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Angela Delentheia Bluitt

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AN ASSESSMENT OF READING PROGRAMS IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

By

Angela Delentheia Bluit

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 School Administration
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State Mississippi

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Title of the Study: AN ASSESSMENT OF READING PROGRAMS IN NORTH
MISSISSIPPI ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE
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The purpose of this study was to compare the impact of reading programs of students who used the Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, and Reading Program Three reading programs and those students who were taught using no basal reading program in North Mississippi. The study also assessed teachers' perceptions of the various reading programs based on gender, age, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience.

The research design for this study included a descriptive analysis. Ten elementary schools in North Mississippi using the Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, Reading Program Three, and no basal reading program were analyzed. This study also included a descriptive design to analyze teachers' perceptions of their reading programs. Comparisons were made across gender, age, educational attainment, and years of experience of the participants.

The findings in this study indicated that students who were taught using no basal reading program and Reading Program One scored significantly higher on the Mississippi

Curriculum Test in reading in 2005 than students taught using basal Reading Program Two and Reading Program Three. The findings in this study also indicated that students who were taught using no basal reading program scored significantly higher on the Mississippi Curriculum Test in reading in 2006 than students taught using Reading Program One, Reading Program Two and Reading Program Three. There was not a significant difference based on gender. The findings in this study revealed that some differences existed in student achievement on MCT reading scores based on the accreditation level of the school. The analysis of the teachers' perceptions revealed that their reading programs or strategies contributed to students' success.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my grandparents, Ruthie Mae and James Thompson, Sr., and Annette and Roosevelt Wilson, Sr., who paved the way with prayers and hard work, which allowed me to travel this journey knowing that I was never alone. It is also dedicated to the loving memory of my uncle, Larry Thompson, who after his battle with cancer did not get to see me receive this, my last degree. His unselfish love and support allowed me to stay focused and remember that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The importance of learning to read cannot be underestimated. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*, according to Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985), indicated that schooling is an investment in human capital that includes knowledge, skill, and problem-solving ability that can be sustained. While a nation receives a positive return on investment in education at all levels, the highest returns are the early years of schooling when children are first learning to read (McGahey, 2002). Federal support for states and districts focused on early literacy because of the priority placed upon reading instruction in the early years, before third grade (United States Department of Education, 2002b).

According to McNeil (1996), the curriculum for teaching reading in America from 1600 to the present has reflected different goals. The initial goal was religious. Children were expected to learn to read the Bible. Reading was also taught to help build national strength and patriotism. During the period from 1840 to 1890, the primary goal of teaching reading was a means of obtaining information. From the 1890s to about 1920, creating interest in literary material was the utmost concern. Reading selections were oriented to the events of everyday life. Phonics instruction began in the 1930s, and

was the predominant style until the late 1970s. Austin and Morrison (1963) reported in their research, *The First R: The Harvard Report on Reading in Elementary Schools*, that the lack of innovation as well as a stagnant environment led them to conclude that reading in the elementary schools was not up to standard, or “mediocre at best” (p. 235). Austin and Morrison (1963) recommended that no single method of instruction in beginning reading be advocated but that a variety of approaches be utilized (Austin & Morrison, 1963).

Background

Schools and districts have relied on research to help students become better readers. Teachers across different states and districts have demonstrated that sound, scientifically-based reading instruction can and does work with all children (United States Department of Education, 2002b). Nationwide progress can be made when proven methods and significant, new federal resources are put together to make sure every child becomes a successful reader and that each child moves forward, well-prepared for a rich and rewarding academic experience (United States Department of Education, 2002b).

When President George W. Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* in January 2001, he extended the previous President’s efforts to improve the reading ability of the nation’s youth. *The NCLB Act (2001)*, the President’s framework for bipartisan education reform, emphasized his belief in public schools and a greater concern that the children in most need were being left behind, despite the nearly \$200 billion in Federal spending since the passage of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* of 1965. The President called for bipartisan solutions based on accountability, choice, and

flexibility in Federal education programs. The ESEA of 2001 included two initiatives aimed at assisting states and districts in meeting the challenge of the *NCLB Act of 2001*. *Reading First Initiative*, which replaced the *Reading Excellence Act of 1998*, provided funds to help implement comprehensive reading instruction grounded in scientifically-based research for children in kindergarten through third grade. *Reading First* provided funds to school districts and public and private organizations that serve children three to five years of age. In order to qualify for the federal funds, schools must use reading programs that have been scientifically proven to work with emphasis on the first building blocks of early literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Mesmer & Karchmer, 2003; Education Commission, 2002). Minkel (2002) stated that education agencies, rather than the Department of Education, determined which reading programs and schools qualify for the funds.

Educators have disagreed regarding the most effective approach to the teaching of reading (Adams, 1990; Coles, 1998; Cromwell, 1997). In the last two decades, the dominant approach to reading was whole language. The debate over phonics and whole language was labeled the reading wars (Ponnuru, 1999; Rasinski & Padak, 1998). According to Baumann & Hoffman, (1998), teachers favor a balanced, eclectic approach, blending phonics and holistic principles and practices that include emergent literacy, phonics, phonemic awareness, and whole language (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1999).

Commercially developed basal reading programs include textbooks and other materials to teach reading along with associated reading skills in elementary school curricula in the United States (Dole, Rogers, & Osborn, 1987). In 2001, the Center for

the Study of Reading noted that the content and quality of instruction in basal readers influences reading curriculum and instruction in American schools. By estimation, 75% to 90 % of the time students spent in a reading period were dominated by the content of basal reading programs (Fisher et al., 1978). Researchers like Kamil and Moe (Kamil, Moe & National Reading Conference, 1980) and Durkin (1983) stated that teachers follow the teachers' manuals of basal programs very closely. For this reason, scholars, including Brophy (1982) and Resnick and Resnick (1985), argued that improving basal reading programs is a necessary condition for improving reading instruction in American classrooms.

The *Reading Excellence Act (REA)* (1998) listed six dimensions of reading: (1) phonemic awareness, the skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes or speech sounds are connected to print; (2) decoding, the ability to decipher unfamiliar words; (3) fluency, the ability to read fluently; (4) vocabulary, sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension; (5) comprehension, the development of appropriate activities to construct meaning from print; and (6) motivation, the development and maintenance or motivation to read. The National Reading Panel (NRP) in 2000 identified five key areas of reading instruction that should be present in the classroom: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) text comprehension (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Education Commission, 2002; Mesmer & Karchmer, 2003).

With the nation's quest to comply with the *NCLB Act of 2001*, states and school districts relied on standards and quality in education. According to Olson and Manzo

(2005), each of the 50 states instituted the process of developing academic standards. In an attempt to comply with the national efforts, Mississippi, like other states, set in place state criterion-referenced tests to assess students. Mississippi utilized the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) in grades 2-8 to assess students' progress in reading, math, and language. The school's performance classification for the Mississippi School Accountability Model was based on data gathered from student testing. Mississippi began testing in the spring of 2001.

The Mississippi Accountability Model required that students in grades two through twelve take the state's curriculum assessment. The purpose of the assessment in second grade was to establish base-line data. The assessment provided benchmarks in the third and seventh grades; criterion-referenced tests in grades three through eight; a writing assessment in grades four, seven, and ten; subject area tests in high schools for English II, Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology I (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003).

According to the guidelines of the *NCLB Act of 2001*, a school could be placed in improvement if its students fail to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) and growth expectation. If a school was labeled a priority school for two consecutive years, the parents had the right to send their child to another school that was not a priority school in the district. With this directive, districts strived to achieve accredited status. Data from this study will provide information that will help Mississippi school districts meet *NCLB Act* (2001) requirements by identifying reading programs and/or strategies that appear to

contribute to the development of successful readers (United States Department of Education, 2002c).

Approaches to Teaching Reading

For nearly 40 years, phonics was the primary method used to teach reading (McNeil, 1996). Phonics focuses on the relationship between sounds in speech (phonological patterns) and spelling patterns (orthographic patterns). Glazer (2005) stated that most children learn phonics tacitly without realizing it. He also stated that they learn from reading stories and poems, listening to conversations, and by observing adults using language.

Consequently, phonemic awareness is the consciousness that words are comprised of separable sounds or phonemes that can be blended to produce words (Pressley & Allington, 1999). Phonics is becoming mandated for teacher certification throughout the United States (Rasinski & Padak, 1998) as a political shift to basic instruction methods. The National Council of Teachers of English (1998) passed a resolution which stated that phonics should be included in a range of reading strategies for all readers. Phonics is a method of teaching reading where the objective is to sensitize students to the relationship of the spelling patterns in our written language to the sound patterns of oral language (Hempenstall, 1997).

Emergent literacy, a process in which children construct concepts about symbols and prints, is based on experiences and meaningful language facilitated by interaction with adults. Stratton (1996) described emergent literacy as the process of learning about the environment that leads to the development of meaning and concepts. McGee and

Purcell-Gates (1997) described emergent literacy as a continuum of learning to read beginning before schooling and stretching from the time children begin to experience the use of print to the point where they can independently read and write.

Indeed, reading is such a complex task that no one approach works best for every student (National Reading Panel, 2000). McGahey (2002) stated, "A balanced approach should include semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar and structure), and graphophonics (sound/symbol relationship). The following strategies encompass a balanced reading curriculum: (1) reading aloud, (2) phonics, (3) shared reading, (4) guided reading, (5) independent reading, (6) shared writing, (7) modeled writing, (8) independent writing, and (9) guided writing" (p. 30).

National Efforts to Improve Reading

Cassidy and Cassidy (2005) stated that educators have come to a constructive consensus about reading instruction and key skills students must learn to become successful readers. Otuya and Krupka (1999) noted that there are five factors which can help to explain why children have reading problems: (1) a lack of phoneme awareness, (2) difficulty with reading comprehension, (3) a lack of motivation to learn to read, (4) inadequate preparation of teachers, and (5) a lack of standards and accountability.

As previously mentioned, the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) issued a report to help identify key skills necessary for reading achievement: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) text comprehension. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds. Phonemes are the smallest units constituting spoken language. The English language

consists of about 41 phonemes. These phonemes combine to form syllables and words. Activities to help in development of phonemic awareness are phoneme isolation, identity, categorization, blending, segmentation, and deletion (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). According to Beaver (1997), the number one goal of any reading program should be to help students become proficient, enthusiastic readers who enjoy reading and read for a variety of purposes.

National Goals

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush adopted a set of six ambitious national education goals for the 21st century: (1) ensuring that children begin school ready to learn, (2) raising high school graduation rates, (3) increasing levels of education achievement, (4) promoting science and mathematics achievement, (5) continuing literacy as lifelong learning, and (6) freeing schools of drugs and violence. Congress broadened these goals in 1994 to include improvements. In 1997, President Clinton strengthened the nation's commitment to rigorous education standards by proposing a voluntary program of national tests in reading at grade four and in mathematics at grade eight to ensure that all students are provided equal opportunities to achieve high standards in these crucial subject areas (Ballator & Jerry, 1999; Campbell, Voelkl & Donahue, 1998). Currently, the federal law requires states to administer reading and math tests every year in grades three through eight, with the goal of having every student proficient in math and reading by 2014. But the law allows each state to write its own tests and define proficiency (Dillon, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study centered around the poor performance of students' reading achievement. The problem also centered around the reports from commercial basal reading programs claiming to insure improvement in students' reading achievement. These claims tend to make it difficult for schools and districts to select programs or materials to implement in their curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact on reading achievement of three basal reading programs and no basal reading program to determine if there were significant differences in third grade students' reading achievement as measured by the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT). The study also examined teachers' perceptions of the impact of the reading programs used in their respective schools.

Research Questions

The researcher developed the following research questions to guide the study:

1. When students are grouped based on the type of reading program used in their classrooms, are there significant differences in their MCT reading achievement scores?
2. Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on gender?
3. Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on school accreditation level?

4. What were the teachers' perceptions of the reading program used in their respective classrooms?

Justification of the Study

In response to a national concern that 40% of America's fourth grade students had difficulty learning to read, President Clinton proposed the *America Reads Challenge Initiative* in his 1998 State of the Union Address. The goal of the initiative was to provide federal assistance to states and school districts to help children read successfully by the end of third grade. The *Reading Excellence Act of 1998* was signed into law October 21, 1998, as part of the Clinton administration's amendment to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Its purpose was to improve students' reading skills and teachers' instructional practices by implementing the scientifically-based reading research (Otuya & Krupka, 1999).

In an effort to guide districts and schools, the National Reading Panel (2000), stated that in an effort to produce successful readers, teachers' instructional decisions must be based on scientifically-based reading research. The research by the National Reading Panel (2000), stated that reading achievement is maximized if teachers utilize the strategies in which students are taught systematically and explicitly the five key early reading skills. According to Farstrup (2002), there was a widespread understanding that school districts could increase their chances of receiving federal funds by selecting certain commercial programs that made claims of incorporating the five key, scientifically-based reading skills.

In addition, many school boards bragged that their prepackaged curricula were teacher-proof. McLaren (1988) indicated that teaching then became stripped of its decision-making potential. Teachers were reduced to clerks who were ordered to carry out a task. McLaren (1988) also indicated that teachers' voices needed to be heard and respected since the experience and expertise they bring provide an essential component for reading success. He also indicated that it is important to respect and honor the role of teachers and support teachers through high-quality professional development in order to succeed in achieving the shared vision of reading for all (McLaren, 1988).

