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Kindergarten Through Third Grade Reading Tutors In Northeast Mississippi

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KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE READING

TUTORS IN NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI

By

Angela Williams

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All public schools in the United States have been caught up in educational reform. This has especially been true since the 1980's. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was a major component in how schools have changed the process of educating students. In response to reform efforts, many schools have relied on their own knowledge to achieve higher test scores. In the last several years, accountability standards have been increasing. Schools are being assessed according to national standards. Because of this, many schools are using different methods of instruction for students at-risk of failing.

One method of instruction that many schools have turned to is tutoring. Tutoring has been used in education for a long period of time. The use of tutoring and its effectiveness have been well established in the literature. However, there is not much literature on why tutoring is effective. There is also limited research on the tutor perceptions of the tutoring program.

The focus of this study is to examine the use of tutors in Northeast Mississippi school districts. This study explores the grade levels and subjects tutors work in, how the tutoring sessions are organized, and the focus and materials of the tutoring sessions. Additionally, the backgrounds, experiences, training, and perceptions of the tutors regarding the tutoring program are explored. The results of this study suggest that tutors of schools in the Northeast Mississippi districts are utilized in a manner consistent with the research on effective tutoring. Additionally, the findings of this study add to the literature in regards to the organization, focus, and materials of the tutoring sessions. The findings show that some schools in Northeast Mississippi have a good organized tutoring program, but that others do not. Conversely, the focus and materials used in most of the tutoring sessions are consistent with ones shown to be effective in research. The findings also give some insight into tutor perspectives regarding tutoring sessions. Tutor perspectives coincide with research findings that show one-to-one and small group tutoring is effective and that tutors need training, observation, and feedback on tutoring to be most successful.

Key words: Northeast Mississippi, perceptions, tutoring

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to my husband, Jeff, my children, Jeremy and Dusty, and my parents, John and Hazel McComic. None of this would have been possible without their love and support.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recommendations to change and improve education have been present since the nineteenth century. Educators and schools have been caught up in the need for reform; though oftentimes have had to rely on intuition or individual experiences to decide which of the numerous suggested strategies would best improve achievement (Education Reform, 2002; Lindemann, 2000).

Every level of the educational system has been affected by educational reform and the numerous strategies and programs that have been developed to serve at-risk children, the ones who are most likely to fail or drop out (Education Reform, 1995). Suggested programs and methods to aid instruction just in the area of reading have included programs such as *Success for All* and *Reading Recovery.* Programs such as these have changed the way education is delivered, such as the use of after-school programs, and tutoring (Education Reform, 1995; Weiss, 2005) among many others. Many schools have come to use one or more of these programs or strategies.

A tutor is a private teacher who usually teaches a single person or a small group. Tutoring, according to Roe and Vukelich (2001), is an educational communication between a tutor and a tutee that focuses on a part or parts of curriculum content that need improvement or strengthening in the tutee. The general principle of tutoring has been to

make educational interventions available to meet the needs of children who are having academic difficulty (Woolley & Hay, 2007).

Since the time of Plato and Socrates, tutoring has been used for the children of the wealthy. Similarly, children of the less wealthy oftentimes became an apprentice (another form of one-to-one teaching or tutoring) to learn a trade or a skill. Tutoring dates back for hundreds of years, claiming the longest history of any educational practice in the Western world, and continues through present day education (Campbell, 1991; Gordon, 1990). Many important educational philosophers of Western culture, such as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, developed educational curriculum theories based on their experiences as tutors, with several of their philosophies later emerging into many of today's current educational principles (Gordon, Morgan, Ponticell, & O'Malley, 2004). Many well-known universities, such as Cambridge and Oxford, had tutors who lived in the residence halls with the students. This tradition continued even as institutions of higher learning were developed in the United States. As the growth of such institutions continued throughout the country, so did the admission of many students who were not academically ready for college. Tutoring supported these students (Harris, 2008).

The creation of the Federal Department of Education in 1867 led to the first Office of Education report for the years 1869-1870. This Act of 1867 required the Department of Education to gather and report the condition and development of education in yearly reports to Congress (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2009). As more and more people began to enroll in the educational system, educational problems, especially illiteracy, began to surface. These problems appeared as early as the 1930's, but were not aggressively addressed until the latter part of the 1900's. As a result

of not being addressed forcefully, the educational problems only intensified and expanded (Richards, 2007). This is evident when looking at the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, which indicate that fewer than a third of the children in the nation in grades 4 and 7 are proficient in reading (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2007). Nearly one-half of all American adults have restricted literacy skills, limited to a fourth or fifth grade reading level (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007; Sweet, 1996).

Numerous strategies developed to potentially address literacy challenges have been, for the most part, funded by the federal government. The United States has spent billions of dollars every year with programs such as *Title I* (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2004), *Right to Read* (NRRF, 2009), *Reading First* (USDOE, 2004) and others to attempt to improve literacy achievement (Sweet, 1996). Since 2002, the United States has spent over four billion dollars on the *Reading First* program alone. The *Reading First* program, as defined by the USDOE, is a program that focuses on putting scientifically-based methods of early reading instruction in classrooms (USDOE, 2004). This program was designed as an attempt to improve reading instruction in the primary grades and was also designed strictly for economically challenged schools. Funds were given to states according to the proportion of children age 5 to 17 who live within the state and who are from families with incomes below the poverty line. The state then distributes the funds to the individual schools. A major component of the *Reading First* program was the use of tutoring to improve reading. This program has been just one approach that focused on using research-based methods of early reading instruction in classrooms. The aim of the *Reading First* program was to ensure that all children learned

to read well by the end of third grade, as called for in the No Child Left Behind Act (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007; USDOE, 2001).

The NCLB Act of 2001, (PL107-110), aimed toward improving U. S. school performance by increasing accountability standards. The mandate also included an increased focus on reading. The NCLB Act incorporated the use of accountability standards, which are the levels of requirement that students and schools must meet in order to be considered an effective school (USDOE, 2001). Since the NCLB Act was enacted, all public schools in the United States have been continuing to strive to produce higher student achievement and rank as an adequately performing school (according to individual state standards), where students score proficient or advanced in subject matter (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006). As a result, many of these schools have been utilizing a variety of methods to reach and maintain a satisfactory or higher performance standard level as defined by NCLB (USDOE, 2004).

