; (e) oral, reading, and writing vocabulary; (f) comprehension; (g) maintaining attention; (h) motivation; and (i) vision, hearing, or other physical ability necessary for processing text.

Struggling adolescent readers have been labeled as “unsuccessful, passive, disengaged, disenchanting, helpless, resistant, alienated or low achieving” (Ambe, 2007, p. 632). In schools, teachers must teach 14-year-old students who struggle with reading, but cannot receive the same instruction as a beginning kindergarten student (Hock & Deshler, 2003). Fisher (2008) noted that struggling adolescent readers who are reading on a fourth grade level will intentionally not work with materials intended for fourth grade reading instruction. According to Wolfson (2008), some students do not develop literacy skills and become labeled as low achieving and at risk. Smith (1998) identified two warning signs to determine if students were not learning required material: students try to intentionally memorize material and students go through the material and remember nothing.

According to the National Institute for School Leadership (2009), reading involves comprehending meaning from printed materials. In order for students to learn to read, they must have: an understanding of phonics, an ability to decode words, fluency, a sufficient vocabulary, and motivation. For a struggling reader these skills are extremely difficult. Finding the correct way to teach a struggling reader involves complex planning and patience. Teaching reading is the responsibility of all teachers not just reading specialists or language arts teachers. Content area teachers can recognize struggling readers more effectively and make adjustments in their lessons to provide interventions.

According to Irvin (1997), for the first four years of a child's educational journey the instructional goal must be to train students how to spell and read. By the end of the third grade, normal achieving students can read. However, as Chall (1983) found, as students begin the fourth grade they enter the fourth grade slump. Beginning in the fourth grade students are expected to decode and comprehend text. They come across passages filled with vocabulary in social studies and science. The students must decode text and comprehend ideas from difficult formats. According to Stanovich (1986) as students' progress through school, the gap between good readers and poor readers becomes larger. Good readers become more proficient; poor readers become discouraged and fall further behind in reading proficiency.

Students who enter middle school with reading deficiencies have found it difficult to succeed. According to Irvin (1997), most schools have not offered reading instruction past fourth grade. Reading instruction at the middle and high schools has appeared to be a low priority, especially instruction that would benefit struggling readers. As Irvin found, students with reading difficulties have not thrived very well at the secondary level.

School becomes difficult for an adolescent who struggles with reading. For the typical struggling reader, a pattern of behaviors begins to develop that impacts his/her learning. Struggling readers become characterized as "lacking motivation, possessing little self-confidence, experiencing difficulty making and keeping friends, and displaying a host of maladaptive behaviors" (Deshler, Ellis, & Lenz, 1996, p. 25). These students cause problems for teachers. Students who experience difficulty with reading face academic challenges throughout secondary school because of the increased inability to develop skill competencies and more than half will drop out of school (USDE, 2009).

According to Gaskin (2005), students struggle in reading for a variety of reasons and many setbacks interrupt the process of learning to read. The author pointed out research has shown that some students struggle in reading because reading instruction has not been aligned to the way students learn. Gaskin indicated that struggling readers must be provided with multiple and various opportunities to practice new skills. To improve reading instruction for struggling readers will require that they are provided with numerous opportunities to practice reading.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) found various reasons have been offered to explain students' reading deficiencies in middle school. The most common reason was that struggling readers have not developed sufficient word recognition skills to decode text. According to the authors, for struggling readers to improve their reading ability, teachers must employ numerous opportunities for students to practice reading. Isolating a specific skill for a struggling reader will result in word calling, reduced motivation, and a lack of comprehension.

Struggling readers will never make adequate yearly progress with their grade level reading instruction. Teachers must implement necessary support for struggling readers. Allington (2001) showed that struggling readers have difficulty with reading because they do not read on their own or have enough teacher directed instruction.

The problem with identifying difficulties struggling readers possess is that no two struggling readers are the same. Each struggling reader possesses a different area or areas that require interventions. In the intervention process, programs must focus on prevention and the desired action is intervention not remediation.

Interventions for Struggling Readers

Teachers must use a multitude of practices and strategies to help struggling readers overcome their deficiencies in reading and learn needed skills to be successful.

Norton (2007) stated that:

Good readers use many strategies. They visualize, they ask questions, they summarize their reading, and when necessary they ask for help. Many students, however, will not use these effective strategies unless they have many opportunities to discover that the strategies do, indeed, help them comprehend the materials, (p. 241)

Intervention programs for struggling readers address not only printed text but also media and information technologies all around them. According to the New London Group (2000), the definition of text must be broadened to include visuals and print. The concept of reading interventions needs to be re-mediated to include broad concept of literacy. Elkins and Luke (1999) use the term re-mediation in the context that educators must “come to grips with the contextual variables in adolescent lives, all of the complex causes and consequences of any given action and intervention, and the multiple relations between media technologies that adolescents juggle every day” (p. 215). Remediation means to improve the way students learn, not to fix the students. For teachers to re-mediate reading instruction, they must let go of old teaching ways and adapt new strategies. As Elkins and Luke noted, change of any kind is not easy for people to accept especially in education.

In the re-mediation model (Elkins & Luke, 1999), the emphasis is placed on the complexities of teaching and learning in all content areas. The model does not emphasize that all teachers must become a teacher of reading. Any intervention program involves

many steps and will not fix the problem of reading in all adolescents, but a change in teacher expectations and learning conditions will direct educators to implement an effective literacy program. Regarding the re-mediation model and current research regarding reading, Elkins and Luke offered the following guidelines to assist educators in selecting an appropriate literacy program to help struggling readers

- Select a program that intervenes in close proximity to the instructional strategies and methods students are currently expected to learn.
- Examine the program closely and research the assumptions about the program.
- Determine how much teacher to student exposure the program offers instead of allowing the student to use a computer for reading interventions.
- Determine if the program allows the teachers and students to evaluate the program.

Reading Programs for Adolescents

Research on reading instruction and reading programs has become the norm in education since the mid-1990s. In an effort to shed light on the numerous programs for improving reading achievement in adolescents, three programs are described below: Accelerated Reader, Project CRISIS, and READ 180.

Accelerated Reader

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a computer-based program that assesses reading comprehension. AR was originated by Advantage Learning Systems, now called School Renaissance Institute (Renaissance Learning, 2010). AR is promoted as reading motivation and learning information system in which teachers can supervise student reading practice. Students first take the Standardized Test for Assessment of Reading

(STAR) which assesses a reading level for the students. STAR is a computerized test with no oral reading comprehension test or teacher observations of reading. Once the test is completed, a specified reading range for the student is established. The students select books within that range to read then complete a computerized multiple-choice comprehension test on the context of the book. The computer scores the test and points are given to the students based on the level of the book. According to Renaissance Learning (2010), AR is supported by extensive staff development and is in over 40,000 schools in the US.

Project CRISS

Carol Santa developed Creating Independence Through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS; Project CRISS, 1996). CRISS is composed of five components; (a) background knowledge, (b) purpose setting, (c) author's craft, (d) active learning, and (e) metacognition. The program was designed for use by social studies, science, and language arts teachers to help students learn within the content areas. CRISS focuses on changing the way teachers teach reading in the content area, not focusing on how to change student. The CRISS program provides professional development for the teachers that support the initiative of including literacy in all subject areas. According to Project CRISS, teachers in the CRISS program become exposed to strategies that extend beyond basic literacy instruction within the content areas.

READ 180

READ 180 is a computer program marketed to educational personnel by Scholastic and is based on the research of Ted Hasselbring, Janet Allen, and the staff at Scholastic (Scholastic, 2010). The program targets students with below average reading

in Grades 4-12. Students work on vocabulary, reading, and writing skills through supplemental books and audiotapes. The program comprises four main components: (a) interactive software; (b) audiobooks; (c) paperbacks; and (d) teacher resources. Fluency is improved through repetition and word review (Scholastic, 2010).

READ 180 has been widely researched over the past 10 years. The program provides feedback to the students, uses video, uses audio video, and uses computer components. READ 180 also supports English Language Learners. The design of the program allows teachers to diagnose a problem with the student and then provide a quick solution to the struggling reader's problem (Scholastic, 2010).

Dr. Ted Hasselbring originally developed the READ 180 program in 1985 with other faculty members of Vanderbilt University. The program was the collaboration of the Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt University, the Orange County Literacy Project in Florida, and Scholastic. The program was originally piloted in three middle school classrooms in 1994-1995.

In 1997, Scholastic collaborated with Vanderbilt University and Orange County Schools to transform READ 180 into a program that could be marketed to other schools in the United States. In 1999, Scholastic published the READ 180 program, and it was implemented in schools nationwide. According to the READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide (2005), through years of research, collaboration, and implementation, READ 180 has proven effective in closing the reading gap for students.

Motivation

School success depends on motivation. Guthrie and Davis (2003) researched motivation theories and found the common idea behind all theories pertained to the

context of the reading material. The type of context influenced how engaged the students were with reading. According to Gambrell and Marinak (2009), factors that influence motivation for reading are self-concept and value of reading, reading materials, and the use of incentives.

According to Gottfried (1985), reading motivation decreases as students progress from fourth to seventh grade. According to Eccles et al. (1993), middle school and elementary school differ in many ways. Middle school becomes a transition period for students. They move from one classroom with one teacher all day to moving classrooms and teachers all day. Many students struggle with the transition and become less motivated to learn.