This study sought to determine whether students taught by teachers using the five key early reading skills obtained the same level of success as those taught using basal reading programs. Many of the claims of student success documented by program evaluators tend to present a biased view and exaggerate positive results. The studies reviewed did not provide results from a specific geographical location (Manso, 2007; North West Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). Studies conducted involving teacher education and student achievement did not specifically cite whether or not the results would be the same if conducted in early childhood grades, more specifically kindergarten through third grade classrooms. A study conducted by Ferguson in 1991, found sizable influences of the level of teachers' knowledge on student achievement (Ferguson & Ladd, 1996).

Findings from this study should provide individual schools and districts in the state with valuable information on which reading strategies or materials contribute to students' success in reading. With the overwhelming concern to produce successful

readers by the third grade and meet the mandates of *NCLB Act of 2001*, Mississippi educators will be able to seek sound innovative ways or materials to produce successful readers.

Delimitations

This study was delimited by the following factors:

1. The participants of this study included teachers from ten elementary schools in North Mississippi.
2. The participants were selected based on reading program and school accreditation level.
3. The study focused on MCT reading scores as indicators of students' reading achievement.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study.

1. The study only included students in grade 3.
2. The findings were limited in terms of the honesty and thoroughness of the respondents in completing the questionnaire.
3. The findings were limited by the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and the use of mean scores to report teacher perceptions.
4. No attempt was made to imply a cause/effect relationship from the findings.

5. Other variables, such as socio-economic status of students, race, funding sources, and the quality of professional development that might be included in a study of this type were specifically excluded.

Definitions of Terms

Terms that are technical in nature, subject to multiple interpretations, and/or unique to this study are defined as follows.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is an achievement measure based on the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the state assessments (Mississippi Department of Education, 2004).

Basal Readers are textbooks used to teach reading and associated skills to school children. Commonly called reading books or readers, they are usually published as anthologies that combine previously published short stories, excerpts of longer narratives, and original works. A standard basal series comes with individual identical books for students, a Teacher's Edition of the book, and collection of workbooks, assessments, and activities (Basal Reader, n.d.).

Criterion-Referenced Test-is defined as an assessment that focuses on the mastery of defined skills or content. An absolute level of performance is set as the criterion against which an individual is evaluated (Anderson et al., 1985).

Elementary schools are schools including the first four grades and often kindergarten (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2003).

Growth expectation is defined as the use of student assessment data and, possibly, other variables to set a reasonable achievement expectation for a school. The actual

achievement of the school is compared to the expected achievement to determine the degree to which the school has met or exceeded its expectation (Mississippi Department of Education, 2004).

Mississippi's Accountability

Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) is defined as a criterion-referenced test that is aligned with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks 2000. The test produces scores in three content areas - reading, language, and mathematics (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003).

Mississippi School Accountability Model refers to a school evaluation and improvement system that requires performance-based accreditation, addressing both individual schools and school districts. The model also requires that the State Department of Education identify Priority Schools as those schools not meeting expected levels of student achievement. Accreditation ratings are based on the following criteria: (1) the accomplishment of meeting annual growth expectation in student achievement and (2) the percentage of students proficient at grade level (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is an education reform initiative enacted by President Bush that provides (1) increasing accountability for student performance, (2) utilizing effective research-based practices in teaching, (3) spending flexibility of federal funds, and (4) providing parents with school choice opportunities in a national effort to ensure that all children are provided a quality education (United States Department of Education, 2002c).

Reading is defined as the process of constructing meaning from written texts. (Anderson et al., 1985; Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

Reading Achievement

Reading achievement is measured by the score a student earned on the Mississippi Curricula Test.

Advanced students consistently perform in a manner clearly beyond that which is required to be successful at the next grade.

Proficient students demonstrate solid academic performance and mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade.

Basic students demonstrate partial mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade. Remediation may be necessary for these students.

Minimal students do not demonstrate mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade. These students require additional instruction and remediation in the basic skills (Mississippi Department of Education, 2004).

Scale Score refers to the score the student receives for each content area. The score is based on the number of points earned on the test. The total number of score points is translated to a scale (Mississippi Department of Education, 2007).

Scientificallly-based reading research refers to research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

Standardized tests are commercially-published tests that contain a fixed set of items and have uniform procedures for administration and scoring (Anderson et al., 1985).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the age of accountability, many educators are seeking ways to meet or exceed the national expectation of Every Child a Reader (Mississippi Department of Education, 1995), in which students are expected to read on grade level by third grade. In an attempt to make this possible, many schools are in search of a silver bullet to provide answers to their dilemma. Politicians and policy makers are frequently expressing their commitment to the goal of Every Child a Reader. This is a goal and vision that the International Reading Association has promoted from its very beginning in the 1950s (Farstrup, 2002; McGahey, 2002; United States Department of Education, 2002 b).

Teaching young children to read is a very critical educational priority facing our country. By teaching all children to read well by the end of third grade, the nation will ensure that students advance to higher grades well prepared to achieve their full academic potential, thus becoming more productive in society. The nation's effort to place more emphasis on early literacy speaks to its commitment to improve the reading ability of its future leaders (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

In his 1996 State of Education address, United States Education Secretary Richard W. Riley called for a new national crusade demanding that every American child must become a good reader by the end of third grade. President Clinton's 1997 State of the

Union address launched a national literacy initiative. The administration's *American Reads Challenge* pursued Riley's goal. In 1998, the National Research Council provided a blue print for action to create a nation of readers. The report stated that children need language-rich preschool opportunities, and teachers need better preparation and support to be able to guide students through the complex mix of skills that are vital in learning to read (National Academy of Science, 1998; United States Department of Education, 1998).

Continuous federal legislation has placed emphasis on reading instruction. The United States House of Representatives passed a bill that gave nearly one billion dollars annually to improve reading, with the goal of assuring that every student learn to read by the third grade (McGahey, 2002). In the past the federal government has spent billions of dollars to improve student achievement in reading (Farstrup, 2002). Even though President Bush stated that federal spending on education increased by 40 percent under his administration, states' educational officials say these increases were not enough to help states and school districts comply with the new accountability measures of the *NCLB Act of 2001* ("States Need More Money, Guidance to Improve Schools," 2003). Despite billions of government dollars being spent on reading programs, approximately 40% of students across the nation cannot read at a basic level (Ballator & Jerry, 1999; Ferguson, 1991; Plisko, 2003; United States Department of Education, 2002b).

Reading First

In an effort to assist schools and districts in their quest for finding a reading program that will enhance students' reading achievement, many states and districts rely on federal funding to cover the cost. *Reading First Initiative*, a national reading initiative, is a conduit for many. The purpose of the *Reading First Initiative* is to ensure that all children in America learn to read well by the end of third grade (Bell, 2003; Education Commission, 2002). The program was designed to help states and districts apply scientifically-based research and proven instructional and assessment tools consistent with the research to teach all children to read. The *Reading First Initiative* also provides necessary assistance to states and districts to establish research based reading programs for students in kindergarten through third grade (United States Department of Education, 2002a).

Reading First funds provide significantly increased professional development to ensure that all teachers have skills needed to teach the reading programs effectively. The program provides assistance to states and districts in preparing classroom teachers to screen, identify, and overcome reading problems facing students. The *Reading First Initiative* also provides assistance to states and districts in selecting or developing effective instructional materials, programs, learning systems, and strategies to implement methods that have been proven to teach reading. Additionally, assistance is also provided for the selection and administration of screening diagnostic and classroom-based instructional reading assessments with proven validity and reliability in an effort to monitor student progress.

Reading First focuses instructional methods, materials, assessments, and professional development on the five key components of reading: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) text comprehension identified by the National Reading Panel. Programs funded under *Reading First* have to demonstrate their ability to address the five essential components of reading in a comprehensive and effective manner.

Title I, Part B, Subpart 1 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, as amended by the *NCLB Act of 2001* authorizes *Reading First*. *Reading First* has been referred to as the academic cornerstone of the *NCLB Act of 2001*, which recognizes the importance of both improving student reading achievement and implementing programs and strategies scientifically proven to be effective (Bell, 2003).

Reading First was passed into law by a bipartisan majority of Congress under the *NCLB Act of 2001* and centers on the following priorities:

1. raising the caliber and quality of classroom instruction
2. basing instruction on scientifically-proven methods
3. providing professional training for educators in reading instruction
4. supplying substantial resources to support the unprecedented initiative

(United States Department of Education, 2002d)

When President George W. Bush designed *Reading First* around an extensive knowledge base of the skills children need to learn to read, the program reflected the recommendations of a congressionally mandated review of scientifically-based research

on how students learn to read, completed by the National Reading Panel in 2000 (Education Commission, 2002; Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

In 2002, Mississippi received an \$11.1 million grant award under the *Reading First Initiative* to help districts and schools improve student achievement in reading through the application of scientifically-based reading research. Of the awarded amount, \$8.8 million of the grant was used to make subgrant awards to approximately 40 schools in eligible districts. The Mississippi Department of Education integrated *Reading First* with its statewide infrastructure for improving early literacy.

The state of Mississippi began making subgrant awards in April 2003. As part of its professional development plan, the state held Mississippi Reading Academies for all kindergarten through third grade educators and elementary administrators. The academies focused on teaching strategies that support the five essential components of reading instruction and implementing instructional reading assessments. The state closely monitors the progress of schools and districts participating in *Reading First*, and will conduct longitudinal evaluation of its program (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.c.; National Right to Read, 2002)

For nearly two decades, standards and quality were dominant themes in education reform. The need to set more challenging educational standards stemmed in part from several decades of comparative international data showing that American students were not measuring up to international standards in science and math. Since the publishing of *A Nation At Risk* (1983) by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, national and state leaders have undertaken several initiatives to improve standards

and quality. Every state has developed academic standards to determine proficiency (Dillon, 2007; Otuya & Krupka, 1999).

Mississippi's Efforts to Improve Reading

During the past twenty years a series of significant legislative mandates beginning with the *Education Reform Act of 1982*, have been instrumental in creating the current public school accreditation model and accountability system. The *Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act of 1999* was enabled by *Senate Bill 2156* to create a state-of-the-art school evaluation and improvement system. This required that the performance-based accreditation system address both individual schools and school districts. This legislation also required the Mississippi State Board of Education to set annual performance standards for each of the schools in the state to measure the performance of each school against itself, using student growth performance measures (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003).

The state of Mississippi, like many other states, worked to develop a comprehensive reading reform model. The state has invested millions of dollars in this effort. The Mississippi Reading Reform Model (MRRM) has incorporated scientifically-based reading research conclusions into a comprehensive process of prevention and intervention. The model's components include the following: (a) a reading instruction intervention process, (b) extended instructional opportunities, (c) parent-family literacy programs, (d) early literacy intervention, and (e) effective instructional practices for teachers, administrators and support staff (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.c.).

The Mississippi School Accountability Model was enacted by *Senate Bill 2488* of the 2000 Mississippi Legislative session to expand and incorporate into *Section 37, Chapter 18* of the *Mississippi Code of 1972*, annotated. The bill specified that the State Department of Education will identify priority schools as those schools not meeting expected levels of student achievement. The legislation further clarified public school accreditation and accountability measures that require individual school accreditation ratings to be based on the following criteria: (a) meeting annual growth expectation in student achievement and (b) the percentage of students proficient at grade level. These are identified as the Achievement Model and Growth Model. In the new accreditation model, public school accreditation is two-fold: (1) each school district is awarded an accreditation status based on compliance with process standards, and (2) individual schools are assigned a performance level based on student achievement (United States Department of Education, 2004).

School District Accreditation Status Process standards address the operation of the school, including policies, state and federal laws, staffing, resources, and programs. School district accreditation status included the following: (1) accredited status is assigned to the districts that comply with 100% of the process standards, (2) advised status is assigned to districts that do not comply with one or more process standards, and (3) withdrawn status is assigned to a district that has previously been on an advised status and still does not comply with the corrective action plan (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003). Provisions of the new federal legislation require that specific assessment be given to all students across the country and that states establish one system

of accountability for all schools. Mississippi's efforts to strengthen curriculum, assessment and accountability, school-by-school, are consistent in many ways with the requirement of *NCLB Act of 2001* (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003)

The use of standardized tests has increased over the past thirty years. Many states and some local school districts have mandated minimum competency examinations in reading for entry into or exit from certain grades (Anderson et al., 1985). Criterion-referenced tests are used heavily in schools that employ skills management systems for reading instruction. In an effort to ensure students' success, districts are searching for ways to produce proficient readers. Mississippi utilizes the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) in grades 2-8 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003).

The School Performance Classifications

Models are based on data gathered from student testing. Mississippi administers the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) to students in grades 2-8. Testing takes place in the spring of each year in reading, language, and mathematics on the MCT. Grades 3 and 7 are benchmark grades in which students must meet the benchmark or receive remediation the following school year and retake the test in January. Student performance on grades 3 and 7 benchmarks is used, along with other data, to determine whether the student should be promoted to the next grade. (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.b). In an effort to make the assessment rating of schools fair, and to make sure that a school has had an opportunity to impact students' learning, schools are only accountable for students that are enrolled in the school a majority of the instructional time. Students tested in the spring must be in school approximately 70% of the

instructional time prior to testing, based on the student information system database, before their scores count in the accountability model (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003)

To calculate school performance classifications, Mississippi developed a system that combines the achievement level and growth status of the students in each school. Schools are assigned a 1-5 performance level based on (a) Growth Model of meeting annual growth expectation established for each school, and (b) Achievement Model of the percent of students who are achieving at basic and above. The growth expectation will be established by testing students annually and by following their progress. The lower- performing schools will be designated as Priority Schools. Mississippi's

Classification levels are:

1. Level 5 – (Superior-Performing) – Achievement Level 5
2. Level 4- (Exemplary) – Achievement Level 4 – OR- exceeded growth expectation and is in achievement Level 3
3. Level 3- (Successful) – School met its growth expectation – OR- failed to meet growth and is in achievement Level 3
4. Level 2 –(Under- Achieving) – School failed to meet growth and is in achievement Level 2
5. Level 1- (Low-Performing) – School failed to meet its growth expectation and is in achievement Level 1. Some of these schools may be designated as Priority Schools (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003 p. 3).