One method that has been frequently used is tutoring for students who are struggling, particularly in the area of reading. The NCLB Act of 2001 and the use of high-stakes testing have been the leading factors that have helped give the role of tutor and tutoring a new eminence in American education (Gordon, 2002). After the passage of the NCLB Act, tutoring programs were made available to low performing and at-risk students in public schools throughout the country in a way they never had been available before (Cohen & Kulik, 1981). The NCLB Act stated the need for programs that use research-based teaching strategies designed to increase student achievement (Gordon et al., 2004; McClure, 2008). The NCLB Act also allowed for the use of supplemental services (programs to help students improve achievement), therefore increasing educator

interest in tutoring (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006; Harris, 2008). Gordon (1990) considered tutors and tutoring to be important components of the American educational reform movement, components that could potentially help students improve their chances of reaching their educational goals. Gordon called upon modern educators to think more seriously about tutoring as a possible solution to many of the problems of contemporary schooling. He stated that "The American public deserves our high-quality professional tutoring services. Many of us are now achieving excellent results for our students…" (Gordon, 1990, p. 9).

In January 2009, with the beginning of a new presidency, the NCLB Act came to an end. Newly appointed Education Secretary Arne Duncan brought new ideas for improving America's schools. In an August 2009 interview with U. S. News and World Report, Duncan stated that the NCLB Act had unintended consequences and that it needed rebranding. He stated that he believed that the nation is "in an educational crisis" and that students are "unprepared to be successful in high school and have almost no chance of going to a good university and being successful" (Ramirez & Clark, U. S. News and World Report, 2009, p. 1). A key component of Duncan's plan is for states to increase early childhood education, form better assessments, and improve teacher quality. While he supported an emphasis on accountability, he felt that accountability should be handled differently than NCLB. All states in America, according to Duncan, need to implement more thorough standards that are aligned with other leading nations, instead of each state implementing its own standards. Duncan stated that before he finalized any plans, he would need to travel the country to meet with school officials as well as families to get their input about testing (Ramirez & Clark, 2009). Duncan constantly

advocated his desire for teacher involvement in his reform plans. He also emphasized the need for data gathering of students and improving the quality of standardized tests. He was also a big advocate of a reading initiative when he was named to head the Chicago public schools in 2001 (Henderson, 2009; Kingsbury, 2008).

In March, 2010, Arne Duncan testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee. He stated that he and his staff had visited every state during a listening and learning tour. He said that they had met with parents, teachers, and students for conversations about education. After the tour, he and his staff developed a blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. On March 13, 2010, the Obama administration released *A Blueprint for Reform – The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. In a March, 2010 press release, the blueprint was presented as being a key priority in the reform of the NCLB Act and as being the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

This blueprint challenges America to emphasize education standards that would put the nation on a course to international leadership. It provides incentives for states to implement educational standards that prepare students to be successful in college and the workplace, and create accountability systems that calculate student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate and be successful in college. According to the USDOE (2010), the proposals in the blueprint contain guidelines for the following areas:

- supporting science, technology, engineering, and math
- supporting families and communities
- supporting teachers

- college and career-ready standards and assessments
- a complete education
- diverse learners
- early learning
- public school choice
- rewarding excellence and promoting innovation
- turning around low-performing schools

The Blueprint for Reform retains the annual testing and data-driven accountability of the NCLB Act but also adds resources and the flexibility of supporting innovative approaches to meet a new goal. This goal is that all students will be able to graduate from high school ready for college and a career by the year 2020. President Obama noted that America must do better to be able to achieve this goal. He also noted that families, communities, and schools must be able to deliver services that take into account the full range of student needs. Mr. Obama additionally stated that the effort will require the investigation and evaluation of what works in the schools of America. Duncan noted that teachers cannot do it alone. He stated that there is a need for community leaders and other supportive adults in the schools (Chaddock, 2010; USDOE, 2010; Weinstein, 2010). With the statements made in the blueprint reform, the desire for improvement in the nation's schools, and the call to use methods that work, it seems highly likely that tutoring will be an advocated strategy in education.

Since the Blueprint for Reform replaced NCLB, but keeps in place the accountability standards, schools will continue to strive for high test scores. Since tutoring has long been used and has been proven to be an effective method of

intervention, schools will probably continue to use this as one method of instructional intervention for students at-risk of failing. However, there is the problem that very little research has been done on why tutoring works. There is very limited research on the aspects of tutor perceptions regarding tutoring programs. It is important to recognize tutor perceptions of successful tutoring programs. This information is not readily available in the research of literature.

Statement of Purpose

Tutoring has become a popular tool used in many schools. Mississippi is just one of many places in the United States that utilize tutors in schools. However, there has been little research done on the specific use of tutoring in schools, especially in Mississippi. Therefore, this study has five main purposes. The first purpose is to determine how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize reading tutors: including the grade level(s) and subject(s) tutors work in, the organization of tutoring sessions, and the focus of tutoring and the materials used. The second purpose is to discover the educational backgrounds of tutors. The third purpose is to find out what experiences the tutors have. The fourth purpose is to determine what training the tutors have. The fifth purpose is to discover the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement.

The study of these five questions and related sub questions may give some insight into tutor perceptions and tutoring programs, particularly those used in Northeast Mississippi. Gaining insight into these programs could be very valuable, especially since many schools in Mississippi are turning to the use of tutors as one strategy for trying to improve student achievement.

Since the report of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, there have been many reports issued on the state of education in America. A January 3, 2007 Mississippi Department of Education News Release stated that an Education Week newspaper report confirmed the needs identified by the Mississippi Board of Education. It stated that the *Quality Counts 2007 Report* indicated that Mississippi children would do well to have preschool programs because of the many factors that affect a child's chance for educational success, such as lack of parental education and low average family income (MDOE, 2007). Mississippi, as well as the other 49 states and the District of Columbia, was ranked on a Chance-for-Success Index, which is based on 13 indicators that draw attention to whether young children get off to a good start in life, succeed in school and become productive adults. The state of Mississippi was ranked 45th according to this index. The state also ranked in last place according to an Achievement Index which indicated whether or not students were making progress on a scale of 15 indicators related to reading and math performance, high school graduation rates, and scores from advanced placement tests. This index measured the achievement of a state's public school system based on absolute levels of performance.

According to the *Quality Counts 2010 Report,* Mississippi did not improve on either index from 2001 to 2010; in fact, Mississippi scored worse on the Chance-for-Success index, dropping from 45th to 49th (Staresina, 2004). One reason for this decline may be the changes in testing standards recently developed by the state of Mississippi to try and raise test scores closer to the national level. Teachers and students are still getting accustomed to the new guidelines and testing format.