Summary

According to the National Institute for School Leadership (2009), the role of administration must be to lead, support, and assess literacy instruction. Administrators must first assess the literacy situation using the previous five years of school data in literacy. Administrators need to use the literacy data to identify weak areas in instruction and ways to improve literacy instruction. Jones et al. (2010) noted that effective leaders make a positive impact on student learning. Effective leaders use their abilities to benefit the teachers and students.

Reading is a fundamental aspect of life and should be easily learned by students. However, some students struggle with reading and reach adolescence without learning to read. Some students struggle with reading throughout their education. Without learning to read, the students will not be successful in the 21st Century. Research has shown that a person's ability to effectively read and comprehend printed text has serious ramifications

for that individual. For students to be successful in the 21st Century, they must understand essential reading and writing practices. Most students in school learn to read and write effectively, but schools still have many students who do not read effectively enough to meet the rigorous educational standards today. Therefore, literacy must be a highly valued aspect of K-12 education (National Institute for School Leadership, 2009).

Reading should be an unconscious act; however, there are students who struggle with reading throughout their lives. Beers (2003) noted that anyone could be a struggling reader. The difference between struggling readers and effective readers lies in the fact that people are either independent readers or dependent readers. An independent reader will monitor his/her reading and can correct comprehension problems. A dependent reader cannot monitor his/her reading and relies on other people to help correct comprehension problems. Everyone has difficulty reading some types of genres. The difference lies in the ability to monitor oneself to correct any reading difficulties.

In the past there has been little research conducted on adolescences who struggle with reading. There have been attempts more recently, however, to establish a research based literacy profile for schools to use to reach struggling readers (National Institute for School Leadership, 2009).

Moore et al. (2005) noted that the main factor effecting student achievement in reading is instruction; thus, reading instruction must be focused and specific for individual student needs. According to Moats (1999), reading is a skill that is acquired, not a natural instinct for students. Therefore, teachers must focus their instruction on individual student needs.

Interventions for struggling readers must be implemented to help students reach their full potential. 21st Century technological demands encompass several areas in which

students must become effective. Students today must become independent readers, writers, and thinkers in order to be successful. Thus schools must do all they can to prepare the students for the 21st Century.

Success in school depends on motivation. The older a student gets, the less motivated he becomes to learn especially if he struggles with reading. As students progress from fourth to seventh grade, their reading motivation decreases. Middle school becomes a transition period for students. They transition from staying with the same teacher in the same classroom all day to changing classrooms and teachers all day. Once students become motivated, they will be successful in all areas of school. To become motivated to read and to stay motivated, the students must be provided with an abundance of interesting texts.

Leaders and teachers must continue to provide students with multiple strategies throughout high school to ensure all students learn and apply literacy skills. According to Norton (2007), by providing multiple strategies, leaders and teachers are providing students the opportunity to feel that they belong in a literate society.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of participating in a reading program on reading achievement for struggling readers. Additionally, the study provided an opportunity for the voices of the student participants and the teachers/administrators in READ 180 to be heard. This chapter provided a description of the research design and participants involved in the study, as well as a discussion of the data collection and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a mixed-method research design. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), a mixed-method study involves studying an individual or group by gathering and analyzing various forms of data. The implications derived from a mixed-method study are applicable to the specific individual or group studied. Students in grades six, seven, and eight in the READ 180 program participated in the mixed-method study. The READ 180 teachers and administrators at GMS also participated in the mixed-method study.

A mixed-method study is an intensive study of a single participant or participant community (Yin, 2009). A mixed-method study involves a detailed examination of a single event, thus, being referred to as a case. Collecting data, analyzing data, and making conclusions provide the systematic way mixed-method studies are conducted. A mixed-method study can be referred to as a research strategy. The research strategy for mixed-

method studies involves single and multiple data sources and can involve both quantitative and qualitative data.

The emphasis in a mixed-method study is placed on exploration and description (Merriam, 1985). Data are gathered from multiple sources in mixed-method studies thus providing more information than through statistical analysis. The researcher has more flexibility with a mixed-method study (Merriam, 1985). The flexibility of the mixed-method study provides the researcher the opportunity to begin with broad questions and then narrow the questions as the study progresses. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, allows the researcher to compare observations with quantitative results that strengthens the accuracy of the results.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), using both quantitative and qualitative methods within the study is mixed-methods research. Using both methods allows the researcher to collect and analyze more data. Also, different types of data are collected to analyze, thus strengthening the overall accuracy of the results.

The aim of quantitative research is to determine the relationship between variables (Creswell, 1994). Data were analyzed to determine if the use of READ 180 in a middle school resulted in increased reading achievement. MCT2 language arts scores from 2007 and 2008 were analyzed to determine if the reading achievement of READ 180 student participants reading achievement increased. Also, the SRI tests were analyzed to determine if READ 180 student participants increased their reading level.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1986), qualitative research seeks to understand a situation from the participants themselves. Qualitative research is descriptive. The researcher gains an understanding of the situation through words and diagrams. The researcher is the instrument for data collection and analysis. The

researcher goes to the people and the setting to observe participants in their natural surroundings. Qualitative researchers have more flexibility in the design of the study. The qualitative aspect of this study was the interviews and observations conducted by the researcher. The student, teacher, and administrator participants were interviewed to determine their perspective on the READ 180 program. Also, observations occurred in the READ 180 classroom to observe the participants engaged in the program

Participants

LCSD is a rural school district in North Mississippi that is comprised of about 15 schools and about 7500 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. GMS houses sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Currently there are approximately 725 students enrolled at GMS. The researcher is employed at GMS as an assistant principal. GMS implemented READ 180 during the 2008-2009 school year. The school purchased 60 READ 180 licenses. About 50 students were placed in the READ 180 program based on their MCT2 scores from the previous year. With the school's goal of improving student reading performance, READ 180 was purchased to use with at-risk students in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

This study was conducted in three classrooms where the READ 180 program had been implemented. The student participants for this study were minors and were assured their participation was voluntary and their responses were treated confidentially. The school and the district were not notified who participated and who did not. The study consisted of about 50 student participants. The student participants were composed of both girls and boys. Additionally, there were five teacher and administrator participants. There were three teacher participants and two school administrators.

The student participants were enrolled in the READ 180 class based on their MCT2 language scores from the 2007-2008 school year and initial test on SRI. Students who scored minimal on the MCT2 language subtest were placed in the READ 180 class because they have the greatest potential for accelerated growth. The three teacher participants were the teachers who taught the READ 180 class. The sixth grade teachers were selected as the READ 180 teachers because they are highly qualified in reading and they were the sixth grade English teachers. One of the administrators participated because he helped implement the program at the school.

The other administrator participated because she is the researcher of this case study. She is the assistant principal at GMS (see Resume in Appendix A). This is her fourth year to work at GMS. During the 2007-2008 school year, she was the media specialist. The 2008-2009 school year, which was the READ 180 implementation phase, was her first year as the assistant principal. The primary purpose in conducting this research was to determine if the use of READ 180 has resulted in increased measures of reading achievement and to understand the perception of the student and teacher participants.

Measures of Reading

The measure used to assess the effects of the READ 180 program was the language subtest from the MCT2 and the final SRI test. The MCT2 test was given to all regular education students and special education students whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifies it necessary.

The MCT2 consists of criterion-referenced reading/language arts and mathematics assessments. The MCT2 measures student achievement in reading/language arts and

mathematics in Grades 3-8 including special education students in which their IEP specifies goals aligned with Grades 3-8. The MCT2 is based on the 2006 *Mississippi Language Arts Framework-Revised* and 2007 *Mississippi Mathematics Framework-Revised*. The MCT2 allows Mississippi to comply with the test requirements of NCLB (2001). In addition the assessment results are the basis for the Mississippi state accountability system in Grades 3-8. The accountability system includes achievement, growth, and AYP. The MCT2 results also provide data used to improve instruction and student achievement (Mississippi State Department of Education, 2009).

The MCT2 contains questions of varying degrees of difficulty that are aligned to the content, skills, and processes detailed in the standards in the curriculum frameworks. The academic performance level descriptors are also aligned with the test questions. The validity of the test items was determined by the field test administration of the MCT2 during May 7-22, 2007 (Mississippi State Department of Education, 2009).

The MCT2 is administered the second week of May each year. Language Arts is administered on day one. Reading is administered on day two and mathematics on day three. The results are reported for federal and state accountability (Mississippi State Department of Education, 2009).

The SRI (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005) is a computer program that adapts to the student's reading ability. The level of each question adjusts as the students' progress through the SRI test. If the student answers a question incorrectly, the next question is less difficult. If the student answers a question correctly, the next question is more difficult. The SRI test is administered three times throughout the school year. Within the first two weeks of beginning the program, the SRI test is administered to determine the reading comprehension level of each student in Lexiles and to place each

student in the appropriate READ 180 level. The initial SRI test is also used to form the small group rotations.

According to the READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide (2005), as students' progress through the program, the SRI test should be administered again to determine any reading growth. As students Lexile scores change, instruction and small groups must be adjusted to meet the new reading levels of the students. The final SRI will allow the teacher to analyze the overall reading growth of the students in READ 180.

The SRI test allows the READ 180 teacher to determine each individual student's Lexile scores, reading level, and recommendations for students to meet grade level expectations. SRI results are norm-referenced which allows the teacher to observe how the students whether in a group, class, or grade perform as compared to the grade level proficiency range. SRI results allow the READ 180 teacher to: identify reading levels for each individual student, develop instruction for individuals and groups, appropriate group placement, select appropriate texts, measure reading progress, and evaluate student progress. (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

Data Collection Procedures

Before the researcher began this study, she requested permission from Mississippi State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B) to conduct this study. Also, written permission from the Superintendent of Education of the LCSD in Mississippi was obtained to conduct this study at GMS.