Schools that fail to meet federal standards two years in a row must offer parents the choice of transferring to another public school (within the district). The sanctions may increase to a point where a school must be reconstructed with a new staff if it fails to meet the standards for six consecutive years (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d. a).

Five Areas of Reading Instruction

The National Reading Panel (2000) issued a report to help identify key skills necessary for reading achievement. The Panel has identified five key areas of reading instruction that should be present in the classroom: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) text comprehension.

Phonemic awareness is defined as the ability to deal explicitly and segmentally with sound units smaller than a syllable according to Stanovich (1994). Phonemic awareness is simply the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds. Activities to help in the development of phonemic awareness are phoneme isolation, identity, categorization, blending, segmentation, and deletion (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). A number of training studies have shown that preschool and kindergarten children exposed to programs that include phonological awareness become better readers (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Bradley & Bryant, 1985; Cunningham, 1990; Lie, 1991; Lundberg, Frost & Peterson, 1988). According to Pearson Learning Group (2002) phonological awareness is the one cognitive process that is the single best predictor of early reading success. Learning to read is an activity that requires a conscious awareness of phonemes, individual segments in words (Moats, 1998; Torgesen & Mathes, 1998). Share and

Stanovich (1995) noted that children who quickly come to understand letter/sound correspondences and apply those correspondences to their print experiences also are most likely to become better readers. The National Right to Read Foundation estimated that 20% to 30% of children may experience some level of phonological impairment that could affect their early literacy skills. For children who struggle with phonemic awareness, the National Right to Read Foundation (1999) recommended that they be directly and systematically taught phonemic-awareness skills.

Phonics exemplifies the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. Learning phonics teaches students how to use grapheme-phoneme correspondences to decode or spell words (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). Research completed by Bruce (2003), Hiskes (1998), and Moats (1998) showed that early, systematic, explicit phonics instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades is essential in providing a successful foundation for reading because it gives children the decoding skills that demystify reading. According to Chall (1989) and the National Reading Panel (2000), the systematic and direct teaching of phonics in particular, is effective for at-risk, low-income children and those with reading or learning disabilities.

It is critical that children learn to decode in the first grade to ensure reading comprehension in subsequent grades. The National Reading Panel (2000) in its published report, *Teaching Children to Read*, found that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and for students having difficulty learning to read. Explicit phonics builds from part to whole, moving from the smallest parts to the whole. Students learn sounds and letters before

blending syllables into words. Systematic phonics means that the introduction of the sound spelling is coordinated with the material that children are asked to read. The most effective instructional programs teach children to read successfully with just 40 to 50 sound-spelling relationships (Grossen, 1997; Stahl & Duffy-Hester, 1998).

Fluency refers to reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Fluency depends on well-developed word recognition skills, but such skills do not necessarily lead to fluency. Fluency is a critical aspect of skilled reading, but it is often neglected in classroom instruction. Students who are low in fluency may have trouble getting the meaning of what they read. Fluency is best developed through reading practice (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). The National Reading Panel (2000) suggested that complete and effective reading programs must provide opportunities for beginning readers to apply their phonics skills in text. Cognitive scientists have shown that fluent, accurate decoding is the hallmark of skilled reading. As stated in Pearson (2002), many researchers agree that the successful application of phonics skills is best achieved with connected text.

Adams (1990) recommended approaches that link decoding instruction with connected text to achieve superior reading results. Adams also suggested that the texts should be engaging for the child and contain words that are 90 to 95% decodable, while Moats (1998) recommends that high-frequency sight words should be introduced gradually and cumulatively to make sentences less stilted. The most common approaches to teaching fluency are guided oral reading and independent silent reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1998).

Vocabulary aids in understanding the meaning and message of words. Five main methods of teaching vocabulary include: (1) explicit instruction (students are given definitions to learn), (2) implicit instruction (exposure to new words), (3) multimedia methods (haptic learning, or various media, is used), (4) capacity methods (practice) and (5) association methods (making connections with what they know and new words) (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). The National Reading Panel (2000) identifies two types of vocabulary, oral and print. The larger a reader's oral and print vocabulary, the easier it is for him or her to make sense of the text.

Comprehension is the ability to understand the author's words. It is viewed by many as the essence of reading. Literally, it means intentional thinking, which produces meaning from the text (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). Reading comprehension depends on the ability to perceive words relatively quickly and effortlessly (Adams, 1990) and assumes that an individual's decoding processes are well-developed so that efforts can focus on meaning of text (Stanovich, 1994). The highest predictor of a child's comprehension score on a standard reading-comprehension test is a measure of decoding skill, or the ability to read one word at a time out of context. This literally means that if a student is able to understand the meaning of spoken language, he or she should be able to understand the meaning of written language (McGuinness, 1997). Comprehension is enhanced when the reader can think about the text and relate his or her own experiences to those that are presented in print. The National Reading Panel (2000) findings also recommended the explicit teaching of comprehension skills that can be used by the reader to enhance his or her understanding of the text. These strategies should be modeled by

the teacher until a child can carry them out independently. These comprehension strategies would include summarizing the main idea, predicting what will happen next, drawing inferences and checking if ideas make sense (Snow & Griffin, 1998).

Reading Program One

Literature can be found to substantiate favorable numbers for utilizing structured reading programs (Atkinson, 1998; Bond & et al., 1992; Bruce 2003). These tests were conducted by the reading companies themselves to promote their products and presented a biased view of the research. Reading Program One is a school-based achievement-oriented program for disadvantaged students in pre-kindergarten through third grade. The program is designed to prevent or intervene in the development of learning problems in the early years by organizing instructional and family support resources within the regular classroom. This literature-based reading program is based on the premise that: (1) every child can learn, success in early grades is critical for future success and (2) learning deficits can be prevented through intervention in preschool and the early grades by the improvement of curriculum and instruction, individual attention, and support to families (North West Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). According to several researchers, effective school reform programs are both comprehensive and intensive (Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1994; Slavin, Madden, Dolan & Wasik, 1996).

According to Greenlee and Bruner (2001), Reading Program One claims that by the third grade, students using the program outperformed non-Reading Program One students by an entire grade equivalent of more than eight months. Greenlee and Bruner (2001) state that Reading Program One students, when compared to similar peer groups,

have higher achievement, especially in the language arts areas. Limitations of this study included the following: (1) missing data due to mortality impacting the reading comprehension self-efficacy survey populations, (2) no test data identified for special education students, (3) inability to match cohort groups demographically, and (4) the potentiality of a Hawthorne Effect (Atkinson, 1998). Although the research on Reading Program One showed that schools' test scores improve more than schools with similar demographics that do not use the program, an independent study which carried out an independent evaluation in Baltimore schools showed that Reading Program One students fell increasingly behind national norms the longer they were in the program. Another independent study by Ross and Smith (Greenlee & Bruner, 2001) reported similar results in an evaluation of the program in Memphis, Tennessee.

Reading Program Two

Reading Program Two is a leading publisher of instructional material for over two million students in more than 2,000 school districts nationwide (Harcourt, Inc., n.d). The company claims to meet the requirements of the *Reading First* guidelines. According to the publishers of Reading Program Two, it is a balanced, comprehensive reading and language arts program for pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. The program provides a full range of resources and support that teachers need to deliver research-based, motivational instruction for all learners. The instructional focus of the program progresses from learning to read, to reading to learn, and progressing to learning for life (Harcourt, 2004).

Characteristics of the program focus on key areas of reading instruction. The program claims to develop student proficiency in all aspects of reading and language arts, including the key areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, as well as writing, spelling, grammar, listening, and speaking. The program provides teachers with intervention strategies to meet a variety of needs. Resources include a complete intervention program for students struggling to read and write and a scaffolded support program for English language learners. The program has a Spanish-language program which parallels the complete program. In addition, the program has integrated assessment components which allow teachers to determine each student's strengths and weaknesses and adjust instruction as needed, using a variety of resources (Harcourt, 2004).

Strengths of the program's intervention include:

1. Lessons are aligned with the core curriculum.
2. Intervention is daily.
3. Daily materials are well organized and teacher friendly.
4. Phonetic and high frequency word activities are applied to reading stories.

Weaknesses of the programs intervention:

1. Daily, explicit instructional strategies for teaching comprehension and vocabulary are lacking.
2. There is no teaching of consonants at the first grade level.

3. Grouping students for intervention is not specified in the teacher's manual or from the results of the screening assessment (Florida Center of Reading Research, 2003, p. 3)

A pilot study conducted to evaluate the instructional effectiveness of Reading Program Two focused on the primary levels and included Grades 1 and 3. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was used. Results indicated an increase in test scores on both of the national standardized tests, the Stanford Achievement Tests, the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, and on Reading Program Two assessment. In addition, the results showed gains on both the instructional assessments and the standardized tests were approximately the same, indicating the results were not due to the focus of the instructional assessments. Findings suggested increases were greater for Grade 1 than for Grade 3 (Conner, 2000).

Reading Program Three

Reading Program Three claims to be one of the most comprehensive reading programs available for grades pre-kindergarten through 6 (McGraw-Hill, 2006). One of Reading Program Three's basal series was one of the first all-new elementary reading programs published since the release of the National Reading Panel's findings. The publishers of Reading Program Three claim that the program's basal series is based on recent reading research and built on the five elements of reading prescribed by the National Reading Panel (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension). According to McGraw-Hill, the program gives teachers best-practice approaches for effective, differentiated instruction, enabling them to meet the needs of

students at all reading levels, and provides a wealth of award-winning, engaging literature essential to motivating young readers. McGraw-Hill states that the program ensures Annual Yearly Progress by setting high expectations for all students. Materials to challenge gifted students as well as intervention materials for struggling readers are incorporated in the program. The program features assessments and technology-based monitoring to inform instruction, allowing teachers to identify skill gaps and address them quickly. The publishers also claim that the program is attuned to the real classroom environment, providing daily targeted instruction support. The program's explicit, systematic instruction and research-proven routines are believed to meet all the requirements of *NCLB Act of 2001*, which is essential for any school district concerned about meeting Annual Yearly Progress requirements (McGraw-Hill, 2006)

Research-based Strategies with No Program

In the 1960s, the federal government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to find the best approach to beginning reading. Data were collected from primary grades around the country that employed different methods. However, as teachers implemented and taught the various approaches, the strategies used seemed to be a major indicator of the success of the approach. Some teachers used combination approaches, such as language experiences and basal, phonic and literature, or literature and training. Studies by researchers concluded that combination approaches worked better than any single style (Baumann, Hoffmann, Duffy-Hester, & Ro, 2000; Guthrie, 2001). By the late 1980s, the basal reader approach was the most widely-used approach to teaching reading in the United States (Searfoss & Readence, 1989). Basal readers are based on

sub skills, in which a set of skills and sub skills serve as the framework of the approach. The difficulty of the vocabulary is controlled. The selections begin at lower reading levels and gradually increase in difficulty as students' progress in the program (Searfoss & Readence, 1989).

Teacher Characteristics

Quality teaching is believed to be essential to learner success by both researchers and the public (Fermanich, 2002; University of Minnesota, 2003). Research has been done to define quality teaching by identifying which teachers' related variables seemed to be most highly correlated with greater levels of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Ferguson, 1991; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; Greenwald, Hedges & Laine, 1996). There are three variables that emerged as having significant influence on student achievement: (1) teacher knowledge, (2) level of education, and (3) teaching in area of major. The following paragraph provides explanations regarding these variables.

A sound knowledge base is thought to be an important characteristic (Valdosta State University, 1999). In some states, including Mississippi and Georgia, education students must complete the required lower division curriculum with at GPA of 2.5 before being allowed to enter the education program. Students must then take a certain number of courses in the subject they expect to teach and must maintain the 2.5 GPA in order to enroll in student teaching. They must then pass a specific PRAXIS II test covering content they will teach and principles of human development and the teaching/learning process before they are certified to teach. All this is based on the belief that teacher knowledge is an important teacher characteristic (Ivey, 2000; Valdosta State, 1999).

Ferguson (1991) conducted an analysis of 900 Texas school districts' teacher licensing examination scores in combination with the presence of advanced degrees and years of experience, to predict student reading and math achievement. These measures of teacher experience accounted for over 40% of the variances among students' scores. Ferguson and Ladd (1996) later used the college ACT scores of teachers, along with the presence of master's degrees, in an analysis of Alabama schools, which still found sizable influence of these variables on student achievement (University of Minnesota, 2003).

In their review of 60 studies examining the impact of various factors on student achievement, Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine, (1996) found that increased levels of teacher education proved to have a significant effect on student outcomes. Their analysis suggested that financial investment in securing a more educated teaching staff (defined as holding a master's degree) had a stronger impact on achievement than lower pupil/teacher ratios, increased staff salaries, or increasing the average years of teacher experience. Research into the characteristics of successful teachers has consistently pointed to the benefits of educating our future teachers in both the science of teaching and in their selected subject areas or disciplines (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Blaschke (2002) reported that reading achievement improved more quickly when teachers gave high ratings to their professional development in reading. The United States Department of Education released a study entitled the *Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change in Performance in Title I School*. The study followed 71 high-poverty schools as they progressed from the third to the fifth grade. The growth in student test scores between three and five was about 20% greater when teachers were confident of

their own preparation. The study identified several practices and activities likely to help bring low performing students reading and math achievement closer to national norms (United States Department of Education, 2001).