Even though the state of Mississippi did not improve on the Chance-for-Success or the Achievement Index, there is good news. Dr. Burnham reported on January 25, 2010 that "The *Quality Counts 2010 Report* graded Mississippi at a B-plus in its Standards, Assessments and Accountability category" and that it was a remarkable improvement (Burnham, 2010, p. 1). Burnham also stated that Mississippi is moving forward and is focused on two areas: greater expectations and higher academic achievement, which are the foundation for advances in other areas of the educational system.

The Mississippi Department of Education admits that the state has a low level of achievement. Data indicated that in 2008, 90% of Mississippi's fourth graders were proficient in reading according to state testing data, but only 19% scored proficient according to NAEP standards. While 52% of Mississippi's eighth graders were proficient in reading according to state standards, only 17% scored proficient according to NAEP. Math achievement data for Mississippi indicated 81% of fourth graders were proficient, but NAEP only showed 21% proficient, and while 54% of the state's eighth graders were proficient using state standards, only 14% were proficient according to NAEP standards.

According to NAEP data, Mississippi did make improvements in 2009; however, the state still has low levels of achievement. Data for 2009 MCT2 scores indicated that 52% of Mississippi's fourth graders were proficient in reading while NAEP showed only 22%. Of Mississippi's eighth graders, 22% scored proficient in reading on the MCT2 and 19% were proficient according to NAEP. Data for math showed 58% of Mississippi's fourth graders to be proficient on the MCT2, but only 22% scored

proficient on the NAEP. Data for eighth graders showed 54% to be proficient on the MCT2 while only 15% were proficient according to NAEP (Mississippi Department of Education [MDOE], 2010; NCES, 2010). The number of students who scored proficient on the MCT2 has decreased because the state test has become increasingly aligned with the NAEP.

Mississippi has a large number of high-school students who do not graduate in four years. The state only has a 62.7% rate of freshmen who graduate on time, as compared to a 75% national rate, and only an 11.5% rate of students taking advanced placement exams, as compared to a 24.9% national rate (MDOE, 2007; NCES, 2008). Mississippi also has a high drop-out rate. The Mississippi Department of Education lists Mississippi's drop-out rate for 2006 to be 17.6%, 2007 was at 15.9 %, and 2008 was 16.0% (MDOE , 2008). Nationally, 9.3% of American students dropped out of high school in 2006 while 8.7% dropped out in 2007, and 8.0% dropped out in 2008 (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2004; U. S. Census Bureau, 2009).

As a measure to try to address the high drop-out rate and other barriers to achievement, a Legislative Task Force met in July 2007 (Bounds, 2007). One possible solution discussed was full funding of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP), which was designed to provide necessary resources to all schools. Additionally, the Mississippi Board of Education also requested additional funding to target problems discussed by the task force, including funding for tutoring programs (Bounds, 2007; MDOE, 2007).

Even though most existing research has shown the use of tutors and tutoring to be an effective educational tool, the amount of research on tutors and tutoring remains

limited (Allor, Cheek, Smith, & Schorzman, 2006). Due to the limited research, it is important to study the organization of tutoring and the experiences and perceptions of tutors.

Rationale for the Study

A review of literature (see Chapter 2) shows that the use of tutors can be effective for struggling students, especially in reading, but little specific research had been completed on tutor experiences, background, focus of tutoring and the materials used, training, or perspectives of tutors toward tutoring experiences. Specifically, no research has been completed concerning reading tutors, tutor perceptions, or tutoring in Northeast Mississippi schools.

A study by Dickinson (1999) investigated the motivation of 133 reading tutors in an established tutoring program. The tutors responded to a variety of questions regarding their perspectives of the tutoring program. This study stated that tutor motivations as well as favorable perceptions regarding the components of the tutoring program were necessary for a successful program. Dickinson stated in this study that tutor perspectives would guide future research about effective tutoring programs, which indicates that tutor perspectives can and do play a vital role in successful tutoring.

Another study of tutor perceptions among college students was conducted by Allor et al. (2006). This study examined tutor perspectives of college students who tutored with the *America Reads* program. The study was conducted over a two-year period in an urban metropolitan area in the South. All of the tutors in the study worked with struggling first-grade readers who were enrolled in at-risk schools with low test scores. The focus of this study was to find out what the tutors perceived as strengths and

weaknesses of the tutoring program and what possible solutions they recommended for addressing any concerns. Questions utilized in this study included Likert scale as well as open-ended questions. Training, supervision, and feedback were listed as strengths but also as weaknesses. The tutors who felt they had received adequate training, supervision, and feedback listed them as strengths while the ones who felt like they had not received adequate amounts listed them as weaknesses. The tutors who listed these components as weaknesses also voiced suggestions about how to improve these components.

Allor et al. (2006) stated that an analysis of tutor perspectives helps to present important insight into possible reasons for successful implementation of tutoring programs and provides recommendations to improve the tutoring program. Tutor insights were also said to be valuable to both researchers and educators as they study and carry out the implementation of tutor programs. Their study indicated that tutor perceptions are related to the components of the tutoring program, but that more research is clearly needed in this area to explore and compare tutor concerns and perspectives.

The present study attempts to add information in the area of tutor perceptions and tutoring programs in K-3 classrooms in Northeast Mississippi school districts. This study was conducted by researching the following: the organization, focus, and materials of tutoring sessions; the qualifications, experiences, background, and training of tutors; and the perceptions of reading tutors toward their experiences in the schools. Since tutoring is such a widespread educational tool, the question of tutor perspectives toward tutoring is an area that needs to be researched to find the characteristics and strategies that make the programs successful.

Since there are many low-performing and at-risk students, especially in Mississippi, there is a vital need to learn more about tutoring programs, how they function, or are perceived to function by tutors. Learning more about tutoring programs will help all schools and educators worldwide to employ the tutoring techniques that work the best.

Research Questions

The five questions and related sub questions explored in this study included:

1. How do K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize tutors?
    a. In what grade level and subjects do the tutors work?
    b. How are the tutoring sessions organized?
    c. What is the focus of the tutoring sessions?
    d. What materials are used in the tutoring sessions?
2. What are the educational backgrounds of the tutors?
3. What are the experiences of the tutors?
4. What training do the tutors have?
5. What are the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement?