The researcher met with the student participants and passed out the consent forms for their parents. The student participants took the consent form home to their parents to read and sign. The consent forms were returned to the school and collected by the

researcher. The parent consent forms were placed in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office at GMS.

The researcher passed out the assent forms to the students whose parents had given consent for their child to participate. The students read and signed the assent forms. The assent forms were placed in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office at GMS.

Students who scored minimal on the language subtest of the MCT2 were placed in the READ 180 classroom. Within the first two weeks of the class, the SRI was given to the students to determine the appropriate READ 180 level. SRI is a computer adaptive test that measures reading comprehension based on the Lexile Framework that measures readers and texts on the same scale. The SAM reports SRI results for student as a Lexile score. SAM then places each student in the appropriate READ 180 level. READ 180 contains four instructional levels to differentiate for varying reading proficiencies. Each level allows students to practice phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension skills (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

According to the READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide (2005), the students go through small group, instructional computer software, and independent reading. During small group instruction, the students explore modeled and independent reading. Data are assessed to differentiate instruction in READ 180. The data are derived through READ 180 Topic Software, SRI, rSkills Tests, and Scholastic Reading Counts. The READ 180 Software allows the teachers to customize and manage each student's individualized proficiency level. During the study, the researcher analyzed the SRI to determine the effectiveness of READ 180.

The students were interviewed concerning their participation in READ 180. The interviews lasted about 15 minutes. Teachers and administrators were also interviewed

concerning READ 180. Each teacher in the study was interviewed concerning his or her thoughts on the READ 180 program. The administrator was also interviewed concerning his thoughts on the effectiveness of the READ 180 program. The second administrator was the researcher. The interviews for the three teachers and one administrator lasted about 15 minutes. The researcher also had informal conversations with the students, teachers, and administrator during the study. Confidentiality procedures were utilized throughout the process of gathering data.

Data Analysis

For this study, quantitative data analyses were conducted with statistical tests on the MCT2 language subtest obtained from E-Z Test Tracker and SRI test obtained from SAM. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data obtained from E-Z Test Tracker and SAM. F-ratios at the .05 level, $p \leq .05$, were used as the statistical level of significance.

Research Question 1 Did the implementation of READ 180 result in increased reading scores?

To answer Research Question 1, data obtained from E-Z Test Tracker and SAM were analyzed to determine if READ 180 increased reading achievement. The utilization of repeated-measures *t* tests requires that the observations within the treatment are independent, and the differences of scores must conform to a normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). The statistical analyses are presented in full in chapter four.

The MCT2 contains questions of varying degrees of difficulty that are aligned to the content, skills, and processes detailed in the standards in the curriculum frameworks.

The academic performance level descriptors are also aligned with the test questions (Mississippi State Department of Education, 2009).

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According to the READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide (2005), as students' progress through the program, the SRI test should be administered again to determine any reading growth. As students Lexile scores change, instruction and small groups must be adjusted to meet the new reading levels of the students. The final SRI will allow the teacher to analyze the overall reading growth of the students in READ 180.

The SRI test allows the READ 180 teacher to determine each individual student's Lexile scores, reading level, and recommendations for students to meet grade level expectations. SRI results are norm-referenced which allows the teacher to observe how the students whether in a group, class, or grade perform as compared to the grade level proficiency range. SRI results allow the READ 180 teacher to: identify reading levels for each individual student, develop instruction for individuals and groups, appropriate group placement, select appropriate texts, measure reading progress, and evaluate student progress. (READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide, 2005).

The MCT2 scores and SRI scores were used in this study for several reasons. With change or implementation of a new program, stakeholders are more likely to adapt to the change if the decision was based on data. Standardized tests allow educators to assess student performance, knowledge, and skills. According to Deerman et al. (2008), validity and reliability standards are met with standardized tests.

Research Question 2 What are the perceptions of the READ 180 student participants?

Research Question 3 What are the perceptions of the READ 180 teachers and administrators?

To answer Research Question 2 and Research Question 3, a constant comparative analysis of interviews and observations was conducted. According to Merriam (1998), the aim of constant comparative analysis is to determine any patterns in the data. The data are analyzed to determine similarities and differences. The data are then grouped based on similarities into categories. Comparisons are made between categories and properties until a theory can be developed. The objective of data analysis is to understand the data.

The students were interviewed for about 15 minutes each regarding READ 180. The information gained from the interviews was grouped into three main categories: likes of the program, dislikes of the program and motivational factor of the program. Also, observations and informal conversations occurred throughout the school year. The teachers and administrators were interviewed for about 15 minutes each regarding READ 180. The information gained from the interviews was grouped into two main categories: components of READ 180 program and student success. The information from the interviews is presented in full in chapter four.

According to Krefting (1991), trustworthiness in qualitative data seeks to assure that the findings by the researcher are worth consideration. There are four areas of trustworthiness for qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Trustworthiness was established by the following strategies.

The researcher used three procedures to gather data. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and informal continual conversations. This allowed the researcher to develop three in-depth layers of data from each participant.

To address transferability, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the procedures of this study. A detailed explanation allows other researchers to replicate this study as closely as possible. Also, the data analysis procedure is explained fully. To address dependability, the researcher relied on constant oversight from my dissertation director. Confirmation was achieved through peer evaluation from the college professors on my dissertation committee.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to better understand student participation in READ 180. Specifically, the research was to determine whether student achievement increased on the language subtest of the MCT2 after participating in READ 180. The research was conducted also to understand the perceptions of READ 180 by students and teachers. This chapter provides a description of the school and participants in the study, and then addresses the three research questions. A summary of the findings concludes the chapter. Pseudonyms are used in this study for all schools and school district, and for any persons listed.

Gauge Middle School

GMS serves students in grades sixth through eighth in the northern area of LCSD. Students come to GMS from Sautier Elementary and go to Sautier High School to complete their secondary education program. Sautier Elementary and Sautier High, which are not located on the same campus, are located about five miles from GMS.

The building that presently houses GMS was a separate K-12 school until the early 1980s. The school then became a K-9 school with students in grades 10-12 attending Sautier High School. Because of the small number of students at the K-9 school and because of overcrowding in the Sautier, the schools were reorganized during the early 1990s. Sautier Elementary served all students in grades K-6 and the former K-9 school became GMS, the middle school for all students in the district.

The original buildings at GMS date from the 1930s and the community did not want to see the school closed. Although at times it can be confusing describing the middle school for Sautier High is located in another city, the pride of being a Tiger for both Sautier and Gauge has not faltered.

GMS serves students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. At the time of this study, there were approximately 725 students enrolled at GMS. The ethnic composition of the school during the study was approximately 90% White, 8% African American, and 2% Latino.

The participating students were selected for READ 180 based on their MCT2 scores from the previous year. Students who scored minimal on the language subtest of the MCT2 were selected for READ 180. The school had a license for 60 students for READ 180. Originally, 60 students were selected for the program. These original 60 students scored minimal (the lowest ranking) on the 2007-2008 MCT2. By the end of the school year, however there were 48 students still enrolled in the program.

Once the original 60 students were selected, the administrators and READ 180 teachers examined three sets of data for the students. The three sets of data included MCT2 scores, end of year grades, and STAR Reader reading levels. A student could score below expected grade level scores on the MCT2 but not be below grade level in the other scores. The teachers and administrators examined all scores to determine if students were on grade level as administered by the other scores. If they were on grade level on class grades and STAR Reader, they were not placed in the READ 180 program. There were two students who scored minimal on MCT2, but were on grade level with the other scores and were not placed in READ 180. The teachers and administrators at GMS targeted the students who scored the highest in the minimal range since they had the

greatest potential for improvement. Also, READ 180, not GMS teachers, sets a cutoff point in which the students are considered too low to benefit from the program.

Also, since this was the initial phase of READ 180 at GMS, parents could also request that their child not participate in the program. There were two students whose parents did not want them in the program.

At the beginning of the school year, 56 students were enrolled in READ 180. By the end of the school year, there were 48 students enrolled in READ 180. Eight students in the initial group withdrew from GMS during the school year. The administrator chose not to enroll new students into the program. These 48 students were the participants for this study.

The 48 participants in this study were 11, 12, and 13 year olds and were sixth through eighth grade students. The student group consisted of 25 males and 23 females, with 33 students in sixth grade, 10 students in seventh grade, and 5 students in eighth grade. There were 23 White females, 23 White males, and 1 Black female and 1 Black male.

The administrator did not select the program to implement. The district curriculum directors selected the program for all elementary and middle schools in the county. The district covered all the initial costs of the program. The equipment and materials were purchased through district funds but the school was responsible for all upkeep of the computer equipment and materials for the students. The administrator talked to all English teachers about the program and selected the 2 sixth grade English teachers because the majority of the students selected for READ 180 were sixth graders. There were four special education teachers at GMS. The special education teacher who worked with the sixth grade volunteered to teach READ 180 because some special

education students would be in the program also. The administrator and the three teachers determined the criteria to select students for the program. The MCT2 scores were used as the determining factor. Class grades and STAR Reader were used to help identify whether students were on grade level. The teachers looked at class grades and STAR Reader scores for all the students selected. If the students were on reading grade level, they were not put in the READ 180 class. Class grades and STAR Reader were not used during the program to determine reading achievement.