Related Studies

The review of the literature revealed that although educators have been in disagreement regarding the most effective approach to teaching reading (Adams, 1990; Coles, 1998; Cromwell, 1997), a majority of educators favor a balanced eclectic approach, blending phonics and holistic principles and practices (Baumann & Hoffman, 1998). The review also revealed the nation's effort to place more emphasis on early literacy spoke to its commitment to improve the reading ability of all students (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.)

In an effort to simplify quality reading instruction, the National Reading Panel's (2000) report identified key skills necessary for reading achievement. Schools and districts were encouraged to use the Panel's recommendation in determining whether or not a program was indeed providing the key necessary components of reading. In order to receive federal funding, the schools and districts had to ensure the funding source that the programs or materials they purchased were scientifically-based reading materials.

The state of Mississippi also followed the nation's lead of developing an accountability model to ensure classrooms and schools were held accountable for the quality of student achievement. The state's reading reform model was implemented with federal funds used to assist districts and schools to improve student achievement in reading through the application of scientifically based reading research. The model

incorporated scientifically-based reading research into a comprehensive process of prevention and intervention.

Before spending funds on basal reading programs, schools and districts are encouraged to evaluate the program's ability to provide strategies for students in the key components of reading. A review of the literature revealed that although basal reading companies claim to have the answers to improving students' reading ability, schools and districts should ensure the essential components of reading are incorporated in the reading instruction (Minkel, 2002).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Based on the move of Americas' schools to comply with the regulations of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (United States Department of Education, 2002c) and the National Reading Panel's (2000) initiative of every child reading by first grade. The goal of this study was (a) to assess various reading programs in North Mississippi in order to determine their impact on students' reading performance, (b) to determine if differences existed in student achievement based on gender, (c) to determine if differences existed based on school accreditation level, and (d) to examine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the reading programs used in their respective classrooms. The study also assessed whether a difference existed in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on school accreditation level.

Research Design

The research design for this study included a descriptive analysis. This research design was used in an attempt to describe conditions that already existed (Gay & Airastian, 2003). This study also used the survey method to collect data on teachers' perceptions of the various reading programs they used in their reading instruction. The survey method was considered appropriate for this part of the study because it was used

to examine the status of things as they were. According to Gay and Airastian (2003), surveys are used to collect information on attitudes, opinions, and perceptions.

Participants of the Study

The participants in this study included ten elementary schools from five school districts in North Mississippi. Thirty-three, third grade teachers from a population of 36 teachers returned usable survey forms, a return rate of 92%. Records for a cohort group of 579 students' MCT reading scores for 2005 and 2006 were available for students in the schools used for this study. There were 319 (55%) male and 260 (45%) female students' MCT reading scores examined. Elementary schools with pre-kindergarten through second grade or below compositions were not included in the study because they are not included in the accreditation model. Public elementary schools were chosen because of their participation in state-wide testing program.

For the purpose of anonymity, the schools in the study were identified by the numbers one through ten. The counties were identified by numbers one through five. School One was a Level 3, successful school, located in County One including grades two and three with a total of 95 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 53% male, 47% females, 94% Black, and 6 % White students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals were 97%. There were five third grade teachers.

School Two was a Level 5, superior school, located in County Two including grades kindergarten through sixth grade with a total of 22 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 55% male, 45% females, and 100%

Black students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals were 99%. There was one third grade teacher.

School Three was a Level 3, successful school, located in County Two including grades kindergarten through fourth grade with a total of 87 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 49% male, 51% females, and 100% Black students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals were 98%. There were five third grade teachers.

School Four was a Level 4 exemplary school, in County Two including grades kindergarten through six with a total of 47 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 49% male, 51% females, and 99% Black and 1% White students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals represented 99% of those enrolled. There was one third grade teacher.

School Five was a Level 3, successful school, located in County Three including grades kindergarten through fourth grade with a total of 75 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 51% male, 49% females, and 97% Black and 3% White students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals represented 88%. There were three third grade teachers.

School Six was a Level 4, exemplary school, located in County Three including grades kindergarten through fourth grade with a total of 25 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 50% male, 50% females, and 98% Black and 2% other. Students eligible for free and reduced meals represented 98%. There was one third grade teacher.

School Seven was a Level 5, superior school, located in County Three including grades kindergarten through fourth grade with a total of 104 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 49% male, 51% females, 65% Black, 30% White, 1% Asian and 4% Hispanic students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals represented 67%. There were four third grade teachers.

School Eight was a Level 4 exemplary, school located in County Four including grades three through five with a total of 200 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 49% male, 51% females, and 45% Black, 51% White, and 4% Hispanic students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals were 66%. There were eight third grade teachers.

School Nine was a Level 4, exemplary school, located in County Five including grades kindergarten through third grade with a total of 77 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 57% male, 43% females, and 49% Black, 47% White, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals were 72%. There were four third grade teachers.

School Ten was a Level 5, superior school, located in County Five including grades kindergarten through third grade with a total of 88 students in third grade. The school records indicated that the population included 48% male, 52% females, and 44% Black, 55% White, and 1% Hispanic students. Students eligible for free and reduced meals were 46%. There were four third grade teachers.

Sample

A purposeful sample was used in this study to ensure that all accreditation levels and reading programs were included. The schools were selected based upon their geographical locations in the state. Using a convenient selection, ten schools were selected from North Mississippi. There was a cohort group of 579 students in the selected schools whose MCT reading scores were available for two consecutive years (2005 and 2006). Thirty-three teachers completed surveys. The 579 students and 33 teachers represented the sample of the study. These schools were grouped according to accreditation level and type of reading program.

The researcher identified the types of reading programs used in the schools by contacting the schools via e-mail (Appendix A). If the researcher received no responses from the email letters, the researcher contacted schools by telephone to secure volunteer participants for the study (Appendix B). Ten schools in north Mississippi were selected based upon the type of reading program and accreditation level shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Number of Schools Participating in the Study According to Reading Program

Programs	Number of Schools				
	Level 1 Low Achieving	Level 2 Under Achieving	Level 3 Successful	Level 4 Exemplary	Level 5 Superior
Reading Program Two	0	0	1	1	1
McMillan- McGraw- Hill	0	0	1	1	1
Reading Program One	0	0	1	1	0
No Program	0	0	0	1	1
Total	0	0	3	4	3

Instrumentation

The researcher developed a questionnaire (Appendix C) after reviewing the literature and questionnaires on reading achievement to gather data on teachers' perceptions of the reading programs identified in the study. A five-point Likert scale was used to collect data on how teachers feel about the reading programs they use. Question 8 of the questionnaire was used to identify the name of the reading program being used. Section A, questions 1 through 6 gathered the demographical information of the teacher, question 7 gathered information about the student population. Section B, questions 9 through 16 gathered information about reading programs only. Section C, questions 17 through 43 gathered information about the reading programs or reading strategies. Section C of the questionnaire utilized a three-point scale, adapted from the Mississippi Department of Education, (3 = superior, 2= adequate, and 1= may require supplemental resources) to measure the teachers' perceptions of the programs' teaching strategies,

instructional materials, assessment, and intervention efforts. Section C consisted of three questions concerning the teachers' perceptions of vocabulary development (questions 17, 18, and 25), four questions concerning phonics and phonemic awareness (questions 21-24), eleven questions concerning comprehension (questions 26-36), seven questions concerning fluency (37-43), and two questions concerning phonics (questions 19 and 20).

The questionnaire was validated by a panel of experts on reading programs and questionnaire development. The panel was requested to assess if questions adequately measured what they were supposed to measure. Feedback from the panel of experts was used to improve the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also tested for reliability. Reliability was measured by a test- retest procedure. A panel of teachers not participating in the study was requested to complete the questionnaire and to complete it again after two weeks, the scores were correlated and $r = .70, p. \leq .05$.

The questionnaires were given to ten schools in North Mississippi. The researcher delivered the questionnaires to teachers in their respective schools with permission from the superintendent and school board. A prepaid, self-addressed envelope was provided to return the questionnaires. The researcher made telephone calls and a second visit to pick up questionnaires from the schools. The return rate of the questionnaires was 92%. The questionnaire was utilized to assess teachers' perceptions of the reading programs they used for reading instruction. Individual school accreditation levels were obtained from the Spring Mississippi State-wide Accountability Results 2005. The state of Mississippi assigns accreditation levels to each individual school that serves students in third grade and above. Kindergarten through second grade elementary

schools are not tested and are unassigned by the state (testing begins in grade 3) and thus, are omitted from this study. The reading spring 2005 and 2006 MCT third grade reading scores were examined to determine students' achievement. Data generated from this study were analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical procedures. Summary descriptive statistics, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and a Sheffe Post Hoc were utilized. The alpha level for all statistical procedures was set at $p. \leq .05$

Procedures

The researcher received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Mississippi State University (see Appendix D) to conduct this study. Once permission was granted, the researcher submitted a cover letter to building principals explaining the study and requesting their assistance in distributing the questionnaires to third grade reading teachers. Cover letters were attached to the questionnaires. The completion and return of the questionnaire signified the participants' consent to participate in the study. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary.

A second letter was submitted to school districts requesting individual student MCT reading 2005 and 2006 individual scores. The researchers did not have to obtain parental consent because the data on students' reading MCT scores were collected from existing data with no identification of individual students. Numerical identifiers were assigned to student scores to ensure anonymity. Once the information were collected and recorded, the researcher entered the data into the SPSS for Windows and statistical analysis of the data was conducted.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using various descriptive and correlation statistics from the SPSS system at Mississippi State University. The procedures used for each research questions were as follows.

Research Question 1 When students are grouped based on the type of reading program used in their classrooms, are there any significant differences in their MCT reading achievement scores? The statistical procedures used were an ANOVA and Sheffe' Post Hoc to identify where the difference existed.

Research Question 2 Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on gender? The researcher performed a one-way ANOVA to determine if differences existed.

Research Question 3 Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on school accreditation level? The procedures used were a One-way ANOVA, a Tukey HSD Test, and a Paired t-test to determine if a significant difference existed in the students' MCT scores from one year to the next.

Research Question 4 What were the teachers' perceptions of the reading programs used in their respective classrooms? The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In the era of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), schools and districts have begun to rely on research to enhance their quest to help students become better readers. Further, teachers across different states and districts have demonstrated that sound, scientifically-based reading instruction can and does work with all students (United States Department of Education, 2002c). The purpose of this study was to determine if there were differences based on the type of reading program (Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, Reading Program Three, and no basal reading program) in the reading achievement of students. Students' reading achievement was measured by the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT). The study also examined teachers' perceptions of the impact of the reading program used in their respective schools and assessed if differences exist in teacher responses to survey items based on demographic data. These research questions guided the study:

1. When students are grouped based on the type of reading program used in their classrooms, are there significant differences in their MCT reading achievement scores?
2. Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on gender?

3. Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on school accreditation level?
4. What were the teachers' perceptions of the reading program used in their respective classrooms?

Summary Descriptive Statistics (Students' Records)

Data were collected from the student records of 579 students from ten elementary schools within five school districts in North Mississippi. The majority of the students were male as shown in Table 4.1. Table 4.2 shows the breakdown of the types of reading programs at the various schools. Most of the students used Reading Program One, followed by Reading Program Two.

Table 4.1
Gender of Students

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	319	55
Female	260	45
Total	579	100

Table 4.2

Reading Programs and Student Participants

Reading Program	Number of Students	Male Students N (Percent)	Female Students N (Percent)
Program One	187	102 (55)	85 (45)
Program Three	90	43 (47)	47 (53)
Program Two	157	87 (55)	70 (45)
No Basal Reading Program	145	77 (53)	68 (47)
Total	579	309 (53)	270 (47)

MCT Summary Descriptive Statistics of Reading Scores

The summary descriptive statistics are provided for the cohort of 579 student records analyzed for the study. As shown in Table 4.3, the State's Reading mean score for all students in 2005 combined was 494.60, the median was 497, and the range was 352. The median score of 497 reflects that most of the students performed in the proficient range of 452-518. The mean score for all students in the state for this MCT Reading test in 2006 was 513.20, the median was 512, and the range was 635. The median score of 512 reflects that most of students in the state performed in the proficient range of 462-539. In 2005, both male (499.87) and female students (498.65) in the cohort scored slightly higher than the state's mean score (494.60). In 2006, the male students (509.81) in the cohort scored slightly below the state's mean score (513.20).

Table 4.3

Summary Descriptive Statistics of Students' MCT Reading Scores

	All Students 2005	Males 2005	Females 2005	All Students 2006	Males 2006	Females 2006
Mean	499.31	499.87	498.65	514.64	509.81	519.83
State Mean	494.60	494.60	494.60	513.20	513.20	513.20
Median	497.00	497.00	497.00	512.00	512.00	519.00
Mode	502.00	479.00	502.00	534.00	526.00	534.00
Range	352.00	352.00	257.00	635.00	635.00	234.00
Minimum	338.00	338.00	408.00	55.00	55.00	397.00
Maximum	690.00	690.00	665.00	690.00	690.00	631.00
Count	579	309	270	579	309	270

Summary Descriptive Statistics (Teacher Demographics)

Table 4-4 displays the summary descriptive statistics of the teachers in the study.

Forty-six percent of teachers in the study had 1-5 years of teaching experience at their schools.

Table 4.4
Teachers' Years of Experience

Years Teaching at This School	Number	Percent
Less than a year	7	21
1-5 years	15	46
6-10 years	4	15
11 years	6	18

Table 4.5 displays the student population of the schools in the study and the number of third grade reading teachers who completed and returned questionnaires. The data revealed that 64% of the teachers taught in schools with a student population between 300-499 students.