Limitations of Study

Limitations for this study include:

1- A small sample size due to the number of K-3 reading tutors in the schools, with the findings only generalizable to the respondents of those schools.

2- The inability to ask follow-up questions.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used for this study:

1. *A Nation at Risk* -- a report, published in 1983, which contained details about the poor quality of public education in America (Education Reform, 1995).
2. Accountability standard -- the level of requirement for students and schools to meet in order to be considered an effective school (USDOE, 2001).
3. Adequately performing school -- individual state standards, where in order to be considered adequate, a high percentage of students must score proficient or advanced in tested subject matter (USDOE, 2006).
4. After-school programs -- programs that provide educational as well as extra-curricular activities conducted after regular school hours for students to participate in (Chung, 2000).
5. *America Reads* -- a federal program started in 1997 that put literacy tutors in many schools to tutor children in Kindergarten – third grade (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006).
6. At-risk students -- students who are most likely to fail in school, drop out, or become a problem for society. These students are considered at-risk because of their background, rearing, or circumstances or birth (Education Reform, 1995).

7. Economically challenged schools -- schools with a high proportion of children age 5 to 17 who live within the district and who are from families with incomes below the poverty line (USDOE, 2006).
8. Fluency -- the ability to use a language easily and accurately (The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005).
9. Literacy -- a person's educational ability to read or write while illiteracy refers to a person's inability to read or write (The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005).
10. Perceptions -- the thoughts, beliefs, or ideas of tutors regarding the way things are and why they are that way (Allor et al., 2006).
11. Phonics -- teaches the relationship between written languages and sounds (USDOE, 2006).
12. *Reading First* -- a federal program implemented to enhance beginning reading instruction in schools that are the most economically challenged. This program focused on using research based, proven methods of improving early reading instruction (Teale et al., 2007).
13. *Reading Recovery* -- a short-term intervention program designed to reduce the number of first-grade students who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write (RRCNA, 2009).
14. Reading tutor -- one who teaches a single student or a very small group in the area of reading (Allor & McCathren, 2004).

15. Reform or educational reform -- deliberate attempts to change something in a desirable way, in a response to a perceived weakness (Lankshear, 1998).
16. *Right to Read* -- a program in schools with the purpose of eliminating illiteracy in America by the use of phonics in first grade classrooms in America (Sweet, 1996).
17. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (Public Law 107-110), -- the act that became law on July 1, 2002. This law mandated that all children who attend public schools would have a fair, equivalent, and significant chance to achieve a high-quality education. It also mandated that children would obtain a minimum of a proficiency level on state assessment tests and that all schools would be held accountable (USDOE, 2001).
18. *Title I* -- a program in schools specifically targeting low-income students where the teaching of reading is a major emphasis (Sweet, 1996).
19. Tutor -- one who teaches a single student or a very small group (The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005)
20. Tutoring -- the act of teaching or helping someone for a particular purpose, in this study; it is the purpose of obtaining a successful education (The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005; Gordon, 1990).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Background of Tutoring

Throughout its long history, the basic intent of tutoring has always been to provide support to meet the individual needs of struggling students. This is still what tutoring is about in the present (Woolley & Hay, 2007).

Early tutoring and schooling

Tutoring has been used for longer than other traditional forms of education (Gordon et al., 2004). In fact, the use of tutoring goes back for centuries and is actually one of the oldest practices of teaching (Gordon, 1990). Tutoring was the form of teaching that was used before the age of schools. Even after schools were developed, tutoring was still widespread because many children still did not attend school (Boydon, 2010). Then, for many years, educational tutoring occurred separately from schools and was only used by the affluent while less prosperous children received training for acquiring a skill by becoming apprentices (Gordon, 2002; Harris, 2008). Early schooling practices were developed based on some key educational philosophers of Western society, such as John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These philosophers, as well as others, developed educational programs of study and theories based on their experiences as tutors (Gordon et al., 2004).

Even during the years of the development of more formalized schools, and later,

when there were official educational institutions, tutors continued to play an important role in the learning process. Many colleges, such as Cambridge and Oxford, had tutors who lived in residence halls with students (Gordon et al., 2004). The progressive movement in the early 20th century saw education as a process in which the development of the individual child was assisted and supplemented, therefore schools engaged in and began to use tutoring within the curriculum (Dewey, 1963).

The 1960's and 1970's brought about anti-poverty and civil rights laws, which in turn created the emergence of the USDOE mission statement of equal access for all. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 brought about the development of a comprehensive set of programs, such as *Title I*. These programs ensured federal aid to help disadvantaged children. Programs such as these included tactics for educational improvement such as tutoring and pull-out programs for at-risk students (USDOE, 2010).

Modern tutoring

Tutoring has long been a popular and successful method of reinforcing educational instruction and is still an accepted and appealing idea for today's schools and educators (Parker, Hasbrouck, & Denton, 2002; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Tutoring has been used to increase the educational growth of children and has been shown to be especially effective in the area of reading instruction in the early grades (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). "In recent years, reading theorists, applied researchers, and teachers have devoted much attention to preventing reading failure in the primary grades" (Brown, Morris, & Fields, 2005, p. 89).

The Education Commission of the States reported that the use of tutoring has become an ever growing accepted strategy to improve the academic development of students, particularly those described as at-risk of failing (Weiss, 2006).

Ritter, Denny, Albin, Barnett, and Blankenship (2006) looked at the effectiveness of tutoring programs on academic skills of students in grades K-8. They concluded that tutoring programs can positively influence reading and language skills. Similarly, Houge, Geier, and Peyton (2008) found one-to-one tutoring to be successful when used with middle and high school students. Tutoring in areas other than reading and language has also proven to be successful. Baker, Gersten, and Keating (2000) found that the use of after-school math programs utilizing university tutors who were enrolled in teacher training was also successful. This tutoring program was carried out among elementary, junior high, and high school students in rural Pennsylvania.

Tutoring programs, which range from homework help to one-to-one skill building, have become increasingly popular. This is in response to efforts to improve academic achievement and minimize the risk of educational failure. The use of tutoring programs has shown success in reducing the achievement gap and increasing students' academic success. Tutoring programs that are well-designed and use trained tutors can be effective, no matter what the grade level or subject area (USDOE, 2001).