Even though the principal did not select the program, he determined the class periods for READ 180. The class periods at GMS consisted of 48 minutes, but READ 180 consisted of 90 minutes; thus, each READ 180 class lasted for two periods. The seventh and eighth grade students were in one class period. The sixth grade students were divided into two class periods. There was one sixth grade teacher in each class period. The special education teacher taught the seventh and eighth grade READ 180 class by herself and helped with one sixth grade class because these classes contained special education students. The periods the sixth grade teachers were not teaching READ 180, they taught sixth grade English classes. One sixth grade class contained 19 students and one contained 14 students. The seventh and eighth grade class contained 15 students.

All regular education and special education students at GMS rotate through English, math, science, social studies, and PE throughout the school day. The students who were not in READ 180 were in math, science, social studies, or PE when the teachers were teaching READ 180. READ 180 was taught during the English class periods of students in READ 180. That is, a sixth grade student in READ 180 was in the READ 180 class while the student's classmates were in English.

The teachers selected to teach the program went to a week-long training on READ 180 the week before the 2008-2009 school year started. They received one-on-one training with a representative from Scholastic on READ 180 one day a month for the first year of implementation. The representative went through the program beginning with the first day. She discussed with the teachers during the week-long summer training on how to select students with such a limited number of slots for students to participate, what to expect during the class, the three rotations within each class, and specifically how to guide the students through the program. The representative came to GMS once a month during the first year of implementation and observed the teachers during the READ 180 class. Then they met and discussed what was correct with the program, what could be done differently, and any concerns or questions the teachers had about the program.

READ 180 is taught in a 90-minute time period. There are three rotations during the 90 time period; the rotations are 30 minutes each. The teachers use a timer to keep students on track for rotations. The students move to the next rotation when the timer sounds. Everything the students need is prescribed for them and when to use the materials is specifically stated. The three rotations are computer, silent reading, and small group. The students are divided into three groups, one for each of the three rotations. The recommended number per group is no more than nine students.

The READ 180 teacher only works with the small group. While the teacher is working with the small group, the other students are either in the silent reading or computer rotation. The small group rotation is a whole group instruction. The teacher goes over the vocabulary for the specific story they are working on for a particular unit.

For the computer rotation and silent reading rotation, the students work independently. The teacher sets a timer for 30 minutes and students move through each

rotation; when the timer buzzes the students move to another rotation. The group the teacher had been working with moved to either computer or silent reading and the teacher works with another group for 30 minutes. After 90 minutes in READ 180, each student has been through each rotation.

Results

Each research question is presented below and is followed by an analysis of the data. A response to the questions is provided.

Research Question 1

Research Question One was: Did the implementation of READ 180 result in increased reading scores? To answer this question, scores from the MCT2 and SRI were analyzed using a repeated-measures *t* tests. The utilization of repeated-measures *t* tests requires that the observations within the treatment are independent, and the differences of scores must conform to a normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). The scores of each student within the sample for both measurements are independent from each other, and the Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed that the differences of scores conformed to a normal distribution, $p = 0.92$, allowing the researcher to proceed with the analysis.

Table 4.1 outlines the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 MCT2 average scores for the READ 180 students as a group. The table shows the average MCT2 scores for all the participants by grade. The 2007-2008 MCT2 scores were used as the determining factor in placing students in the READ 180 program and are labeled the Placement MCT2. The 2008-2009 MCT2 scores were used as the indicator in determining whether the students increased their reading ability and are labeled the Indicator MCT2. The MCT2 scores were used for both as the placement in READ 180 and as the indicator for reading gain

after READ 180. The English and reading class grades and STAR Reader score or levels were only used as a reference guide to determine reading grade level. The scores were not used to determine growth.

Table 4.1 MCT2 Descriptive for READ 180 Participants

Student Grade	Frequency	2007-2008 Placement MCT2	2008-2009 Indicator MCT2
Grade 6	33	138.5	141.6
Grade 7	10	140.2	136.0
Grade 8	5	135.6	139.6

*Placement -

*Indicator -

The sixth and eighth grade READ 180 participants increased their average MCT2 scores. The seventh graders did not increase their average MCT2 score. The researcher cannot accurately explain the rationale for why the seventh grade students decreased on the MCT2. The teachers and administrators stated they cannot explain the decrease in the MCT2 scores. The teachers and administrators can make an assumption of fatigue, lack of motivation, uneasiness, stress, sickness, time of day, temperature in room, etc. to explain the decrease for the seventh grade but cannot know for certain. The decrease could be associated with the limited number (10) of seventh grade students in READ 180.

The MCT2 score reference for language arts is basically the same set for grades third through eighth. The range in scores is 0-190 for language arts. The lowest score a student can score is 0 and the highest is 190. The range of 0-137 puts them in the minimal range. A student who scores 137 or below on the MCT2 falls into the minimal range set by the Mississippi Department of Education. For the 2008-2009 school year MCT2, the

READ 180 teachers set a goal of 138 and above on the MCT2 for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in READ 180 to show improvement.

Table 4.2 outlines the MCT2 average scores for the students at GMS not in READ 180. The sixth and seventh grade students also decreased their 2008-2009 MCT2 scores. The teachers and administrators cannot say for certain why the students' scores decreased. An assumption of fatigue, time of day, lighting in the room, temperature in room, student mood, etc can be made about the decrease. The eighth grade students not in READ 180 increased their MCT2 scores from their 2007-2008 MCT2 scores.

Table 4.2 MCT2 Descriptive For Students Not In READ 180

Student Grade	Frequency	2007-2008 MCT2	2008-2009 MCT2
Grade 6	244	150.3	149.8
Grade 7	222	148.0	147.4
Grade 8	227	147.7	149.4

The SRI is a computer program that adapts to the student's ability. The level of each question adjusts as the students' progress through the SRI test. If the student answers a question incorrectly, the next question is less difficult. If the student answers a question correctly, the next question is more difficult. According to the READ 180 Teacher Implementation Guide (2005), the SRI test is administered three times throughout the school year. Within the first two weeks of beginning the program, the SRI test is administered to determine the reading comprehension level of each student in Lexiles and to place each student in the appropriate READ 180 level. The initial SRI test is also used to form small group rotations. The SRI score taken in mid-year is not used in

determining growth within the program. The first and last SRI scores are compared to determine overall growth.

GMS had 48 students in grades sixth-eighth with valid SRI data at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school year. The mean pre-test SRI score for all students in READ 180 for GMS was 520. The mean post-test SRI score for all students in READ 180 for GMS was 644. The mean SRI gain for GMS was 124. The approximate grade level gain for the READ 180 participants was 1.6 and 64% of the READ 180 participants had over a one year gain. There were five students who achieved three years reading growth in the year they participated in READ 180. One sixth grade White female regular education student, one seventh grade Black female regular education student, two seventh grade White female regular education students, and one eighth grade White male regular education student achieved three years growth in reading after participating in the program.

Table 4.3 shows the first SRI scores and final SRI scores. The first SRI was administered during the first two weeks of school. The final SRI was administered during the last two weeks of school. The students increased their final SRI scores from the first SRI test given at the beginning of the year.

Table 4.3 Summary of SRI Data for READ 180 Participants

Student Grade	First SRI Score	Final SRI Score
Grade 6	489.5	716.0
Grade 7	657.0	941.0
Grade 8	598.0	869.0

Table 4.4 shows the pre-reading level, post reading level, and the grade level gain per class for the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade READ 180 participants. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes increased their reading level by one grade level. The grade level gain was the grade level gain in reading for the class as a whole.

Table 4.4 Reading Levels for READ 180 Participants

Student Grade	Pre-Reading Grade Level	Post Reading Grade Level	Grade Level Gain
Grade 6	3.0	4.2	1.2
Grade 7	4.0	5.0	1.0
Grade 8	5.0	6.1	1.1

A repeated-measures *t* test was used to examine the data. The MCT2 scores and SRI scores were combined for all the grade levels. That is, the MCT2 pretest scores for sixth grade, seventh grade, and eighth grade students were combined to create a pretest score. The MCT2 posttest scores for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were combined to create a posttest score. A test was not conducted on each grade level because the researcher was determining if reading improved after participating in the program. The limited number of students in seventh and eighth grade limited further analysis. Additionally, cell sizes of 10 (for seventh grade) and 5 (for eighth grade) were too small for individual analysis.

The repeated-measures *t* test showed no statistically significant difference between the MCT2 mean scores prior to READ 180 treatment ($M = 138.46, SD = 7.53$) and the MCT2 mean scores after the implementation of READ 180 program ($M = 140.13, SD = 8.72$) at the 0.05 alpha level, $t(47) = 1.22, p = 0.23$. However, the repeated-

measured *t* test showed a statistically significant difference between the SRI mean scores prior to READ 180 treatment ($M = 512.19, SD = 155.32$) and the SRI mean scores after the implementation of the READ 180 program ($M = 639.15, SD = 25.40$) at the 0.05 alpha level, $t(47) = 5.94, p < .01, r^2 = 0.43$. For these data, 43% of the variance in the scores is explained by the effect of READ 180. In addition, Cohen's *d* value of 0.86 illustrates a large effect size.

The students showed a statistically significant increase on the SRI test. The SRI adapts to the students reading level. The adaptability of the difficulty of the questions explains for the increase in the SRI test scores. If a student answers a question correctly, the questions become progressively more difficult. If a student misses a question, the questions become less difficult. Also, the SRI test each student takes is not on the student's current grade level. The test is on reading level prescribed in READ 180. A student who is actually enrolled in the sixth grade and should be on sixth grade reading level, but there are many students who are behind grade reading level. However, if the student is not on sixth grade reading level, but on a fourth grade reading level, then the SRI test is on a fourth grade level. This helps account for the statistical difference in SRI scores. The MCT2 is on the student's current grade level not their actual (lower) reading level. As a written test, the questions on the MCT2 will not vary depending on the student correct or incorrect answer. This helps account for the virtual non-difference in MCT2 scores.