Table 4.5
Number of Teachers Based on Student Population

Student Population	Number	Percent
100-299	11	33
300-499	21	64
500-999	1	3

Table 4.6 displays the summary descriptive statistics of the teachers in the study. Sixty-one percent of the teachers were Caucasian, 36 percent of the teachers were African American and one participant did not identify race. Seven of the participants were in the 21 – 30 age range. There were 14 participants in the 31-40 years of age range. There were 12 participants in the 41 years of age and above range. Fifty-five percent of the teacher participants in the study had bachelor's degrees. Forty-five percent of the teachers participating in the study had a master's degrees or higher. Sixty-seven percent of the participants had 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 4.6
Teacher Demographic Summary Statistics

Reading Program	n	Caucasian	African American	21-30 years of Age	31-40 years of Age	41 > Years of Age	BA Degree	MA Degree or Higher	Less than 10 years Experience	10 Years Experience or more
Program One	8	5	3	1	3	4	6	2	5	3
Program Two	9	5	4	4	2	3	5	4	6	3
Program Three	9	4	4	0	5	4	4	5	5	4
No Basal	7	6	1	2	4	1	3	4	6	1
Total	33	20 (61%)	12 (36%)	7 (21%)	14 (43%)	12 (36%)	18 (55%)	15 (45%)	22 (67%)	11 (33%)

Table 4.7 displays the number of teachers by school accreditation level. There were no teachers in the study in Level 1 (Low performing) or Level 2 (Under-Achieving) schools.

Table 4.7
Distribution of Teachers by School Accreditation Level

Accreditation Level	Number	Percent
Level 3 (Successful)	12	36
Level 4 (Exemplary)	12	36
Level 5 (Superior)	9	28
Total	33	100

Research Questions

Research Question 1: When students are grouped based on the type of reading program used in their classrooms, are there significant differences in their MCT reading achievement scores?

MCT Descriptive Statistics Based on Type of Program

Table 4.8 displays the summary descriptive statistics of MCT reading scores based on the type of reading program for 2005 and 2006 school year. In 2005, students taught using the Reading Program One ($M=505.90$) and no basal reading program ($M=510.83$) scored higher than the state's mean score on the MCT ($M=494.60$). In 2006,

students taught with no basal reading program ($M=533.37$) scored higher than the state's mean score ($M=513.20$) on the MCT in reading.

Table 4.8

Summary Descriptive Statistics of Students' MCT Scores

	Reading Program One 2005	Reading Program One 2006	Reading Program Two 2005	Reading Program Two 2006	Reading Program Three 2005	Reading Program Three 2006	No Program 2005	No Program 2006
Mean	505.90	504.92	487.90	511.24	486.97	510.51	510.83	533.37
State Mean	494.60	513.20	494.60	513.20	494.60	513.20	494.60	513.20
Median	502.00	505.00	488.00	512.00	488.00	512.00	502.00	526.00
Mode	470.00	555.00	479.00	534.00	502.00	526.00	543.00	534.00
Range	352.00	576.00	227.00	269.00	213.00	170.00	277.00	276.00
Min.	338.00	55.00	362.00	362.00	355.00	432.00	388.00	414.00
Max.	690.00	631.00	589.00	631.00	568.00	602.00	665.00	690.00
Count	187	187	156	155	91	90	145	145.00

Table 4.9 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA used to determine if there were differences in MCT scores based on Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, Reading Program Three, and no basal reading program. There were statistically-significant differences in MCT scores based on the type of reading program ($F = 10.23, p \leq 05$).

Table 4.9
ANOVA Based on Type of Reading Program in 2005

Sourced of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	61547.44	3	20515.815	10.23	.000*
Within Groups	1153180.22	575	2005.531		
Total	1214727.66	578			

*p<.05

The researcher performed a Sheffe' Post Hoc test to identify where the differences existed. Table 4.10 shows the results of the post hoc test. As shown in Table 4.10 students taught with Reading Program One were significantly different from both Reading Program Two and Reading Program Three groups. In addition the students taught with no basal program were significantly different from Reading Program Two and Reading Program Three groups.

Table 4.10

Sheffe' Post Hoc Based on Type of Reading Program in 2005

Dependent Variable	Reading Program	Reading Program	Mean Difference	p
Reading MCT '05	Program One	Program Two	18.00	.004*
		Program Three	18.94	.013*
		No Program	4.93	.804
	Program Two	Program One	18.00	.004*
		Program Three	.93	.999
		No Program	22.94	.000*
	Program Three	Program One	18.94	.013*
		Program Two	.93	.999
		No Program	23.86	.001*
	No Program	Program One	4.93	.804
		Program Two	22.94	.000*
		Program Three	23.86	.001*

*p. ≤ .05

Table 4.11 displays 2005 MCT reading scores by reading programs. The total number of students in each reading program, mean scores, standard deviations, and the State's mean MCT score are also listed. Based upon the results, the researcher determined that students who were taught with no basal reading program had a higher mean score ($M=510.83$) on the MCT reading assessment in 2005 than students who were taught using Reading Program One ($M=505.90$), Reading Program Two ($M=487.90$), or Reading Program Three ($M=486.97$).

Table 4.11

MCT Reading Scores by Reading Program for 2005

Reading Program	N	SD	M	State's Mean MCT Score
Program One	187	53.54	505.90	494.60
Program Two	156	35.36	487.90	494.60
Program Three	91	38.43	486.97	494.60
No Program	145	43.97	510.83	494.60

Table 4.12 displays the results of the One-way ANOVA which was performed to determine if there were significant differences in 2006 MCT scores based on the type of reading program: Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, Reading Program Three, and no basal program. There was a statistically significant difference at the .05 alpha level in reading MCT Scores in 2006 based on the reading programs, $F(1,577) = 6.19, p < .000$.

Table 4.12

ANOVA results of Reading MCT Scores for Individual 2006 Reading Programs

Sourced of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	51511.53	3	17170.50	6.19	.000*
Within Groups	1589979	574	2769.99		
Total	1641491	577			

* $p < .05$

Table 4.13 shows the Scheffe Post Hoc test results for 2006. There were significant differences ($p = \leq .05$) between students taught using no basal reading program and all other programs. Students taught with no basal reading program scored higher in the MCT in 2006 than students using the Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, and Reading Program Three.

Table 4.13

Sheffe Post Hoc Based on Type of Reading Program in 2006

Dependent Variable	Reading Program	Reading Program	Mean Difference	p
Reading MCT '06	Program One	Program Two	2.964	.965
		Program Three	2.043	.993
		No Program	-20.116	.008*
	Program Two	Program One	-2.964	.965
		Program Three	-.920	.999
		No Program	-23.079	.002*
	Program Three	Program One	-2.043	.993
		Program Two	.920	.999
		No Program	-22.159	.021*
	No Program	Program One	20.116	.008*
		Program Two	23.079	.002*
		Program Three	22.159	.021*

* $p. \leq .05$

Table 4.14 displays students' mean scores for individual reading programs for 2006. The total number of students in each reading program along with standard deviation and State's mean MCT score ($M=513.20$) are also displayed. Based upon the

results, students who were taught with no basal reading program ($M=533.37$) scored higher on the MCT reading assessment in 2006 than students who were taught using Reading Program One ($M=504.92$), Reading Program Two (510.51), or Reading Program Three ($M=511.24$) reading programs based on mean scores.

Table 4.14

Students' Mean Score for Individual Reading Programs for 2006

Reading Program	N	SD	M	State's Mean MCT Score
Program One	187	70.23	504.92	513.20
Program Two	90	40.85	510.51	513.20
Program Three	155	32.91	511.24	513.20
No Program	145	46.91	533.37	513.20

Research Question 2: Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on gender?

Table 4.15 displays 2005 MCT mean reading scores based on gender. The table also displays the total number of students by gender, the mean scores, and standard deviation. The difference between the MCT scores for females ($M=495.84$) and males ($M=495.79$) was negligible.

Table 4.15

MCT Reading Scores Based on Gender in 2005

Gender	Number of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Male	303	495.79	44.23
Female	276	495.84	40.07

Table 4.16 displays the results of the One-way ANOVA showing that there was no significant difference in MCT scores when students were grouped based on gender ($F(1,578) = .00, p = .99$).

Table 4.16

ANOVA Results of 2005 MCT Reading Scores Based on Gender

Sourced of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	.335	1	0.335	.000	.99
Within Groups	1032318.1	577	1789.11		
Total	1032318.5	578			

* $p \leq .05$

Table 4.17 displays descriptive statistics of 2005 individual reading programs by gender. A One-way ANOVA (Table 4.15) was calculated for each reading program using the reading MCT scores based on gender in 2005. There was no statistically significant difference in MCT Scores based on gender in 2005. However, females ($M=502.89, SD=41.94, n=85$) taught using Reading Program One scored slightly higher than males

($M=488.94$, $SD=44.79$, $n=102$), males ($M=491.14$, $SD=40.50$, $n=81$) taught using Reading Program Two scored slightly higher than females ($M=484.04$, $SD=36.45$, $n=76$) using the same program. Males ($M=515.07$, $SD=46.12$, $n=76$) taught using no basal reading program scored slightly higher than females ($M=506.16$, $SD=40.06$, $n=69$) taught using no basal reading program.

Table 4.17

MCT Reading Scores by Reading Programs and Gender for 2005

Reading Program/Gender	Number of Students	Standard Deviation	MCT Reading Mean Score
Reading Program One			
Male	102	44.79	488.94
Female	85	41.94	502.89
Reading Program Two			
Male	81	40.50	491.14
Female	76	36.45	484.04
Reading Program Three			
Male	44	37.18	487.82
Female	46	34.05	486.80
No Program			
Male	76	46.12	515.07
Female	69	40.06	506.16

Table 4.18 displays the 2006 MCT reading scores based on gender. The table also displays the total number of students by gender, the mean scale scores, and standard deviation. Females ($M=522.23$) scored slightly higher than males ($M=512.57$) on the 2006 MCT reading test. The researcher used a cohort group of students' 2005 MCT reading scores with their 2006 reading scores.

Table 4.18

MCT Reading Scores Based on Gender in 2006

Gender	Number of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Male	302	512.57	60.95
Female	276	522.23	43.06

Table 4.19 displays the results of the One-way ANOVA used to determine if there was a difference in overall Reading MCT Scores based on gender in 2006. There was no significant difference in 2006 based on gender, $F = .275$, $p = .84$.

Table 4.19

ANOVA Results of 2006 MCT Reading Scores Based on Gender

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	.207	3	.069	.275	.84
Within Groups	144.22	575	.251		
Total	144.44	578			

Table 4.20 displays the means, standard deviation, and number distribution of student scores in different reading programs based upon gender. Although there was no statistically significant difference in the overall scores, females taught with Reading Program One ($M = 538.27$, $SD = 40.20$, $n = 85$) and Reading Program Three ($M = 515.54$, $SD = 34.51$, $n = 37$) scored slightly higher than males taught with the same programs, Reading Program One ($M = 486.03$, $SD = 97.35$, $N = 101$) and Reading Program Three ($M = 506.58$, $SD = 30.82$, $N = 53$).

Table 4.20

MCT Results by Reading Programs and Gender for 2006

Reading Program/ Gender	Number	Standard Deviation	Mean Score
Reading Program One			
Male	101	97.35	486.03
Female	85	40.20	538.27
Reading Program Two			
Male	87	43.75	509.43
Female	70	36.63	502.13
Reading Program Three			
Male	53	30.82	506.58
Female	37	34.51	515.54
No Program			
Male	77	48.51	535.53
Female	68	45.32	531.00

Research Question 3: Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on school accreditation level?

Table 4.21 displays the 2005 and 2006 MCT reading scores by school accreditation levels. In both years, 2005 and 2006, the higher the School Accreditation Level, the higher the mean MCT Reading scores.

Table 4.21

MCT Reading Scores by School Accreditation Level 2005 and 2006

School Levels	Number of Students	Mean Score 2005	Standard Deviation 2005	Mean Score 2006	Standard Deviation 2006
Level 3	173	488.95	38.23	510.40	45.79
Level 4	279	495.32	43.05	513.47	58.84
Level 5	127	506.24	43.97	534.71	46.30

Table 4.22 displays the 2005 MCT reading scores of students based upon the school's accreditation level and reading program used. Of all the level 3 schools, students who were taught using the Reading Program One ($M=493.51$, $SD=33.85$) scored slightly higher (not statistically significant) than students who were taught using Reading Program Two ($M=485.77$, $SD=40.86$) and Reading Program Three ($M=483.35$, $SD=37.24$) reading programs. Students who were taught with no basal reading program ($M=505.72$, $SD=41.33$) scored slightly higher (not statistically significant) in Level 4 schools than students using Reading Program One ($M=496.37$, $SD=49.24$), Reading Program Two ($M=490.17$, $SD=34.15$) and Reading Program Three ($M=487.36$, $SD=30.06$) reading programs. Students who were taught with no basal reading program ($M=514.98$, $SD=45.85$) scored slightly higher (not statistically significant) in Level 5 schools than students using Reading Program Two ($M=491.85$, $SD=35.66$) and Reading Program Three ($M=491.21$, $SD=37.28$) reading programs in 2005 on the MCT reading assessment.