Due to the large number of students termed at-risk for educational failure, there has been increased attention given to the use of tutors. This is especially true since the influx of programs such as *America Reads*, *Success for All*, *Reading Recovery*, *Reading First*, and *Right to Read* appeared in the 1980's and '90's (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006; Balkcom & Himmelfarb, 1993; RRCNA, 2009; Teale et al., 2007; Sweet, 1996; Wasik,

1997). All of these programs required tutor training, ongoing support, and feedback, which are still common components in tutoring programs used today.

The Education Commission of the States reported the growing popularity of after-school programs which generally provide some kind of tutoring and involve the one-to-one attention of adults. These types of programs have also gained the support of the federal government, especially in low-income communities where families with children live in poverty (Chung, 2000; USDOE, 2006; Weiss, 2006).

Tutors being utilized in the current era include retired teachers, peer tutors, teachers, and private tutors (Botwinik, 2006; Gordon et al., 2004). Tutoring programs consist of a variety of methods, from tutoring programs that begin in Kindergarten, pull-out programs during the school day, tutors in the classroom, before and after school programs, and homework help (Al-Otaiba, Schatschneider, & Silverman, 2005; Brown et al., 2005; Tingley, 2003).

Tutoring is an appealing idea to many parents, schools, and teachers (Parker et al., 2002; Snow et al., 1998). One reason is that new teaching methods and busy lifestyles have many parents in a situation where they cannot always assist their children. Therefore, there is even a higher demand for tutoring programs in society today (Coeyman, 2000).

The Educational Impact of Tutoring

Tutoring has come to be a major educational tool used throughout American society. Gordon et al., (2004) found that students in the bottom 16% of their classes are likely to be involved in some type of tutoring, and also that 42% of Americans believe there is a vast need for tutoring. There are around 5,000 volunteer programs alone which

are aimed at tutoring young people in this nation. These programs are sponsored by the federal government, local schools, colleges, businesses, nonprofit groups, professional organizations, as well as other sources (Weiss, 2006). There are around seven million students in the United States of America who receive some type of academic tutoring (Gordon, 2002).

The 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, revealed that the government has spent billions of dollars funding numerous educational programs aimed at improving education. All of the programs have targeted public schools in attempts at raising the standards and outcomes of education through the use of various strategies. Many schools with struggling students have chosen to use some type of tutoring as one strategy to try to raise the educational levels of the students (McClure, 2008; Thompson & O'Quinn, 2001).

After-school tutoring programs, in particular, seem to have many benefits. The students in after-school tutoring programs were shown to have improved school behavior, better work habits, advanced educational goals, better school attitudes, a better sense of belonging in their community, and better relationships with their parents (Morris, 1990; Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1994; Weiss, 2005). The National Research Council (2002) stated that after-school programs were effective at improving reading performance. However, the programs were also effective for additional benefits such as physical and emotional safety and building relationships. After-school programs can help students to improve test scores as well as provide enriching activities (Hamilton & Klein, 1998; Schinke, Cole, & Poulin, 1998).

Benefits of tutoring on the tutor and tutee

Extensive research reveals the consistent effectiveness of programs such as *America Reads, Reading First, Reading Recovery, Right to Read, and Success for All* (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006; Sweet, 1996; USDOE, 1997). These are all reform programs that include the use of tutoring. There has also been research that has shown the use of tutoring has added to the academic growth and to benefit both the tutor and the tutee (Cohen & Kulik, 1981; Fresko, 1996; Goodlad & Hirst, 1990). According to Annis (1983), tutoring appears to produce positive effects on both tutees and tutors.

One review of research by Cohen & Kulik (1991) analyzed data from 65 studies on tutoring. The studies differed in experimental designs and settings, covered a variety of programs, and described educational outcomes in three areas: learning, attitude, and self-concept. This review indicated that tutoring programs had definite and positive effect on the learning and attitudes of tutees, but not self-concept.

The effect on learning included the fact that 52 of the 65 studies described effects of the programs on exam scores of tutored students. Eighty-seven percent of the students in tutoring classes outperformed students of control classes. Ninety-five percent of the studies that reported significant differences between teaching approaches favored the students in classes with tutoring programs.

Eight of the 65 studies reported results on student attitudes toward the subject matter they were taught. Results from the eight studies revealed students had more positive attitudes in classrooms with tutoring programs. Only 1 of the 8 studies produced a large enough effect to be statistically reliable. However, “even though the number of studies available was small, results were consistent enough for us to conclude with

statistical confidence that tutoring programs had a positive effect on the tutored students' attitudes toward the subject being taught" (Cohen & Kulik, 1991, p.229). The tutees outperformed peers on exams and showed more positive attitudes toward the subjects in which they were tutored.

Madden and Slavin (1987) reviewed research on effective pull-out programs for at-risk elementary students and concluded that achievement of at-risk students could be significantly increased by using tutors. They also concluded that "effective programs for students at-risk balanced adjustment of instructional approaches to meet students' unique needs with provision of adequate direct instruction. In addition, effective classroom programs provide frequent assessment of student progress through a well-specified, hierarchical set of skills" (Madden & Slavin, 1987, p. 18). The authors suggested a need for greater knowledge about effective programs for at-risk students and the need to identify the elements of tutoring programs that account for their success.

Allen and Chavkin (2004) conducted a study of tutoring middle school students in a variety of subjects. The tutors and tutees were all from 1 large urban and 2 smaller rural school districts, with the majority of participating campuses being inner-city and having low-income families. There were 31 tutors who were all involved in the AmeriCorps program and there were 256 students in the tutoring program. The authors concluded that tutoring programs are very promising due to the considerable increase of the number of students who improved after being involved in a tutoring program. The authors also indicated the need for more studies to examine the relationship between tutoring and academic achievement.

Tutoring programs can and do positively influence vital reading and language skills for students and can impact students' lives, even after school (Bray, 2006; Fresco, 1996). "The message from the educational literature on tutoring programs seems clear enough. These programs have definite and positive effects on the academic performance and attitudes of those who receive tutoring" (Cohen & Kulik, 1981, p. 229). Ritter et al., (2006) looked at data from 21 studies involving 1,676 participants. They concluded that the analysis of the studies indicated that tutoring positively influences outcomes in language and reading. The authors also noted that educators should consider structured, reading-focused tutoring as a strategy to improve reading and language. Fager (1996) noted that tutees generally receive individualized instructions and lessons, more feedback, encouragement, close monitoring, and companionship than students who do not receive tutoring. Teachers of students in tutoring programs have also reported that tutored students were more motivated and excited about class work after receiving tutoring (Baker, Rieg, & Clendaniel, 2006; Morris et al., 1994).