Based on the MCT2, the students showed no statistical increase on the MCT2. However, based on the SRI scores, the students showed a statistical increase. The students had scored minimal on the MCT2 when they began READ 180 and they scored minimal on MCT2 after going through READ 180. The students were below grade

reading level when they began the program and increased their reading level based on the SRI but did not increase reading level to grade reading level. The MCT2 is given on grade reading level not the below grade reading level of the students. All the students increased on the SRI. The SRI is given on their below grade reading level and is adaptive to the students' responses.

The students in sixth and eighth grade increased their MCT2 scores and improved their SRI scores. The students in sixth and eighth grade still scored minimal on the MCT2 after going through READ 180. They increased their reading level, but not enough to make up the difference on the reading level of the MCT2. The seventh grade students decreased on the MCT2 but increased their SRI scores. The seventh grade students showed improvement in their reading level; however, the teachers and administrators could not explain the rationale for the decrease. The teachers and administrator stated that fatigue, stress, the environment, student mood, etc could be factors in the decrease.

Research Question 2

Research Question Two asked: What are the perceptions of the READ 180 student participants? To answer this question, observations and interviews were conducted to gain the perception of the students and teachers. The perceptions of the students were developed into three main categories based on interviews and continual conversations. The three categories include likes of the program, dislikes of the program, and motivational factor of the program.

The student interviews were conducted during the READ 180 class period. When the students had individual reading time, the researcher called them one at a time into the hallway and talked with them about the program. The researcher did not record the

interviews so the students would not feel too nervous. The researcher took notes during the interviews as the students talked about the program. The interviews lasted about 15 minutes so the students still had time for their individual silent reading time. Also, throughout the school year the researcher had many informal continual conversations with the students, discussing the program and listening to their comments within the small group rotation with the teacher.

The students knew the researcher so they were open to talking to her and were very comfortable talking to her. The students were receptive to the questions the researcher asked and did not hesitate in their answers. The students were very detailed and told her specifically their experiences with and thoughts about the program.

The researcher also observed the classroom numerous times during the study. The students did not seem in any way intimidated by her being in the room. The teachers did not seem to change their instruction when the researcher was in the room. The students and the teachers did not seem bothered by her observing in the room. As assistant principal, the researcher is in the classrooms frequently.

Students loved the computer rotation part of the program. They worked individually on the computer on their prescribed reading level. They also liked that other students did not know their reading level. The most common factor students discussed was that they could work on their own pace without waiting on all students to proceed to the next lesson. The students worked on their own reading levels at their own pace. The constant theme the researcher identified from the interviews of the students was the program allowed them to read on their reading level: no one knew their reading level, no one was waiting on them to finish reading something, and no one was making fun of them for what they were reading.

Through constant observations in the READ 180 classroom, the students demonstrated that the audiobook rotation was very important and beneficial to them. The students liked to have a book read to them. If they did not know how to pronounce a word, they could listen to the word as it was pronounced. A sixth grade White female regular education student stated,

Some words I overlook because I do not know how to say it. This part of the program allows me to hear the word without me having to ask how to say it and then being made fun of for not knowing.

Overall, the students liked the opportunity to move around the room, work at their own pace, and be read to by someone else.

The major dislike of the program was the testing aspect. The students stated they did not like the SRI test and individual tests for the books they read. This is not surprising to me, given the amount of testing (placement, pretesting, pacing, end of unit, nine-weeks, common assessments, MCT2, SRI, etc) with which our students are faced.

Even though they did not like the SRI test, they realized the importance of the SRI test to show their growth. An eighth grade White regular education male stated, “I do not like the test I have to take in the program, but it shows me how I am improving in my reading. I like to see the scores increase from the previous test I took.”

Most of the students did not like the silent reading rotation during the program. The only setback the students indicated they had during the program was having to read on their own. The students did not know if they were being successful when having to participate in silent reading. As stated by a seventh grade White male special education student,

Why do I have to read by myself? I am in this program because I cannot read and now I have to sit for 30 minutes and read by myself. I do not understand the majority of the words when I read by myself.

Motivation was a factor of READ 180 noted by the students. They were motivated to be more successful. When they saw how much they could accomplish through their reading, they became more motivated to be successful in all subject areas. A sixth grade Black male regular education student stated, "I am reading so much better now ... I can walk around with my head held high and can participate in my other classes and help other students." Students indicated they were motivated to see the progress they were making. They also indicated they liked seeing their SRI scores continually increase.

Motivation was the biggest factor influencing the students' success as evidenced by the following quotes: an eighth grade White female regular education , "I love seeing my test grades in other classes now. I am actually passing on my own." A sixth grade regular education Black male stated, "I understand what I am reading and it makes sense." An eighth grade regular education White male stated, "My teachers brag on me now instead of constantly telling me to try harder. . . . I do not get sent to office for being the trouble student anymore."

Research Question 2 addressed the perceptions of the students about the program. The students were very receptive to the program and believed the program helped them become more motivated to learn to read. They became motivated to be successful in all subjects because of the confidence they gained by going through the program. The students liked the program and experienced success after participating in the program.

The program has helped the students tremendously. Motivation has been the single most important factor the students gained. Their reading levels did improve, but

the motivation to work in all subject areas was very important. For once the students believed they could work and understand something. Overall, the students responded very positively to the program as evidenced by the following comments: “This program helped me understand how to read. No one ever explained it in a way that made any sense to me. I was just always told to read when I did not understand what I was reading” stated an eighth grade White female special education student. A seventh grade Black male regular education student noted,

At the beginning of the school year, I was embarrassed to be in the READ 180 class, but after I began understanding things I was reading I was not embarrassed. I was proud to tell people I was in the class. The best part I liked about the class was that no one knew what I was reading. I did not feel bad for getting a low level book because no one knew.

A seventh grade White male special education student noted that,

My behavior improved in all my classes from being in the class. I was the big goof off in class to cover my not being able to read. I do not have to be the class clown now because I understand what I am doing.

A sixth grade White female regular education student stated, “My grades improved in all my classes from my being in READ 180. I understand how to read now and not just fake my way through something.” The teachers worked together very well to implement the program.

Based on the interviews with the students and the observations in the classroom, the researcher understood READ 180 helped them improve their reading and their motivation. The students’ behavior has improved because of the confidence gained from

their improved reading. The students' want to do better in all their other courses based on their improvement in reading.

Research Question 3

Research Question Three asked: What are the perceptions of the READ 180 teachers and administrators? The teacher interviews were conducted during their planning periods. The interviews lasted about 15 minutes and the researcher also had numerous informal continual conversations with the teachers about the program. The teachers knew the researcher so the interview process did not intimidate them. The teachers openly talked about the program. The teachers discussed their hesitations and fears about beginning the program. The observations did not intimidate the teachers. The teachers welcomed the researcher into the classroom to showcase the program and how receptive the students were to the program.

The researcher interviewed the administrator after school on several different occasions. The administrator and the researcher had worked together so he openly discussed any hesitations he had about the program. He also praised the program for the success the students seemed to be gaining. The administrator and the researcher observed the classroom together on several occasions and discussed the observations with the teachers.

The perceptions of the teachers were compiled into two main themes. The main themes include components of READ 180 program and student success.

The teachers found the initial planning for READ 180 very difficult and worked together to understand how to begin the program. The district mandated READ 180 for all students in third through eighth grade in all schools. Therefore, for the first year, the

district set the dates for the SRI test so the teachers would not be so overwhelmed. Once the teachers began going through the books and lessons for READ 180, they became much more relaxed about teaching the program. The teachers became familiar with the program and were comfortable teaching the program after going through a five day training session the week before the school year began. The training was conducted at a middle school in the district that had used the program the year before. The teachers from that school were at the training and helped with questions the new teachers would have about the program and planning. A sixth grade teacher noted, “I was very apprehensive going to the first day of training and I felt overwhelmed when I left that day. But each day I understood more and felt somewhat less apprehensive about beginning the program.”

READ 180 is a 90-minute block and, at first, this caused the teachers anxiety. They were not used to having students for more than 50 minutes at a time. The extra 40 minutes caused them stress. They were unfamiliar with teaching the extra time and were worried they would not have enough for the students to do in the class. Once the teachers worked through the planning for the three rotations in READ 180 and once they realized each rotation is a 30-minute block, they were not as apprehensive about the time frame. One of the sixth grade teachers noted,

I felt at the beginning that I had no clue what to do, I was overwhelmed with information. But once I went through the books and the first training, I was relieved. It is all laid out ready to teach. I didn't have to look for extra material or anything for the students to do. It was all there for me to use.

Each rotation within the program was outlined completely for the teacher and they do not have to add any extra materials to it. The teachers like not having to find extra

materials to use with the students. The teachers stated they loved the easiness of the transitions and how smoothly the transitions between the rotations occurred. The special education teacher noted:

I loved the easiness of the transitions between the rotations. The students did not cause problems. They liked being able to move around and waited to hear the time buzz so they could move to another station without me having to tell them.

Student success was the second component of the interviews and observations. The students loved seeing their improvements in reading. The READ 180 teachers indicated the other teachers at GMS described how the motivation of the students in READ 180 had increased. The READ 180 students were motivated in other subject areas, more confident in answering out in their other classes, and more motivated to read more material.