Table 4.22

Reading MCT Scores by Reading Programs and School Accreditation Level in 2005

Reading Program	Number of Students	Standard Deviation	Mean Score
School Level 3			
Program One	71	33.85	493.51
Program Two	102	40.86	485.77
Program Three	34	37.24	483.35
No Program	0	0	0
Level 4			
Program One	116	49.24	496.37
Program Two	42	34.15	490.17
Program Three	22	30.06	487.36
No Program	65	41.33	505.72
Level 5			
Program One	0	0	0
Program Two	13	35.66	491.85
Program Three	34	37.28	491.21
No Program	80	45.85	514.98

Table 4.23 displays the MCT reading scores for 2006 by school levels and reading programs. Based upon the data collected, students who were taught using Reading Program Two ($M=506.14$, $SD=40.66$) reading program scored higher than students who

were taught using the Reading Program One ($M=494.58$, $SD=36.21$) and Reading Program Three ($M=504.41$, $SD=32.89$) reading programs in level 3. For level 4 schools in 2006, students who were taught using no basal reading program ($M=544.84$, $SD=51.70$) scored higher than students who were taught using Reading Program One ($M=511.25$, $SD=79.52$), Reading Program Two ($M=571.74$, $SD=43.03$), and Reading Program Three ($M=510.09$, $SD=34.23$) reading programs. Students who were taught using Reading Program Two ($M=533.73$, $SD=24.15$) scored higher than students taught using Reading Program Three ($M=516.88$, $SD=33.16$) reading program and students taught using no basal reading program ($M=522.05$, $SD=37.80$) in level 5 schools 2006.

Table 4.23

MCT Reading Scores by School Accreditation Level and Reading Program in 2006

Reading Program	Number of Students	Standard Deviation	Mean Score
School Level 3			
Program One	71	36.21	494.58
Program Two	102	40.66	506.14
Program Three	34	32.89	504.41
No Program	0	0	0
Level 4			
Program One	116	79.52	511.25
Program Two	42	43.03	517.74
Program Three	22	34.23	510.09
No Program	65	51.70	544.84
Level 5			
Program One	0	0	0
Program Two	12	24.15	533.73
Program Three	34	33.16	516.88
No Program	80	37.80	522.05

Table 4.24 displays the results of the One-way ANOVA which was calculated for the reading MCT Scores by school level in 2005. There was no statistically significant difference when students' MCT scores were analyzed based on school levels.

Table 4.24

ANOVA for 2005 MCT Reading Scores by School Accreditation Level

Sourced of Variance	SS	df	M	F	P
Between Groups	971.26	2	485.63	0.23	.79
Within Groups	1213756	576	2107.23		
Total	1214728	578			

* $p. \leq .05$

Table 4.25 displays the results of the One-way ANOVA which was calculated for the reading MCT Scores by school level in 2006. There was no statistically significant difference when students' MCT scores were analyzed based on school levels. There was, however, a statistically significant difference in Reading MCT scores based on School accreditation levels 2006. Because there was a statistical difference, the researcher performed a Tukey HSD Test (Table 4.23) to show where differences existed.

Table 4.25

ANOVA for 2006 MCT Reading Scores by School Accreditation Level

Sourced of Variance	SS	df	M	F	P
Between Groups	52485.28	2	26242.64	9.9	.00*
Within Groups	1525418	574	2657.52		
Total	1577903	576			

* $p. \leq .05$

Table 4.26 displays the Tukey HSD Test used to determine the differences based upon the schools' accreditation levels. Based on the data, there was no significant difference between level 4 and level 5 schools. However, the mean score of the level 3 schools was significantly lower than the level 4 and level 5 schools.

Table 4.26

Tukey HSD Test of Schools' 2006 Accreditation Levels

Accreditation Level	M
Level 3 ^{2,3}	501.6
Level 4 ¹	521.8
Level 5 ¹	521.6

Table 4.27 displays MCT mean scores based on accreditation levels. The mean score for the level 3 schools was lower than the level 4 and 5 schools.

Table 4.27

MCT Mean Scores Based on 2006 Accreditation Level

Accreditation Level	N	M
Level 5	111	521.6
Level 4	259	521.8
Level 3	207	501.8

Because the researcher used a cohort group of students for 2005 and 2006, the researcher performed a Paired t-test to determine if a significant difference existed in the students MCT scores from one year to the next. There was no significant difference from the 2005 school year to the 2006 school year in the level 3 schools. Table 4.28 displays the results of the Paired t-test.

Table 4.28

Paired T-Test of MCT for Level 3 Schools - 2005-2006

Year	M	t	P
2005	497	1.48	.13
2006	501		

There was a significant difference at the .05 level in the level 4 schools between 2005 and 2006. There was also a significant difference at the .05 level in the level 5 schools between 2005 and 2006. Tables 4.29 and 4.30 display the results of the Paired t-tests.

Table 4.29

Paired T-Test of MCT for Level 4 Schools - 2005-2006

Year	M	t	P
2005	499	6.27	.00*
2006	521		

Table 4.30

Paired T-Test of MCT for Level 5 Schools - 2005-2006

Year	M	t	P
2005	502	6.52	.00
2006	521		

Research Question 4: What were the teachers' perceptions of the reading program used in their respective schools?

Table 4.31 displays the scale scores used to interpret the survey results which reported in Likert scale format.

Table 4.31

Likert Scale Mean Score Interpretation

Rating	Description
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree
1.50-2.49	Disagree
2.50-3.49	Undecided
3.50-4.49	Agree
4.50-5.00	Strongly Agree

Table 4.32 displays the overall mean score results for the teachers’ perception survey. The overall mean for the survey was 3.98 which indicated that the teachers agree that the reading program/strategy implemented in their school contributed to students’ reading achievement.

Table 4.32

Overall Mean Score of Teachers’ Perception Survey

	N	SD	M
Survey Overall Mean	33	.93	3.98

Table 4.33 displays the items and the descriptive statistics for the teachers’ survey. Survey questions 9-16 were used to gather the data. The mean scores for the teacher survey indicated that teachers agreed that their reading program or strategy contributed to students’ reading achievement. Based upon the results from the teacher

surveys, teachers who used Reading Program Two strongly agreed ($M=4.63$) that their reading program contributed to students' reading success. Teachers who used no basal reading program strongly agreed ($M=4.5$) that their strategy promoted students' ability to read fluently, to comprehend printed material, and to provide enrichment activities for students.

Table 4.33

Teachers' Perception of Reading Program/ Strategies

Variable	N	SD	M
9. The reading program used in my classroom contributes to students' reading success.			
Reading Program One	5	.84	4.20
Reading Program Two	8	.52	4.63
Reading Program Three	9	.33	4.11
No Program	no responses		
10. I am satisfied with my reading program.			
Reading Program One	5	.84	3.80
Reading Program Two	8	.52	4.38
Reading Program Three	9	1.00	3.67
No Program	no responses		
11. I follow the programs method of instruction			
Reading Program One	5	.70	4.0
Reading Program Two	8	.53	4.5
Reading Program Three	9	1.03	3.2
No Program	no responses		

Table continues

Table 4.33 (continued)

12. The reading program or strategy ensures that students develop phonemic awareness.			
Reading Program One	8	1.31	3.50
Reading Program Two	9	.60	4.11
Reading Program Three	9	.87	4.00
No Program	7	1.51	3.57
13. The reading program or strategy addresses phonics instruction.			
Reading Program One	8	1.31	3.50
Reading Program Two	9	.60	4.11
Reading Program Three	9	.44	4.22
No Program	7	1.51	3.57
14. The reading program or strategy promotes students' ability to read fluently.			
Reading Program One	8	.93	4.00
Reading Program Two	9	.93	3.89
Reading Program Three	9	.44	4.22
No Program	8	.54	4.50

Table continues

Table 4.33 (continued)

15. The reading program or strategy utilizes strategies that foster students' vocabulary development.			
Reading Program One	8	.52	4.63
Reading Program Two	9	.50	4.33
Reading Program Three	9	.87	4.00
No Program	7	.54	4.43
16. The reading program or strategy promotes students' comprehension of printed material.			
Reading Program One	8	.46	4.25
Reading Program Two	9	.44	4.22
Reading Program Three	9	.93	3.89
No Program	6	.52	4.67

For data shown in Tables 4.34 through 4.38, the teachers ranked with a numeric code (3= superior, 2 = adequate, 1 = may require supplementary resources) their perceptions of the reading programs or models' inclusion of teaching strategies, instructional materials, assessment, and intervention efforts. The numbers in the charts represent percentages.

Table 4.34 displays the results of all the teachers combined responses. Survey items 17-43 sought teachers' perceptions regarding their reading program or reading strategies if a basal reading program were not used. Items 17 -20 addressed vocabulary and writing, items 21-25 addressed word recognition, items 26-36 addressed comprehension, and items 37-43 addressed oral reading. The largest percentage (61%)

was given a superior rating for the teaching strategies in the area of comprehension (items 26-30). The responses indicated that the teachers perceived that additional instructional material was not needed, 30% or smaller in all areas, with the exception of blending and segmenting intervention.

Table 4.35 displays the results of teachers who used Reading Program Two. The results indicated that the majority of the teachers felt that their program provided adequate or superior teaching strategies, with the exception of student read alouds. Fifty-six percent of the teachers felt that supplemental resources may be required. The teachers also felt that the program provided adequate or superior instructional materials.

Table 4.36 displays results of teachers who used Reading Program Three. According to the results, the majority of the teachers felt that their program provided adequate or superior teaching strategies, with the exceptions of the areas of expanding reading vocabulary and techniques for discussing read alouds. Fifty-six percent of the teachers felt that supplemental resources were required. The majority of the teachers felt that the program provided adequate or required supplemental resources in the area of instructional materials. The majority of the teachers also felt that the program provide adequate or superior support in the area of assessment. The majority of the teachers also felt that program required supplementary resources or was adequate in the area of intervention.

Table 4.37 displays results of teachers who used Reading Program One. The results indicated that the majority of the teachers felt that the reading program provided adequate or superior teaching strategies. The largest percentage of superior responses

given by the teachers was in the area of instructional materials. The majority of the teachers felt that supplementary resources were not required in the area of intervention.

Table 4.38 displays results of the teachers who did not use a basal reading program in their classrooms. The results indicated that many of the teachers felt that their teaching strategies did not require supplementary resources and rated their strategies "adequate" or "superior". The majority of the teachers felt that their teaching strategies provided adequate or superior instructional materials and assessments. The teachers also felt that their strategies provided adequate or superior interventions. One hundred percent of the teachers rated decoding as adequate in the area of intervention.

Table 4.34

Combined Teacher Survey Results Expressed in Percentages (N=33)

		1 = May require supplementary resources 2= Adequate 3 = Superior											
		*Teaching strategies			Instructional Materials			Type of Assessment			Intervention		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
17.	Learning new vocabulary	9	52	39	6	64	30	15	64	21	24	48	28
18.	Linking vocabulary to concepts	9	58	33	13	59	28	21	48	33	30	48	21
19.	Opportunities for writing	6	52	42	23	39	38	22	50	28	28	53	19
20.	Dictation	31	38	31	27	56	17	34	47	19	30	55	15
21.	Blending and segmenting multi-syllable words	15	39	46	21	42	37	25	41	34	37	33	40
22.	Decoding orthographically “regular” and “irregular” words	18	48	34	18	48	34	25	50	25	27	49	24
23.	Structural analysis of words	16	42	42	28	36	36	28	38	34	27	39	34
24.	Sight word recognition	24	42	34	21	42	37	27	39	34	30	40	30
25.	Expanding reading vocabulary	24	33	43	18	42	40	25	44	31	33	36	31
26.	Connecting and comprehending fiction and nonfiction	9	42	49	24	36	40	28	28	44	3	39	28
27.	Rereading for meaning	6	33	61	15	45	40	30	33	37	30	40	30
28.	Recalling facts and details	0	39	61	16	42	42	21	45	34	21	48	31
29.	Reading for details	3	36	61	15	33	52	22	38	40	22	47	31
30.	Responding to literature	9	30	61	28	28	44	31	31	38	31	38	31
31.	Summarizing	9	39	52	25	34	16	34	32	34	30	36	34
32.	Connecting and comparing across texts	15	51	34	30	42	28	36	36	28	30	48	22
33.	Identifying words and phrases that interfere with comprehension	9	48	43	24	39	37	24	45	31	28	45	27
34.	Cause/effect	3	48	49	24	33	43	27	30	43	21	48	31
35.	Fact/Opinion	6	39	55	24	30	46	24	39	37	24	42	34
36.	Author’s point of view	3	55	42	28	42	31	30	40	30	27	52	21
37.	Selection of books for read aloud (teacher)	19	20	61	29	18	53	31	31	38	33	24	43
38.	Techniques for discussing read alouds	21	48	31	29	38	33	29	45	26	19	44	37
39.	Familiar authors and titles	12	48	40	26	32	42	26	47	27	29	45	26
40.	Student reads aloud	12	38	50	21	32	47	22	39	39	30	30	40
41.	Accuracy and fluency	9	36	55	8	47	45	13	50	37	18	45	37
42.	Opportunities for wide and varied reading	12	36	52	15	44	41	20	40	40	24	39	37
43.	Opportunities to read longer books	21	30	49	29	26	45	30	36	34	39	24	37

The numbers in the chart represent percentages.