Truschel (2008) noted that if basic tutoring concepts are consistently used, then the effects on tutees can be positive. Tutored students meet or exceed their goals, their self-esteem increases, the tutor is intrinsically rewarded, and these positive feelings of success by the tutee might transfer over to the academic and home environments.

Not only has tutoring been shown to be beneficial to the tutee, it has also been shown to have positive impacts on the tutors themselves (Coeyman, 2000; Cohen & Kulik, 1981; Goodlad & Hirst, 1990). Tutoring provides not only employment and income for the paid tutors, but enjoyment and self-satisfaction for both the paid and volunteer tutors' (Bray, 2006; Fresko, 1996). Bell (2009) reported that tutors have

reported improvements in physical conditions, mental health, and self-esteem. Coeyman (2000) noted that many adults begin tutoring because of the feeling that they have something to offer the tutees, but they are often surprised at the benefits they reap themselves by being a tutor.

Although tutoring is not considered to be easy and requires planning, it leads to a great deal of satisfaction for many tutors (Fresko, 1996; Herbert, 1997). Tutors are examples of lifelong learners for their tutees, showing that individuals should never stop learning (Bell, 2009). Tutors also have to engage in higher level thinking skills to be a successful tutor, thereby increasing their own critical thinking (Harris, 2008). The process of tutoring also leads to increased confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of pride in the tutor (Fager, 2006).

Effective Tutoring

Research has shown that tutoring can be successful but that it needs some key features to be successful. Successful tutoring programs include components such as having structure as well as providing tutor training, support, feedback, communication, monitoring and reinforcement (Deeney, 2008; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik, 1998b). Other effective components include the use of a variety of provided materials such as leveled texts, children's literature, writing, and technology. Additionally, activities such as guided reading as well as oral and silent reading were found to be successful (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Baker et al., 2006; Rosenblatt, 2002; Tingley, 2003; Weiss, 2006).

Gordon et al. (2004) found in their review of research that tutoring offers a method for enhancing learning across a wide variety of students and content areas. The

authors found some key factors that make tutoring programs effective, which will be discussed below.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (2000), and Snow et al. (1998), all consistently identified 5 components of reading deemed important for success, which will also be discussed below. They all agree that the core of all reading instruction should include materials that consist of phonics, phonological and phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (USDOE, 1997; Truschel 2008). These components should also be included in materials used in tutoring programs.

The key components suggested in the review of the literature will also be discussed below.

Program structure

If tutors are to have a significant impact on at-risk students, they need a clear and structured tutoring program and also expert preparation and management (McClure, 2008; Tingley, 2003; Wasik, 1998b). The USDOE (1997) noted that successful tutoring sessions need to be well-structured. According to Leal, Johanson, Toth, and Huang (2004) tutoring instruction was found to be most effective when incorporated with intensive instruction.

Schools that provide structure and support to tutors tend to have successful tutoring programs, according to Tingley (2003). Baker et al., (2006) reported that the key to successful tutoring programs is having an organized program structure. They also stated that structure leads to successful achievement by the tutees and satisfaction from adult participants, including school personnel, parents, and the tutors themselves. It was

found by Cohen et al. (1982) that structured tutorial programs obtained higher achievement than unstructured programs. Similar results were obtained about structured programs from Wasik & Slavin (1993).

Diss (1998) stated that viable tutoring programs require considerable planning and organization and must have structured coordination among the tutor and classroom teacher. A critical component of effective tutoring programs is that they be well-planned (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006; Baker et al., 2006; Fitzgerald, 2001). Cohen et al. (1982) and Wasik and Slavin (1993) found that the use of structured tutoring programs indicated higher achievement gains than unstructured programs. Gordon (2009) noted the need for a highly structured tutoring program. He stated that structured programs allow for more precise tutoring and helps to improve classroom achievement.

Four popular and commonly used tutoring programs are *Reading Recovery, Howard Street Tutoring, Book Buddies, and Success for All*. Even though each of the programs has their own unique approach, they are all structured (Wasik, 1998a). Baker et al. (2006) also found structure to be a key component for effectiveness.

Tutor training, support, communication, and feedback

Although tutors may play several different roles, training is important for all (Roe & Vukelich, 2001). Student intervention programs that use trained tutors can and do have more positive effects on student performance than programs without trained tutors (Fresko & Chen, 1989; Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994; Santa & Hoien, 1999; Shanahan, 1998; Shanahan & Barr, 1995; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). The use of trained tutors has also produced better results because tutor training can be a major factor in whether or not students retain the gains made in tutoring (Mathes & Fuchs, 1994;

Shanahan & Barr, 1995). Woolley and Hay (2007) stated that successful tutoring programs require and utilize ongoing training and supervision. Even when tutors have been shown to only be minimally trained, positive outcomes have been found for many at-risk students (Baker et al., 2000). As a result, with more specialized training, guidance and direction, even more positive results have occurred (Fitzgerald, 2001; Invernizzi, Rosemary, Juel, & Richards, 1997; Juel, 1996; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Vadasy, Jenkins, & Pool, 2000).

Tutors themselves have expressed a need for training sessions and ongoing communication to include monitoring and feedback from their supervisors (Allor & McCathren, 2004). Baroffio, Nendaz, Perrier, Layat, Vermeulen, and Vu (2006) found that tutor needs and concerns should be addressed with staff development workshops throughout the year, tailored specifically for them. The workshops should be developed specifically for the teaching contexts used in the tutoring program. This type of training and commitment from schools improve tutors' knowledge and ability to be effective at guiding student learning.

Other support factors included follow-up training sessions, ongoing supervision, and adequate communication with supervisors and teachers (Allor et al., 2006; Wasik, 1998b). The use of these tactics provides an opportunity for any questions that need to be clarified or any other issue that needs to be addressed by a tutor. Tutors are most effective when they have continuous support and on-going feedback about their tutoring sessions (Collins & Matthey, 2001; Saddler & Staulters, 2008). Tutors should be provided with adequate instruction and training in teaching strategies (Diss, 1998).

Instructional materials used for reading tutoring

A major area of reading difficulty comes from a poor vocabulary and limited background knowledge and experiences, especially among students who are considered to be struggling and at-risk (Al-Otaiba et al., 2005). Tutoring is one of the many ways in which schools have tried to intervene through the use of a variety of methods and instructional materials.