There were 21 of the sixth graders and 5 of the seventh graders in the program again the next year. About 7 of the sixth graders and 3 of the seventh graders did not return to GMS for the next school year. The eighth graders completed the program and when the school year was over, were promoted to the high school. This left 34 slots to add new students to the program for the next year. The 26 returning READ 180 students were highly motivated by the program and wanted to continue their success in reading. One of the sixth grade regular education teachers noted,

Once the students saw their increases in reading from just READ 180, they became more confident in the READ 180 classroom. Other teachers then came and told me how much more they were participating in class and how much their grades were improving.

However, the eighth grade students in READ 180 promoted to the high school were still below grade level in reading. The eighth graders in READ 180 entered high school on sixth grade reading level. There were eighth grade students not eligible for READ 180 and some who were eligible for READ 180 but there were not enough available slots for all that were below grade level in reading. These students entered ninth grade three, four, five, or six years behind in reading. The high school administrators and teachers will have to determine how to intervene with these students. If an intervention program is not implemented with these students, it seems obvious they will not pass the high school subject area tests required for graduation.

All the teachers noted the increasing motivation for student success as the greatest result of READ 180. The teachers stated the students liked to see their scores in all their subjects improve. The students experienced success in reading and could understand something they read. Some of the comments made by the students to the teachers and to me included:

“This program has helped me so much, for once I can read.”

“This program gave me the courage to read in front of other students.”

“I may still be behind in my reading but I can now at least understand some of what I am reading and I want to do more in all my classes now.”

“For once when I read something I actually understood what the words meant.”

The students in the program were still reading below their grade level, but they were understanding content at a higher level and making small gains, which in turn motivated them even more. To help the students experience success, the regular education teachers broke their individual class assignments into smaller segments and divide their test into small sections so the students could make small improvements in

class grades. The regular education teachers required the students to read on the grade level they were in, but made small adjustments to the assignments to help them. Generally, students want to be successful, but at times can become frustrated. The teachers stated how the students, like the teachers, were frustrated in the beginning of READ 180, but with each day they became less frustrated and more motivated to learn.

The administrator also observed more motivation from the students in the program. Students told him daily how much they liked the program and how much the program had helped them with their reading skills. The students improved their reading levels, some more drastically than others, but the administrator considered any improvement to be great. Even though the students did not reach their grade level in reading, they did make some improvement in reading. An eighth grade White female student told me,

I am not reading on eighth grade level like I should be but I have gained so much confidence from the small improvements that I have made that I want to keep on improving. For once in my life, I enjoy reading. I look forward to reading and finishing a book. Thank you for buying this program and helping me read.

The success the students experienced in reading added to their confidence in other areas.

The researcher was the other administrator involved in the study. The researcher is the assistant principal at the GMS. The program was already selected and being implemented when she was hired as the assistant principal. The researcher did work with the teachers and the principal selecting students for the program. The researcher also conducted all the observations and interviews for this research. The researcher talked to the teachers during their planning period and the observations were conducted during the READ 180 class time on several different occasions.

During the course of this study, the researcher discovered themes of the students and teachers. The themes that emerged from the interviews with the students were likes of the program, dislikes of the program, and the motivational factor of the program. The students quickly pointed out the dislikes about the program. They did not like the testing aspect of the program. Even though they were behind in reading, they did not like to have to take a test. The students were very motivated from the program once they saw their improvements in READ 180 and other classes.

The themes that emerged from the interviews with the teachers were components of READ 180 and student success. The planning for READ 180 worried the teachers at first, but after training and support from each other, the administrators, and READ 180 trainers, the teachers became less apprehensive. Student success was another emergent theme. The students showed more success with each day in the program. Even though the MCT2 scores did not increase, the students did increase their reading level.

Summary and Discussion

The study focused on the implementation of a reading program at a middle school to increase reading achievement for the school. The 2007-2008 MCT2 was used as the placement criteria for placement into READ 180. The 2008-2009 MCT2 was used as the indicator for measuring reading gain after READ 180. The SRI tests were used to determine the measure the reading levels of the students in the program. READ 180 was implemented with 56 students who had scored minimal on the 2007-2008 MCT2. By the end of the school year, there were 48 students still enrolled in the program. The SRI tests were given three times throughout the program and the students took the MCT2 again at the end of the year. Only the first and last SRI scores were used to determine the growth

or regression in reading levels. The program is set up to only use first and last SRI tests for growth. The second SRI is only given to see if adjustments need to be made to the activities the students work on during independent time.

The students increased their SRI score from the first one given at the beginning of the school year. Most students increased at least two grade levels in reading. On average the students experienced a grade level improvement in reading. The sixth grade increased their reading grade level from 3.0 to 4.2 for a 1.2 grade level gain. The seventh grade increased their reading grade level from 4.0 to 5.0 for a 1.0 grade level gain. The eighth grade increased their reading grade level from 5.0 to 6.1 for a 1.1 grade level gain.

There was no statistically significant difference between the 2007-2008 MCT2 scores and the 2008-2009 MCT2 scores. The MCT2 is given on grade level. The students in READ 180 were not on their grade level in reading; however, they had to take the MCT2 on their current grade level. The MCT2 is a written test. For some questions students have to read several pages at one time and then answer the questions. Students who struggle with reading become frustrated with having so much material to read that is on a reading level higher than their reading level. This helps account for no increase on the MCT2. Frustration with reading the material may also account for the decrease in the seventh grade students MCT2 score. The teachers and administrators cannot explain the rationale for why the seventh grade students decreased on the MCT2.

There was a statistical significant difference in the beginning SRI test scores and the final SRI test scores. The SRI tests within the READ 180 program are given on the students reading level not grade level. The student may be in sixth grade, but reading on a third grade level. The SRI test for the student is on the third grade reading level ability

not the sixth grade level. The SRI is a computer adaptive test. The students get questions with varying degrees of difficulty based on their responses.

This accounts for the students increasing their reading achievement after being in READ 180. All the students increased their SRI scores from the beginning of the program to the end of the program. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students achieved a year's reading growth in one year. The sixth grade students increased their reading grade level from third grade to fourth grade. The seventh grade students increased their reading grade level from fourth to fifth grade. The eighth grade students increased their reading grade level from fifth to sixth grade. Five students achieved three years reading growth in the year they participated in READ 180.

Also, the perceptions of the teachers and students were analyzed. Both indicated that the students saw increases in their reading ability and became more motivated to read and be successful. The teachers also saw the benefit of the program with the students. Students who were once trouble makers and unmotivated in the classroom became more successful and tried harder in class to be successful. The students did not increase their MCT2 scores, but they did increase their reading levels.

According to Wren (2003), by the time students reach second or third grade, most should be reading proficiently. After third grade, students should be reading to learn. No student in middle or high school should be learning to read. However, there are adolescents who struggle with reading. Interventions should begin earlier for students who struggle with reading to get them back on their grade reading level. The material they are required to read for academic courses will make sense to them and they will be prepared to take the MCT2 which is on their intended grade reading level. Also, students can read on grade level if interventions are started earlier than middle school.

The students in READ 180 at GMS were past third grade and struggling with reading. The students in the program were struggling with all their classes and some were behavior problems for the teachers. READ 180 helped them improve their reading, but without continuous interventions it is doubtful the students will continue to make progress in their reading.

The literature review described the characteristics of a struggling reader. According to Deshler et al. (1996), struggling readers are characterized as “lacking motivation, possessing little self-confidence, experiencing difficulty making and keeping friends, and displaying a host of maladaptive behaviors” (p.25). Also, the research points out that a struggling reader will never read on grade level. Deshler et al. noted a struggling reader will never make adequate yearly progress with their grade level instruction. Interventions must be implemented to support a struggling reader. The students can make improvements but they will never reach grade level. This relates directly to the findings of the study because the students increased their reading level but did not increase enough to be on reading grade levels as measured by the MCT2. They did not increase their MCT2 scores which is a standardized test students take on their grade level. However, they did increase their reading level on the SRI test in READ 180. The SRI test is a computer adaptive test and students take it on their reading level ability, not their reading levels for their current grades.

According to Ambe (2007), struggling adolescent readers have been labeled as “unsuccessful, passive, disengaged, disenchanting, helpless, resistant, alienated, or low achieving” (p. 632). The students at GMS who were in the READ 180 classes were unsuccessful, passive, helpless, resistant, and low achieving. The students at GMS stated

that the program helped them become more successful which in turn helped them work harder instead of being passive in all their classes.

Fisher (2008) noted that struggling adolescent readers who are reading on a fourth grade level will intentionally not work with materials intended for fourth grade reading instruction. The students in READ 180 at GMS stated this also. They liked that other students could not or did not know what they were reading. They were not picked on for reading a low level book. The program helped with their reading and self-confidence.

According to Irvin (1997), most schools do not offer reading instruction past fourth grade. Reading instruction at the middle and high school level has appeared to be a low priority even though secondary students struggle with reading. This is evidenced in the study by GMS only having 60 slots available for students who are below reading grade level, and the high school not having a reading intervention program for students who struggle with reading.

According to Cooper et al. (2006), there are many children who struggle with reading. Instead of advocating remediation, Cooper et al. suggest teachers use interventions developed on the diagnosis of each student's reading difficulties. Read 180 is only one of the many interventions available to use with struggling readers

The students in READ 180 for this study began the program three years behind in reading grade level. In READ 180, the students could average a year's growth in reading, but the students will begin the next school year three years behind reading grade level. At this rate, students will never catch up to their grade level in reading. Students not selected for the program were even further behind, and they will require even more work to catch up to their grade levels in reading.