Table 4.35

Reading Program Two Teacher Survey Results Expressed in Percentages (N=33)

		1 = May require supplementary resources 2= Adequate 3 = Superior											
		*Teaching strategies			Instructional Materials			Type of Assessment			Intervention		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
17.	Learning new vocabulary	22	33	45	22	56	22	0	56	44	0	33	67
18.	Linking vocabulary to concepts	0	56	44	0	57	43	0	56	44	0	56	44
19.	Opportunities for writing	22	44	44	23	33	44	14	43	43	11	22	67
20.	Dictation	22	44	44	0	56	44	22	44	44	0	44	56
21.	Blending and segmenting multi-syllable words	11	22	67	11	22	67	11	22	67	13	0	87
22.	Decoding orthographically “regular” and “irregular” words	11	33	56	11	33	56	11	33	56	11	22	67
23.	Structural analysis of words	0	33	67	22	22	56	11	33	56	12	25	63
24.	Sight word recognition	33	22	45	22	33	45	22	44	44	14	14	72
25.	Expanding reading vocabulary	25	25	50	12	38	50	22	44	44	25	63	12
26.	Connecting and comprehending fiction and nonfiction	0	22	78	22	22	56	11	22	56	0	44	56
27.	Rereading for meaning	0	11	89	22	22	56	11	33	56	0	37	63
28.	Recalling facts and details	0	22	78	22	22	56	11	33	56	0	37	63
29.	Reading for details	0	22	78	22	22	56	11	33	56	0	37	63
30.	Responding to literature	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	22	56	11	25	63
31.	Summarizing	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	33	45	11	25	63
32.	Connecting and comparing across texts	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	22	56	11	25	63
33.	Identifying words and phrases that interfere with comprehension	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	22	56	11	25	63
34.	Cause/effect	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	22	56	11	25	63
35.	Fact/Opinion	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	22	56	11	25	63
36.	Author’s point of view	11	11	78	33	11	56	22	22	56	11	25	63
37.	Selection of books for read aloud (teacher)	22	11	67	33	11	56	33	22	45	13	13	74
38.	Techniques for discussing read alouds	11	56	33	22	33	45	22	33	45	12	25	63
39.	Familiar authors and titles	22	44	44	11	33	56	11	33	56	13	13	74
40.	Student reads aloud	56	33	11	33	22	45	33	22	45	25	63	11
41.	Accuracy and fluency	11	22	67	22	44	44	22	44	44	11	25	63
42.	Opportunities for wide and varied reading	0	33	67	0	44	56	0	44	56	0	25	75
43.	Opportunities to read longer books	22	11	67	22	22	56	22	22	56	25	0	75

The numbers in the chart represent percentages.

Table 4.36

Reading Program Three Teacher Survey Results Expressed in Percentages (N=33)

		1 = May require supplementary resources 2= Adequate 3 = Superior											
		*Teaching strategies			Instructional Materials			Type of Assessment			Intervention		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
17.	Learning new vocabulary	0	89	11	11	67	22	22	78	0	22	67	11
18.	Linking vocabulary to concepts	22	67	11	33	56	11	33	56	11	44	56	0
19.	Opportunities for writing	0	78	22	0	78	22	22	67	11	22	78	0
20.	Dictation	33	44	23	33	44	23	44	33	23	33	67	0
21.	Blending and segmenting multi-syllable words	11	78	11	22	67	11	33	56	11	44	44	12
22.	Decoding orthographically “regular” and “irregular” words	33	56	11	22	67	11	44	44	12	56	33	11
23.	Structural analysis or words	44	44	12	44	44	12	56	33	11	56	33	11
24.	Sight word recognition	33	56	11	33	56	11	56	33	11	56	33	11
25.	Expanding reading vocabulary	56	33	11	44	44	11	56	33	11	67	22	11
26.	Connecting and comprehending fiction and nonfiction	33	45	22	44	44	11	44	44	11	56	44	0
27.	Rereading for meaning	22	67	11	22	67	11	44	44	11	56	44	0
28.	Recalling facts and details	0	89	11	11	78	11	22	67	11	44	56	0
29.	Reading for details	11	78	11	11	78	11	22	67	11	33	67	0
30.	Responding to literature	22	56	22	22	67	11	33	56	11	56	44	0
31.	Summarizing	22	67	11	11	67	22	44	44	11	44	56	0
32.	Connecting and comparing across texts	44	44	12	44	44	12	29	57	14	44	56	0
33.	Identifying words and phrases that interfere with comprehension	22	67	11	22	67	11	25	63	12	33	67	0
34.	Cause/effect	0	89	11	11	78	11	25	63	12	33	67	0
35.	Fact/Opinion	11	78	11	11	67	22	25	63	12	33	67	0
36.	Author’s point of view	0	89	11	11	67	22	25	63	12	33	67	0
37.	Selection of books for read aloud (teacher)	44	44	12	56	22	22	56	33	11	67	33	0
38.	Techniques for discussing read alouds	56	33	11	67	22	11	44	44	11	0	56	44
39.	Familiar authors and titles	22	67	11	56	33	11	44	56	0	44	56	0
40.	Student reads aloud	0	89	11	22	67	11	22	67	11	44	56	0
41.	Accuracy and fluency	11	78	11	11	78	11	11	78	11	22	78	0
42.	Opportunities for wide and varied reading	33	56	11	44	56	0	44	56	0	44	56	0
43.	Opportunities to read longer books	44	44	12	56	44	0	0	56	44	67	33	0

* The numbers in the chart represent percentages.

Table 4.37

Reading Program One Teacher Survey Results Expressed in Percentages (N=33)

		1 = May require supplementary resources 2= Adequate 3 = Superior											
		*Teaching strategies			Instructional Materials			Type of Assessment			Intervention		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
17.	Learning new vocabulary	12	38	50	0	75	25	25	50	25	38	50	12
18.	Linking vocabulary to concepts	0	62	38	0	75	25	29	42	29	38	68	0
19.	Opportunities for writing	0	38	62	29	29	42	0	43	57	38	50	12
20.	Dictation	43	57	0	43	57	0	33	67	0	55	45	0
21.	Blending and segmenting multi-syllable words	33	22	45	33	56	11	43	43	14	45	33	22
22.	Decoding orthographically “regular” and “irregular” words	22	45	33	22	45	33	29	57	14	33	56	11
23.	Structural analysis of words	22	45	33	25	50	25	29	57	14	33	56	11
24.	Sight word recognition	22	33	45	11	66	23	25	50	25	38	50	12
25.	Expanding reading vocabulary	11	33	56	0	55	45	14	72	14	22	67	11
26.	Connecting and comprehending fiction and nonfiction	0	67	33	22	45	33	43	14	43	56	33	11
27.	Rereading for meaning	0	22	78	11	56	33	50	13	37	43	33	22
28.	Recalling facts and details	0	22	78	22	33	45	50	17	33	33	45	22
29.	Reading for details	0	11	89	25	0	75	33	17	50	38	38	24
30.	Responding to literature	0	33	67	57	0	43	57	14	29	50	25	25
31.	Summarizing	0	38	62	50	0	50	43	14	43	43	22	33
32.	Connecting and comparing across texts	0	66	34	38	38	24	66	17	17	43	33	22
33.	Identifying words and phrases that interfere with comprehension	0	66	34	38	38	24	50	33	17	50	50	0
34.	Cause/effect	0	34	66	37	13	50	42	14	43	33	43	22
35.	Fact/Opinion	0	34	66	37	13	50	43	14	43	33	33	34
36.	Author’s point of view	0	45	55	50	13	37	57	14	29	43	33	22
37.	Selection of books for read aloud (teacher)	0	0	100	22	11	67	29	29	42	33	22	43
38.	Techniques for discussing read alouds	13	25	62	22	22	56	42	29	29	43	33	22
39.	Familiar authors and titles	13	25	62	33	11	56	42	29	29	43	33	22
40.	Student reads aloud	11	22	37	22	11	37	29	29	43	33	22	43
41.	Accuracy and fluency	13	25	62	11	33	56	29	43	29	33	33	34
42.	Opportunities for wide and varied reading	12	38	50	11	33	56	29	29	43	33	43	22
43.	Opportunities to read longer books	12	38	50	33	11	56	43	43	14	43	33	22

* The numbers in the chart represent percentages.

Table 4.38

No Basal Reading Program Teacher Survey Results Expressed in Percentages (N=33)

		1 = May require supplementary resources 2= Adequate 3 = Superior											
		*Teaching strategies			Instructional Materials			Type of Assessment			Intervention		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
17.	Learning new vocabulary	0	43	57	0	50	50	11	78	11	38	62	0
18.	Linking vocabulary to concepts	14	43	43	13	50	37	24	38	38	38	24	38
19.	Opportunities for writing	14	43	43	29	29	42	50	50	0	38	62	0
20.	Dictation	43	57	0	38	62	0	50	50	0	50	50	0
21.	Blending and segmenting multi-syllable words	0	29	71	14	29	57	14	43	43	0	57	43
22.	Decoding orthographically “regular” and “irregular” words	0	71	29	14	51	29	14	72	14	0	100	0
23.	Structural analysis of words	0	43	57	14	29	57	14	29	57	0	57	43
24.	Sight word recognition	0	43	57	14	29	57	14	29	57	14	43	43
25.	Expanding reading vocabulary	0	43	57	14	29	57	14	43	43	14	43	43
26.	Connecting and comprehending fiction and nonfiction	0	29	71	0	29	71	14	14	72	14	43	43
27.	Rereading for meaning	0	29	71	0	43	57	14	43	43	14	43	43
28.	Recalling facts and details	0	29	71	0	43	57	14	43	43	0	57	43
29.	Reading for details	0	29	71	0	29	71	14	57	29	14	43	43
30.	Responding to literature	0	29	71	0	29	71	14	57	29	0	57	43
31.	Summarizing	0	29	71	0	57	43	29	29	42	14	43	43
32.	Connecting and comparing across texts	0	100	0	0	86	14	29	71	0	14	86	0
33.	Identifying words and phrases that interfere with comprehension	0	43	57	0	43	57	14	43	43	14	43	43
34.	Cause/effect	0	43	57	14	29	57	29	29	42	14	43	43
35.	Fact/Opinion	0	29	71	14	29	57	14	43	43	14	43	43
36.	Author’s point of view	0	86	14	14	86	0	29	71	0	14	86	0
37.	Selection of books for read aloud (teacher)	0	29	71	0	29	71	0	43	57	14	29	57
38.	Techniques for discussing read alouds	0	86	14	0	86	12	0	84	16	16	68	16
39.	Familiar authors and titles	0	57	43	0	57	43	0	84	16	0	84	16
40.	Student reads aloud	0	29	71	0	29	71	0	33	67	14	29	57
41.	Accuracy and fluency	0	14	86	0	29	71	0	29	71	0	43	57
42.	Opportunities for wide and varied reading	0	14	86	0	43	57	12	25	63	14	29	57
43.	Opportunities to read longer books	0	29	71	0	29	71	0	38	62	14	29	57

* The numbers in the chart represent percentages.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess reading programs in North Mississippi. The questions investigated in this study were: (1) When students are grouped based on the type of reading program used in their classrooms are there significant differences in their MCT reading achievement scores? (2) Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on gender? (3) Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on school accreditation level? (4) What was the teachers' perception of the reading program used in their respective classrooms?

First, the findings in this study revealed that when students are grouped based on the type of reading program, there were significant differences in 2005 MCT reading scores of students who were taught using no basal reading program and the students who were taught using Reading Program Two and Reading Program Three. There was not a significant difference in the scores of students taught with no basal reading program and students who were taught using Reading Program One in 2005. In 2006 there were significant differences in the MCT reading scores of students who were taught using no basal reading program and the students who were taught using Reading Programs One, Two and Three.

Second, an analysis of the data revealed that in 2005 there was no significant difference in the 2005 reading MCT scores based on gender. Although there was no significant difference in 2006, the females scored slightly higher than males. The mean score for males was 512.57, and the mean score for females was 522.23. The females

who were taught using Reading Program One, Reading Program Three, and no basal reading programs scored higher than the males in the respective programs.

Third, the findings revealed that in 2005 there were no significant differences in students' achievement on MCT reading scores based on the accreditation level of the school. A One-way ANOVA revealed that some differences existed in students' achievement on MCT reading scores based on the accreditation level of the school in 2006. A Tukey HSD post-hoc test found that students taught in level 3 schools scored significantly lower than students taught in level 4 and level 5 schools. A Paired t-test also revealed that there was no significant difference in the reading scores from the 2005 school year to the 2006 school year in the level 3 schools. There was a significant difference in the reading scores from the 2005 school year to the 2006 school year in the level 4 schools. There was also a significant difference between the 2005 and 2006 reading scores in level 5 schools.

Fourth, the analysis of teachers' perceptions of the reading program or strategies used in their schools revealed that overall teachers agreed that their programs or strategies contributed to student success. A survey in Likert Scale format with 1 for "Strongly Disagree" to 5 for "Strongly Agree" was used to collect data on teachers' perceptions of their reading programs. According to responses, teachers who used a basal reading program perceived that their respective programs contributed to students' reading success. However, this study found that students who were taught in classrooms where the key components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel and no basal reading program, scored as well or higher on the MCT reading assessment than

classrooms with basal reading program. Teachers who used no basal reading program strongly agreed that the strategies they use promote students' ability to read fluently, comprehend printed material, and provide enrichment activities for the students.

Finally, this study revealed that when students were grouped based on the type of reading program used in classrooms, students who were taught using no basal reading program had higher reading scores on the MCT than students who were taught using Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, and Reading Program Three.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to compare the performance of students who used the Reading Program One, Reading Program Two, and Reading Program Three reading programs and classrooms using no basal reading program. The researcher sought to assess if these programs contributed to North Mississippi elementary schools students' reading performance as measured by the MCT. The study also assessed teachers' perceptions of the various reading programs used in their schools. Chapter V provides the summary of the study, conclusions based upon results of the study, and offers recommendations based on the procedures and findings of the study.

Summary

Chapter I of this study introduced the research and provided reasons the study was important to the existing body of knowledge on student achievement. Also included in Chapter I was the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study.

The problem in the study was that many schools and districts in the state tend to make uninformed decisions on reading material selections. School districts and schools are approached by reading program vendors promising gains in students achievement scores if they implement their programs which may or may not produce the promised outcome. The purpose of the study was to assess the Reading Program One, Reading

Program Two, Reading Program Three, and no basal reading program. The study provides individual schools and districts in the state with valuable information related to how various reading programs might contribute to students' success in reading. The information will assist school districts to make informed decisions when selecting programs or strategies for increasing students' reading achievement.