Tingley (2003) stated that tutors should be given materials to incorporate effective teaching strategies. Tingley's viewpoint is that teaching is a skill that not everyone has; therefore, it is essential that specific materials be provided to all tutors for the sessions. Another viewpoint by Deeney (2008) is that tutoring sessions should be coordinated so as to use materials to match classroom instruction. Wasik (1998a) concurred with this by stating that an essential need for tutoring sessions was to have the necessary materials to facilitate learning. Collins and Matthey (2001) stated that tutors, if they are to be most effective, need to use a variety of resources that are provided to them.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] (2000), and Snow et al. (1998) identified 5 components that should be at the core of all reading instruction. These components should be included in the instructional materials used in tutoring programs as well as general literacy instruction. The components include phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonological awareness is the awareness that speech can be broken into smaller units of sound. Phonics is a way of teaching reading that focuses on how letters correspond to sounds. Fluency is the ability to read with an appropriate rate, phrasing, and expression. Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word use which ultimately

leads to comprehension, which is the understanding of what is read. Instruction in these components is most effective when they are taught explicitly and systematically, in both the regular classroom and in tutoring sessions (Ambe, 2007; Ediger, 2003; Houge et al., 2008; Al-Otaiba et al., 2005; Teale et al., 2007; Weiss, 1999).

One type of material that has been found to support literacy learning and can be included in tutoring is leveled texts. The NRP refers to leveled texts as materials that contain a controlled vocabulary that is appropriate to student ability, allowing for practice with success. The use of leveled texts with controlled vocabulary, along with other activities such as guided reading and phonics instruction, was found to be effective in classroom instruction and tutoring (Brown et al., 2005). Guided oral reading is important for developing fluency. It is where students read aloud to someone who corrects their mistakes and gives them feedback. Guided reading also follows the strategy of reading leveled texts that are purposefully chosen to allow for success because the struggling students can read them (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Houge et al., 2008).

The NRP was unable to conclude from research whether independent silent reading helped with fluency. However, they did not discourage the practice because there has not been enough experimental research conducted on the matter. They did state that many correlational studies have shown that good readers do read silently to themselves more often than poor readers. The Panel ultimately decided that silent reading, if used, should be combined with other reading instruction.

Other materials found to be successful in the classroom and in tutoring sessions were the reading of children's literature and reading integrated with writing activities (Leal et al., 2004; Wasik, 1998b). Using literature for fluency contributes to a higher

level of engagement, which influences comprehension and reading achievement (Houge et al., 2008). Instruction that gives students frequent and consistent opportunities to read silently and orally, and to write, listen, and talk about reading also supports achievement (Allor & McCathren, 2004; Ambe, 2007; Saddler & Staulters, 2008). Writing is an integral part of the tutoring process in some well-known programs such as *Reading Recovery, Howard Street Tutoring, Book Buddies, and Success for All*. Activities that promote writing provide students an opportunity to see the reading and print relationship. They allow for the child to attend to the visual details and see the letter-sound relationship. The process of writing gives the student repeated opportunities to see word structure and sound and symbol coordination (Wasik, 1998b).

Technology use may also support effective tutoring. Although the NCLB Act (2001) did not call for the use of technology as a separate standard, it was incorporated into an initiative by the Department of Education. The initiative required schools to aid learning by increasing student achievement through the use of technology, help students to become technologically literate by grade eight, and ensure that technology be incorporated into the classroom curriculum (USDOE, 1996). Given the fact that so many children have been shown to be deficit in their reading skills, incorporating the use of technology into the curriculum has been an added challenge to an already overwhelming task. However, having tutors incorporate the use of technology into their tutoring sessions has been used to help in this area. The wide variety of educational software and internet sites that have been available for several years has been a great help to both teachers and tutors. Technology has been used for many components of instruction such as reading, writing, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and

fluency. Since many children have gained access to many forms of technology in today's society, it has become a normal part of many of their lives. According to Knezek (2009), schools, educators, and tutors have had to incorporate technology into the curriculum as a natural part of learning.

Many of the most effective tutoring programs such as *America Reads, Reading Recovery, and Success for All* have some common characteristics. These include components such as: being coordinated with classroom instruction, including the use of a variety of resources such as oral and silent reading, phonics, phonemic awareness, guided reading, technology, and other such means of instruction. Other common characteristics include having structure and adequate resources as well as providing tutor training, support, communication, and feedback (Tingley, 2003; Weiss, 2006).

Summary

The increased attention to school performance has brought about a greater need of programs such as reading tutoring for low-performing students, especially since the NCLB Act demands for improved test scores (Baker et al., 2006). Research has shown tutoring to be an effective tool for increasing the achievement of lower-achieving (USDOE, 1997).

Many schools have chosen to use some type of tutoring program to improve the performance of the at-risk students. However, tutors have to constantly monitor their strategies and not adopt performance goals simply because of the pressure on schools through the use of testing measureable outcomes (Sullivan, 2000). It must be remembered that the main intention of tutoring is, and should always be, to provide a

type of educational intervention that meets the individual needs of struggling students (Woolley & Hay, 2007).

Since educational reform has been pushed to the top of public awareness and given the fact that tutoring has been shown to be successful, many schools throughout America have incorporated the use of tutors as a method to improving test scores, especially in reading. The United States government has also supported the use of tutors with programs such as *America Reads* and *Reading First* (USDOE, 2006). As a result of the needs of schools, tutoring is becoming a common practice in many schools across the United States.

Tutoring is most successful when tutors are provided with training, adequate resources, communication with the classroom teacher, support, and feedback. Tutoring is also most successful when it includes instructional practices such as oral and silent reading, phonics, phonemic awareness instruction, guided reading, and technology (Tingley, 2003; Weiss, 2006). However, it is not known if schools actually incorporate the use of these components in their tutoring due to the lack of research (Allor et al., 2006; Bray, 2006; McClure, 2008). Specifically, no research has been conducted about the reading tutors that are used in schools in Northeast Mississippi. Therefore, this study will attempt to provide research which will be helpful in determining information about tutors and tutoring in Northeast Mississippi Kindergarten to third grade classrooms.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Since the passage of the NCLB Act of 2001, schools have developed many plans to increase student achievement. Nonetheless, the state of Mississippi still has low levels of student achievement and high drop-out and illiteracy rates (Louvouezo & Hudnell, 2010; National Center of Educational Statistics [NCES], 2007). One intervention that the state of Mississippi has engaged in is the use of tutors within schools, especially in reading. This intervention has been employed as a tool to address academic achievement, illiteracy, and drop-out prevention. However, very little information is known about how literacy tutors are used, what educational backgrounds they possess, or their perceptions of the effectiveness of their tutoring experiences.