According to Elkins and Luke (1999), teachers must let go of old teaching ways and adapt new strategies. This is extremely difficult for secondary teachers because they are content area teachers not reading teachers. They have the students for 45 to 50 minutes a day. Secondary teachers find it difficult to teach reading plus content in a limited time frame. Reading interventions at the secondary level are difficult to implement with the time frame for each class period. Schools must continue to teach reading until a student learns to read. READ 180 was implemented in K-8 schools not at the high school level. The students leaving GMS were still three, four, five reading grade levels behind but still had to take high school level classes on grade level and pass the required subject area tests for graduation.

Motivation is a problem for many of the struggling readers. According to Cooper et al. (2006), knowing how to read motivates students to read more. This relates to the findings of this study because the students stated they were more motivated to be successful in all subject areas as a result of their gains in reading. As a sixth grade White male regular education student stated, "I am reading so much better now. I can walk around with my head held high."

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of participating in a reading program on reading achievement for struggling readers. Additionally, the study provided an opportunity for the voice of the student participants and the teachers/administrators in READ 180 to be heard. This chapter provides a summary of the study, implications of the findings, and recommendations for GMS and for future research.

Summary

Student achievement has become a focus for schools all across the United States. In spite of emphasis on reading and writing, standardized test scores indicate that United States students' reading skills are insufficient. In an effort to identify a means of solving the problem of low achievement levels in reading, the school implemented a reading program for Grades 6-8.

Low achievement in literacy forms the foundation for many problems facing secondary students, teachers, and administrators. Scheffel et al. (2003) noted that students who do not become proficient readers before leaving secondary school will more than likely be undereducated, underemployed, and underutilized in the global society of the 21st Century. The important issue is to research and implement literacy interventions at the secondary level. Low literacy achievement forms the foundation for many problems adolescents face. Brandt (2003) noted that literacy is a crisis in secondary schools because the economy is changing. Developing information and ideas has replaced labor

as the economic pursuits. States and school districts are striving to close the achievement gap for all students so they can be successful in a technological world.

Reading achievement was low across LCSD. The district purchased a reading intervention program and implemented the program in all K-8 schools. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was an increase in student reading achievement after participating in READ 180. Also, the study provides an opportunity for the voice of the student participants and the teachers/administrators in the reading program to be heard.

The following research questions were developed:

1. Did the implementation of READ 180 result in increased reading scores?
2. What are the perceptions of the READ 180 student participants?
3. What are the perceptions of the READ 180 teachers and administrators?

School success depends on motivation; the need or drive that moves behavior toward a specific goal. Setting, people, and task influence student motivation. Factors that influence motivation for reading include self-concept, value of reading, book selection, book discussion time, types of text, and use of incentives. Gambrell and Marinak (2009) identified self-concept and value of reading, selection of reading materials, and use of incentives as factors that influence motivation. The common theme behind all motivation theories pertained to the context of the reading material. The context influenced how engaged the students were with reading. Once students become motivated and want to continue to read, they will become more successful readers. Initially this research looked at motivation as a theoretical framework for middle school students; however, the improvement in reading served as a motivation for students beyond reading. The students were motivated to attend school more, to decrease behavior problems, and to work harder in other classes.

According to Guthrie and Davis (2003), students become less motivated to read as they progress to middle school. As students progress toward middle school they become less motivated to read. Middle school becomes a major transition for students moving from one classroom with one teacher to a complex system of changing classrooms and teachers. Many students struggle and become less motivated.

The literature review outlined struggling readers and why it is difficult to identify struggling readers. A struggling reader is defined as someone whom is experiencing difficulty learning to read. There are nine areas that a student can struggle with in reading. No two struggling readers are the same. Each struggling reader possesses a different area or areas that require interventions and secondary teachers are content teachers not reading teachers; thus, it becomes a struggle for students and teachers.

According to Ambe (2007), struggling readers have been labeled long before they reach middle school. These students struggle with all content areas because of their lack of reading skills. They will try to memorize material instead of learning it. These students in turn become trouble makers and labeled as the low achievers.

Struggling readers must be involved with multiple and various opportunities to practice new skills and to practice reading. According to Deshler et al. (1996), struggling readers are characterized as “lacking motivation, possessing little self-confidence, experiencing difficulty making and keeping friends, and displaying a host of maladaptive behaviors” (p. 25). Students who enter middle school with reading deficiencies have found it difficult to succeed. School becomes difficult to students who struggle with reading. Deshler et al. noted a struggling reader will never make adequate yearly progress with his grade level instruction. Interventions must be implemented to support a struggling reader.

According to Norton (2007), teachers must use a multitude of practices and strategies to help struggling readers over their deficiencies in reading. Intervention programs must address not only printed text but media and information technologies all around them. Reading is a fundamental aspect of life and should be easy. However, some students struggle with reading and reach adolescence without learning to read. Students will not be successful in 21st Century without learning to read.

Interventions must be implemented early in a child's educational journey for the student to be successful. According to Cooper et al. (2006), over time students can learn to read with a specific intervention implemented early in a child's education. Without an intervention, a struggling reader will never learn to read. If interventions are implemented during adolescence, a struggling reader will never read on grade level. The interventions for adolescents can make small improvements but will never catch the child up to where they should be reading. According to Cooper et al., teachers must use interventions developed on the diagnosis of each student's reading difficulties. The researchers composed five components teachers and administrators should use to develop an intervention: (a) assess and diagnose, (b) teach/reteach, (c) practice, (d) apply, (e) reassess. Using this approach allows teachers to scaffold readers who struggle and to provide the necessary components to become competent readers.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was an increase in student reading achievement after participating in READ 180. Additionally, the study provides an opportunity for the voices of the student participants and the teachers/administrators in READ 180 to be heard. The design for this study was a mixed method of the READ 180 program at GMS. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods within the study allowed the researcher to collect and analyze more data. Different types of data were

collected and analyzed, thus, strengthening the overall accuracy of the results. The quantitative data for this study were the MCT2 and SRI scores. The qualitative data for this study were observations and interviews. These different types of data were important to the study because the researcher analyzed the MCT2 for state accountability student performance, the SRI data for specific student performance, and the observations and interviews to understand how the students and teachers felt READ 180 helped them.

GMS is a rural school in North Mississippi. GMS houses sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. This study was conducted in three classrooms where the READ 180 program has been implemented. The study consisted of 48 student participants who were boys and girls in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at GMS. There were three teacher participants and two school administrators.

The student participants were enrolled in READ 180 based on their MCT2 language scores from the 2007-2008 school year. Students who scored minimal on the MCT2 language subtest were placed in READ 180 because they had the greatest potential for accelerated growth on the MCT2. For this study, quantitative data analyses were conducted with statistical tests on the MCT2 language subtest obtained from E-Z Test Tracker and SRI test obtained from SAM.

This study was conducted in three classrooms where READ 180 had been implemented. The student participants were minors and were assured their participation was voluntary and their response was treated confidentially. The study consisted of 48 students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in READ 180. There were five teacher and two administrator participants.

The measure used to assess the effects of the READ 180 program was the language subtest scores from the 2007-2008 MCT2 and the 2008-2009 MCT2. The

beginning SRI test scores and final SRI test scores were also used to assess the effects of the READ 180 program.

To answer Research Question 1, a repeated-measures *t* test was used as the statistical analysis. To answer Research Question 2 and 3, a constant comparative analysis was conducted.

The measure used to assess the effects of READ 180 was the language subtest of the MCT2 and the first and last SRI test. The MCT2 is given in May every year. The SRI is given three times throughout the school year. The first and last SRI scores are used to determine growth.

A repeated-measures *t* test was used to analyze the data. Based on the *t* test, there was no difference in the MCT2 scores. The seventh grade student scores decreased on the MCT2. The teachers and administrators do not know exactly how to interpret the decrease. The researcher did not know the reasons for the decrease. Fatigue, uneasiness, stress, sickness, etc could explain the decrease for the seventh graders. The seventh graders increased their reading level in READ 180 based on the SRI test. However, the SRI test showed a statistical difference for all the students. The SRI scores increased indicating the students improved their reading level.

To answer Research Question 2, observations and interviews were conducted to gain the perception of the students. The perceptions of the students were developed into three main themes based on interviews and continual conversations. The three emergent themes included likes of the program, dislikes of the program, and motivational factor of the program.

The findings from the study relate directly to the literature review. The students in the READ 180 became more confident with reading and other subject areas after going

through the program. They became more motivated to read and learn. For once, the students felt successful at something and wanted to continue to improve. The students did improve their reading levels, but the motivation to work in all subject areas was very important. The students were not frustrated at the end of the program. They believed they could be successful. Their self-esteem improved greatly after going through the program.

A common theme among the students was motivation. They were more motivated to learn than any other time during the education. Motivation is described as the need or drive that moves behavior toward a specific goal. Setting, people, and task influences student motivation. The READ 180 setting increased the motivation of the students in all their courses.

To answer Research Question 3, interviews and observations were conducted to gain the perceptions of the teachers about READ 180. The perceptions of the teachers were compiled into two main themes. The main themes included components of READ 180 program and student success.

A common theme among the teachers was student success. The students improved their reading level in READ 180. Even though they were still below grade level in reading, they made improvements which helped them understand what they were reading. Gambrell and Marinak (2009) identified self-concept and value of reading as factors that can influence motivation. The students in READ 180 for once gained self-concept and value of reading because they understood what they were reading.