Also included in Chapter I were the research questions: (1) When students are grouped based on the type of reading program, is there a significant difference in their MCT achievement scores? (2) Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on gender? (3) Do differences exist in students' achievement in MCT reading scores based on the school's accreditation level? and (4) What is the teachers' perception of the reading program used in their respective schools? Chapter I also included the delimitations of the study, the limitations of the study, definition of terms, and the organization of the study.

A review of literature, presented in Chapter II, revealed that although educators have been in disagreement regarding the most effective approach to teaching reading (Adams, 1990; Coles, 1998; Cromwell, 1997), a majority of educators favor a balanced, eclectic approach, blending phonics and holistic principles and practices (Baumann & Hoffman, 1998). The review also indicated that over the past decade, schools and districts have learned to rely on research to help students become better readers. Teachers across various states and districts have demonstrated that sound, scientifically-based reading instruction works with all students (United States Department of Education, 2002c). The National Reading Panel (2000) identified five key areas of

reading instruction that should be present in the classroom: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) text comprehension.

The nation's effort to place more emphasis on early literacy speaks to its commitment to improve the reading ability of all students; this is evident with the passage of the *NCLB Act of 2001*, the *America Reads Challenge of 1997*, the *Reading First* initiative, and federal legislations implemented to improve students' reading ability (Virginia Department of Education, n.d; National Academy of Science, 1998; United States Department of Education, 1999). Although these legislations provided billions of dollars to ensure students' reading success, approximately 40% of students across the nation cannot read at a basic level (Ballator & Jerry, 1999; United States Department of Education, 2002c).

The state of Mississippi, along with other states, received federal funds to assist in its quest to improve students' reading ability. The state used funds to assist districts and schools to improve student achievement in reading through the application of scientifically-based reading research. Mississippi, like many other states, worked to develop a comprehensive reading reform model. With millions invested in this effort, the Mississippi Reading Reform Model incorporated scientifically-based reading research into a comprehensive process of prevention and intervention. The state held Mississippi Reading Academies for all kindergarten through grade 3 educators and elementary administrators. The academies focused on teaching strategies that support the five essential components of reading instruction and implementing instructional reading assessments (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003).

Provisions of the *NCLB Act of 2001* require that specific assessments be given to all students across the country and that states establish a system of accountability for all schools. Mississippi utilizes the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) in grades 2 – 8 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003; United States Department of Education, 2004). Schools in the state are assigned a 1 – 5 performance level based on the Growth Model. Mississippi's classification levels are level 5, superior performing; level 4, exemplary; level 3, successful; level 2, under achieving, and level 1, low performing. Schools that fail to meet federal standards two years in a row will come under sanctions by the state (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.a).

Fermanich (2002) stated that quality teaching is believed to be essential to learners' success by both research and the public (University of Minnesota, 2003). Other research done to define quality teaching, with teacher related variables, seem to be highly correlated with greater levels of student achievement (Ferguson, 1991; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; University of Minnesota, 2003). There were three variables related to teacher quality that emerged as having significant influence on student achievement: (1) teacher knowledge, (2) level of education, and (3) teaching in area of major.

Chapter III of this study presented a discussion of the methods and procedures used to conduct the study. The chapter included a restatement of the research questions, the research and statistical design, data on the participants of the study, data collection methods, and data or statistical analysis that addressed the research questions.

The study included a descriptive analysis designed to compare reading programs used in North Mississippi and to analyze teachers' perceptions of their reading programs.

A One-way ANOVA, Paired t-test, Turkey HSD, and Sheffe Post Hoc tests were used to determine statistical significance. The participants were third grade public school teachers in North Mississippi. Data were collected on student achievement test scores from the MCT for a cohort for the 2005 and 2006 school years. The source of the data was students' scores on the MCT test provided by the schools with permission from the superintendents' offices and a survey of teachers' impression of the reading program used in their classrooms.

Chapter IV presented the results from the statistical analysis and discussion of the data. The results of the statistical analysis indicated that the cohort of students who were taught using no basal reading program scored higher on the MCT in reading in 2005 and 2006 than students taught using a basal reading program.

There was not a significant difference in reading achievement based on gender. The findings in the study revealed that some differences existed in students' achievement on MCT reading scores based on the accreditation level of the school. Significant differences were found to exist in student taught in level 3 schools. Students taught in level 3 schools scored significantly lower than students taught in level 4 and level 5 schools. The analysis of the data on teachers' perceptions revealed that overall teachers agreed that their programs or strategies contributed to student success.

Conclusion

The statistical analysis conducted to compare reading programs in North Mississippi resulted in the following conclusions.

1. This study found students who were taught using no basal reading program scored higher on the MCT in reading in 2005 and 2006 than students taught using a basal reading program. The review of the literature found that a combination approach to teaching reading which included language experiences, phonics and literature contributed more to students' reading success (Gurthrie, 2001; Byrd, 2008). Many reading programs claim to foster greater reading achievement (Bond, Ross, et al, 1995; Greenlee & Bruner, 2001).
2. The results of this study are consistent with Looby (1986), which indicated that gender was not a contributing variable in student reading achievement.

The findings in this study support those of earlier findings in which the use of a basal reading program does not impact student reading achievement. The selection of reading materials and instructional strategies should not be taken lightly when striving to improve reading achievement. There is no clearly defined evidence to support a position when considering a single basal reading series versus using a multi-basal approach to reading instruction (McDonald, 1994). Each school district will find it beneficial to conduct its own research when making decisions that impact the student population within each individual school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to individual schools and districts in Mississippi seeking to make decisions on selecting reading materials in an effort to improve students' reading achievement.

1. Schools and districts should examine the components of their reading materials to ensure the five key components (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), recommended by the National Reading Panel are present.
2. Schools and districts should rely on research not directed by reading companies when making material or textbook selections.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following are recommendations made from the results of the study.

1. Researchers should examine MCT reading scores of other school districts throughout the state.
2. Researchers should replicate the study using the state's new accountability system, MCT2.
3. Researchers should replicate the study using multiple grade levels.

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APPENDIX A
LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

From: Angelia Bluitt

To: Elementary Principals

Subject: Reading Programs

Dear Colleagues,

I am preparing to conduct a comparative analysis study in North Mississippi and in an effort to conduct my research; I need your assistance in identifying reading programs utilized in 3rd grade classrooms in North Mississippi. Please take a moment and give me the name of the reading program(s) used in your school. If you do not use a reading program, please list the strategies used in teaching reading along with the name, email address, and phone number of a contact person in your building who would have knowledge of your school's program or strategies. Based upon replies, your school may be selected to participate in the study.

I sincerely thank you for your help in this effort to enhance the reading achievement of our students. If you have any questions, or would like more information, feel free to contact me via email or phone.

Thanks for cooperation,

Angelia Bluitt, Principal

Aberdeen Elementary

662-369-4782 (phone)

662-369-0980 (fax)

abluitt@aberdeem.k12.ms.us

APPENDIX B
TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Telephone Script

Researcher: Hello, My name is Angelia Bluitt. I am a graduate student at Mississippi State University where I am pursuing a doctorate in Educational Leadership. I am in the process of writing my dissertation on “An Assessment of Reading Programs in North Mississippi Elementary Schools: A Comparative Analysis. Last week, I emailed a memo to principals in north Mississippi asking for assistance in identifying the types or methods of the reading program or strategies used in third grade classrooms.

R: Did you receive the email?

R: Can you tell me the name of your reading program or the type of reading strategies used in your third grade classrooms?

R: How many third grade teachers are there in you school?

R: How many third grade students do you have?

R: If your school is selected, will you be willing to participate in the research study?

R: Thank you for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX C
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

**An Assessment of Reading Programs in North Mississippi Elementary Schools:
A Comparative Analysis**

Angelia Bluitt
705 15th Avenue South
Columbus, MS 39701

Dear Third Grade Reading Teacher:

My name is Angelia Bluitt. I am a graduate student at Mississippi State University where I am pursuing a doctorate in Educational Leadership. I am in the process of writing my dissertation on “An Assessment of Reading Programs in North Mississippi Elementary Schools: A Comparative Analysis.

This questionnaire is part of the research involving the use of reading programs and reading instructional methods in elementary classrooms in north Mississippi between 2003 and 2005. Findings from this study will also provide individual schools and districts in the state with valuable information on whether or not reading strategies or materials contribute to students’ success in reading.

I realize that your time as a classroom teacher is limited and very valuable. However, your input is vital to the success of this study. Participation in this study is voluntary; participants can withdraw any time. No participants will receive any penalty if he or she decides to withdraw from participation. You can discontinue at any time; you can also choose not to respond to some questionnaire items if you wish. Your participation is voluntary. Completing and returning the questionnaire package indicates your consent to participate in this study.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped addressed envelope by December 11, 2006. It should take approximately 15 minutes. Your responses will be kept confidential. The identification number on the instrument is for tracking the non-returns and will be removed as soon as the data collection is completed. The demographic data will be used for statistical purposes of comparing during data analysis. Please keep this cover letter for your record in case any questions arise or if you should need additional information.

I sincerely thank you for contributing to this study and invite you to call any if you have any questions. You may reach me at (662) 369-4782, or my major advisor, Dr. Mable C.P. Okojie at (662) 325-7598.

For information regarding your rights as a subject of human subject’s research, please contact Christine Williams at the Mississippi State University Office of Regulatory Compliance at 662-325-5220 or via email at cwilliams@research.msstate.edu

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Please circle the number that describes your gender.
 1. Male
 2. Female

2. What is your race, please circle one.
 1. Caucasian
 2. African American
 3. American Indian/Alaskan Native
 4. Asian or Pacific Islander
 5. Hispanic
 6. Other, please specify _____

3. What is your age?
 1. Between 21 -30 years old
 2. Between 31-40 years old
 3. Between 41 – 50 years of old
 4. 51 years and over

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have? Circle one of the following.
 1. Less than a year
 2. 1 -5 years
 3. 6-10 years
 4. 11 years or more

5. What is the highest degree you have earned? Circle one.
 1. Bachelor's
 2. ____ graduate hours (*indicate the hours of graduate course work if you have not completed your Masters degree*)
 3. Masters
 4. Ed. Specialist's
 5. Doctorate

6. How long have you taught at this school? Please circle one.
 1. Less than a year
 2. 1-5 years
 3. 6-10 years
 4. 11 years or more

7. What is the student population of your school?
 1. 100 – 299
 2. 300 – 499
 3. 500 - 999
 4. 1000 or more

8. Does your school use a structured reading program?
 1. Yes, Please name the program _____
 2. If no, please skip to number 16

Section B: Assessment of Structured Reading Programs or Teaching Method

In this section, you are requested to assess your perception of the reading program used in your building. The following questionnaire items are based on a 5-point Likert scale. It ranges from 1 Strongly Disagree (SD); 2 Disagree (DA); 3, Undecided (UND); 4, Agree (AG) to 5, Strongly Agree (SA). In each questionnaire item, please circle the number that expresses your true perception. Your responses will be collectively analyzed, and will be used primarily for program improvement.

In my opinion		SD	DA	UND	AG	SA
9.	The reading program used in my classroom contributes to students' reading success					
10.	I am satisfied with my reading program.					
11.	I follow the program's method of instruction.					
In my opinion, the methods or reading program I use						
12.	Ensures that students develops phonemic awareness					
13.	Addresses phonics instruction					
14.	Promotes students' ability to read fluently					
15.	Utilizes strategies that fosters students' vocabulary development					
16.	Promotes student's comprehension of printed material					

Section C:

For the following categories, please rank with a numeric code (3= superior, 2 = adequate, 1 = may require supplementary resources) your perception of the reading program or model’s inclusion of teaching strategies, instructional materials, assessment, and intervention efforts.

		Teaching strategies	Instructional Materials	Type of Assessment	Intervention
17.	Learning new vocabulary				
18.	Linking vocabulary to concepts				
19.	Opportunities for writing				
20.	Dictation				
21.	Blending and segmenting multi-syllable words				
22.	Decoding orthographically “regular” and “irregular” words				
23.	Structural analysis of words				
24.	Sight word recognition				
25.	Expanding reading vocabulary				
26.	Connecting and comprehending fiction and nonfiction				
27.	Rereading for meaning				
28.	Recalling facts and details				
29.	Reading for details				
30.	Responding to literature				
31.	Summarizing				
32.	Connecting and comparing across texts				
33.	Identifying words and phrases that interfere with comprehension				
34.	Cause/effect				
35.	Fact/Opinion				
36.	Author’s point of view				
37.	Selection of books for read aloud (teacher)				
38.	Techniques for discussing read alouds				
39.	Familiar authors and titles				
40.	Student reads aloud				
41.	Accuracy and fluency				
42.	Opportunities for wide and varied reading				
43.	Opportunities to read longer books				

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



November 21, 2006

Angelia Bluit
705 15th Avenue South
Columbus, MS 39701

RE: IRB Study #06-255: An assessment of reading programs in north Mississippi elementary schools: a comparative analysis

Dear Ms. Bluit:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 11/21/2006 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 refer to your IRB number (#06-255) 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 Christine Williams at cwilliams@research.msstate.edu or 325-5220.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Williams".

Christine Williams
IRB Administrator

cc: Mabel Okojie

Office for Regulatory Compliance

P. O. Box 6223 • 8A Morgan Street • Mailstop 9563 • Mississippi State, MS 39762 • (662) 325-3294 • FAX (662) 325-8776