Implications

Students in middle school struggle with the transition to a more complex system than what they were used to in elementary school. Any instructional method that assists in maintaining the focus and participation of middle school students would be valuable.

READ 180 is an intervention program designed to fit a student's reading level. If a student is three grades behind in reading, all the activities in READ 180 are designed around the lower reading level not the student's grade level. Standardized tests are given on student's grade level regardless of their reading level. The students have trouble reading the test and their scores on the test reflect reading ability more than the knowledge of the content of the subject tested.

Student motivation is another implication from this study. As students become more successful, their behavior improves. Students may get in trouble because they are frustrated sitting in classrooms when they cannot read the assignments, the homework, tests, etc.

Increasing reading achievement is important not the reading program. Any reading program could be used to increase student reading achievement not just READ 180. This study was not an evaluation of the effectiveness of READ 180. The important concept to look at is improving reading abilities of students, not the program used to increase reading (Gambrell & Marinak, 2009).

Also, students in the sixth grade who are behind in reading have spent five years getting behind in reading. Exposure to one reading program over one year cannot make up for five years of struggling with reading.

While we do not know the reading level of students who scored above minimal, indications are they are not reading on grade level, either. These students also need some additional help in reading.

Students whose test scores indicate they struggle in academics need an intervention to help them be successful and score above minimal on the MCT2. Reading levels of students may play a role in their academic struggles.

Another implication is when a reading intervention should be implemented with a student. If after third grade they should be reading to learn, the intervention should begin as early as possible. Students can be identified before fourth grade with a reading deficiency. The intervention should begin when the deficiency is first observed. Teachers become overwhelmed with teaching content and trying to remediate students who fall behind in some area. What is important, as Gambrell and Marinak (2009) noted, is increasing reading abilities, not the program used to do so.

Student behavior is another implication. If students are disruptive because they are struggling, an academic intervention program can help them be successful academically and can help reduce disruptive behavior. This was certainly a finding in this study.

Also, other subject areas need to be examined. A student below grade level in reading cannot be successful in other areas since the content should be on grade level, not the students reading level which may be below grade level. Teachers must accommodate students who are struggling readers, but they also teach on grade level.

Testing is also an area of concern. Students are constantly taking a test whether it is a teacher made test, district mandated tests, or state mandated tests. The students feel

overwhelmed with constantly taking so many tests particularly when they struggle to read the tests and become frustrated.

Standardized test are given on grade level, not reading level. Students who struggle with reading have to take standardized test on their current grade level even though they struggle with reading and are below grade level in reading.

Recommendations

There are a number of areas regarding GMS, LCSD, and READ 180 that need to be thoroughly researched. Based on the findings from this study, the following are recommendations for future research:

GMS and LCSD

This study focused on 48 students in middle school who struggled with reading. Future research could be conducted with a larger sample size, which could include all students who are below reading grade level to determine if the findings are consistent with this study.

GMS only had 60 available slots. There were 348 students reading below proficient on the MCT2 at GMS for the school year the program was implemented. This needs to be addressed by the school and by the school district. The school and the school district need to find a way to intervene with all the students who are reading below the proficiency level.

GMS must address which age or grade to focus more intently on to see improvements in reading. Adolescents who struggle with reading are very difficult to work with in reading. The earlier an intervention is implemented has a greater chance to be successful with the student. GMS must address what grade to begin working with very

intently to improve reading. GMS cannot wait until students are three years behind in reading to attempt to catch them.

This study was also isolated to a specific school in a rural setting. Future studies should focus on an entire district or other schools in the state so that generalizations of the data can be made. The results of this study can only be applied to GMS and cannot be applied to research already conducted on reading achievement or struggling readers.

READ 180 has a cutoff point where students are too low to be in the program. The cutoff point is set by READ 180, not the teachers at GMS. A program or intervention with these students too low for READ 180 could be beneficial for the school. The students were low but with some help they could make small improvements. READ 180 does have a lower ability reading intervention for students who are too low for READ 180.

This study focused on GMS although third through eighth grade schools in the district had the program. Some of the schools implemented the program with all students. GMS only had a license for 60 slots. All data for students in the program throughout the district need to be analyzed to assess the success of the program.

LCSD must look at every grade and examine the reading instruction. The district must determine why students are making it to fifth, sixth, seventh grade without being able to read. The Mississippi Department of Education (2009) has initiated a reading goal of every student leaving third grade on third reading grade level by 2020. The district must look at ways to reach this goal for the students in the county more quickly than 2020.

Another area for future research for LCSD would be a high school reading intervention program. READ 180, for example, goes through high school, but the district

did not purchase the program for any of the high schools. The students who leave eighth grade are still below average in reading; however, they do not have a reading program with which to continue. Therefore, they could regress and not retain the reading skills gained in middle school. The district needs to look into a program for high school.

GMS and LCSD must help all students below grade level in reading. Also, all students with an unacceptable performance on the MCT2 need an intervention program, but they will be very different programs.

Research into other reading programs could be beneficial to GMS and LCSD. There are numerous reading programs available. Research into reading programs that can be implemented with students who have varying degrees of reading difficulty could benefit GMS.

Another area for GMS and LCSD would be to look at the graduation/dropout rate for the county. Reading interventions for the struggling readers could lead to more students staying in school to graduate. Students who struggle in school tend to dropout when they reach the minimum age. The school and county needs to address the students who are struggling and focus on preventive measures to decrease the dropout rate.

Future Research

Student behavior is another area for future research. In the READ 180 classroom, the students move around the room every 30 minutes. This could be problematic if not modeled correctly and monitored. Also, student behavior in other classrooms should be researched and monitored to determine if behavior changes as the students become more successful. Most students who struggle with reading can be behavior disruptions in the

classroom. The students in READ 180 at GMS improved their behavior in other classes as result of better understanding the material they were reading.

Another area for future research deals with the time frame. This study exposed students to the program for a limited time. Future research could track the students throughout their remaining school years to determine the overall effectiveness of the program thus increasing the validity of the study. The program can be carried through high school. The students could begin the program earlier and stay in the program throughout their high school years to determine the overall effectiveness of the program.

Motivation is another area for future research. The literature review discusses motivation being a vital component of student success. However, there is very little research on the role motivation plays in a student's success in school. Future research could include motivational tactics to use with students who struggle with reading or any subject area.

Research is needed regarding the reading level of students and the reading level of standardized tests. The students are below grade level in reading but take a standardized test on their reading grade level to determine their success. The students will continue to struggle reading the material.

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APPENDIX A
RESUME FOR KAREN LETSON

Karen S. Letson

662-348-2420 * 662-255-9951

Qualifications

- Enforcing discipline and attendance rules
- Reviewing and interpreting government codes to ensure facility safety, security, and maintenance
- Establishing programs to evaluate student academic achievement
- Evaluating programs to determine effectiveness and to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations
- Conferring with parents and staff to discuss educational activities, policies, and student behavioral or learning problems
- Managing and directing people and programs
- Negotiating staff policies and disputes
- Evaluating worker performance
- Coordinating worker activities

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Assistant Principal

Leese County School District- Gauge Middle School

August 2008 to present

My responsibilities include handling discipline issues for sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, develop and coordinate interventions for Teacher Support Team, Curriculum Coordinator, and evaluate teacher performance.

Media Specialist

Leese County School District

January 2001 to May 2007

My responsibilities included organizing and maintaining the book collection for the library. I also collaborated with the teachers on lessons and activities that will

benefit their students. I also evaluated web sites for students and teachers to use for research.

Biology Teacher

Itawamba County School District- Mantachie High School

August 1995 to December 2000

My responsibilities included administering and analyzing student performance in biology. I was responsible for guiding the students in investigating the living world around them. I planned various activities for the students using biological analysis.

Science Teacher

Leese County School District- Shannon Junior High School

August 1993 to May 1995

I was responsible for teaching seventh and eighth grade students' science. I counseled the students and guided them in making correct decisions.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Currently pursuing Doctorate in Education Administration

Mississippi State University, MS

May 2006 Master's in Educational Leadership

Mississippi State University, MS

May 1993 Bachelor's in Secondary Education (Science)

University of Mississippi, MS

May 1991 Associate's Degree

Itawamba Community College

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I was a member of the development committee for the State Biology Test. The committee worked collaboratively to analyze and develop the questions for the State Biology Test. I also initiated and directed a summer reading program for elementary students. Also, I tutored elementary students in an after school reading program.

APPENDIX B
MSU IRB APPROVAL



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

Compliance Division
Administrative Offices
Animal Care and Use (IACUC)
Human Research Protection
Program (IRB)
1207 Hwy 182 West
Starkville, MS 39759
(662) 325-3496 - fax

Safety Division
Biosafety (IBC)
Radiation Safety
Hazardous Waste
Chemical & Lab Safety
Fire & Life Safety
70 Morgan Avenue
Mississippi State, MS 39762
(662) 325-8776 - fax

<http://www.orc.msstate.edu>
compliance@research.msstate.edu
(662) 325-3294

November 20, 2009

Karen Letson

RE: IRB Study #09-158: The Effects of a Reading Intervention Program on Reading Achievement

Dear Ms. Letson:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 11/20/2009 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

Please note that the MSU IRB is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRB's policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/human/aahrpp.php>. The first of these changes is the implementation of an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the IRB approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. You must use copies of the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.

Please refer to your IRB number (#09-158) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at cwilliams@research.msstate.edu or call 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

Office of Regulatory Compliance • Post Office Box 6223 • Mississippi State, MS 39762