Taking into consideration this lack of available information about tutoring, there are five main purposes for this study. The first purpose is to determine how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize reading tutors: including the grade level(s) and subject(s) tutors work in, the organization of tutoring sessions, and the focus of tutoring and the materials used. The second purpose is to discover the educational backgrounds of tutors. The third purpose is to find out what experiences the tutors have. The fourth purpose is to determine what training the tutors have. The fifth purpose is to discover the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring programs in increasing student achievement.

This chapter includes the methodology that will be used to address the purposes of this study. Included in this chapter are: participants, instruments, design, procedures, and data analysis.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected using nonrandom purposive sampling (Neuman, 2000; Ostle, 1954). This type of sampling was used because of the criteria required for this research. The criterion was that all participants be current reading tutors in Kindergarten through third grade classrooms in the 16 Northeast Mississippi counties. There are 88 participants meeting the criteria who chose to take part by answering and returning the questionnaire to the researcher.

The population is made up of individuals serving as reading tutors of Kindergarten through third grade students in the 16 Northeast Mississippi counties, in which there are 31 separate school districts. From the total possible population, 10 counties participated, with a total of 13 separate school districts, consisting of 45 elementary schools that include K-3 classrooms. Seven of the 31 school districts do not utilize tutors in any of their schools, two of the school districts declined participation, and the remaining 11 school districts did not respond to the request of participation.

According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2008), five of the 10 participating counties comprise a total of four micropolitan areas, with the rest of the area being rural (areas not classified as urban). A micropolitan area is defined as an area that has at least one urban cluster population of at least 10,000 people but less than 50,000 people. The average land area for the 10 participating counties is 456 square miles with an average of 72 persons per square mile. The average population is 33,295 people, of which 72 % are

white, 26 % are black, and 2 % are of other race. The average poverty rate is 20.26 % while the median income is $31,715.

Instruments

This research utilized a questionnaire (Appendix D), a written collection of self-reported answers to questions, which was developed by the researcher. Some of the advantages to using a questionnaire are that they often require little time to complete, they are not expensive, and they allow for anonymous data collection. However, there are also some disadvantages such as not being able to ask follow up questions and the possibility of having low response rates (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006; Hillway, 1969).

The first two questions about gender and age were asked for informational purposes only. The next 14 items in the questionnaire used in this study allowed for standardized responses regarding the first four purposes of this study. The last four items in the questionnaire allowed for open-ended responses regarding the fifth purpose of this study.

The first purpose was to determine how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize reading tutors: including the grade level(s) and subject(s) tutors work in, the organization of tutoring sessions, and the focus of tutoring and the materials used. Questionnaire items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16 addressed these questions.

The second purpose was to discover the educational backgrounds of tutors. The third purpose was to find out what experiences the tutors have. Questionnaire items 3, 4, and 5 addressed both of these purposes.

The fourth purpose was to determine what training the tutors have. Questionnaire items 12 and 13 addressed this purpose.

The fifth purpose was to discover the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement. Questionnaire Items 17, 18, 19, and 20 addressed this purpose.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, with five demographic questions and 15 questions relating to tutor information. The questionnaire has a total of 20 questions. Of the 20 questions, 16 could be answered by writing a short answer or placing an *X* next to the appropriate response(s) and four require the respondents to provide answers to open ended questions.

The 16 checklist items were composed of nominal variables, also called categorical variables. Some of the items contained yes or no choices while others consisted of a small number of alternatives representing a wider range of values. The four free response items asked about tutor perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the tutoring program, how students were assessed and what areas improvement was made in, any suggestions for the tutoring program, and about any other issue not addressed in the questionnaire.

Since the questionnaire was developed by the researcher, it has no proven reliability or validity. However, in composing the questionnaire, the standardized questions were developed based on the research questions to be answered and research reviewed on effective tutoring. Open ended questions were included to allow for tutor perceptions of the tutoring program. The questions were developed with the thoughts in mind of the definitions of validity and reliability. To further address the validity and reliability issue, the questionnaire was given to several professors at a major university to

be reviewed. Changes were made according to recommendations made by these professors.

Validity is the most important characteristic that a measuring instrument can have, because without validity, the results are essentially meaningless. Content validity is the degree to which an instrument measures an intended content area and is determined by expert judgment in the topic concerned because there is no formula or statistical way to compute it (Gay et al., 2006).

The creation of a questionnaire, or any measurement instrument, requires careful consideration of the items included because of the possible factors that can threaten the validity of the instrument. These factors include such things as unclear directions, vague items, difficult vocabulary, and complex sentences. If a testing instrument contains any of these factors, it can reduce test validity because they produce uncharacteristic answers (Gay et al., 2006; Hillway, 1969).

Reliability generally defines the dependability and the trustworthy nature of the instrument and to the degree of an instrument to consistently measure what is intended. If an instrument has reliability, then similar results can be expected each time the instrument is used (Gay et al., 2006; Ostle, 1954).

Design

For this study, a nonexperimental, descriptive research design was utilized. A descriptive research design involves collecting data to describe the way things are, and requires the collection of information (commonly through self-report or observation) from the research population (Dillman & Salant, 1994). Self-report research utilizes such

instruments as surveys or questionnaires (Gay et al., 2006). This study used a questionnaire developed by the researcher to gather self-reported data.

Procedure

Prior to obtaining IRB approval, superintendents from the 31 school districts in the 16 counties of Northeast Mississippi were contacted about this study (Appendix C). The purpose of this contact was to give a brief explanation of the study and to ask if the district officials would allow their reading tutors to participate in the study. Consent of participating district was needed for the IRB application. A map of the districts of Mississippi counties as well as a close-up map of the Northeast district is shown in Appendices E & F).

Consent from 10 of the 16 counties, comprising 13 separate school districts was obtained. The researcher then requested approval from the Mississippi State University IRB. After IRB approval was granted, the next step was to contact the participating superintendents and inform them that the questionnaires would be mailed to them.

The principals of the 45 schools in the participating districts were asked to distribute a questionnaire and a blank envelope to each tutor in the participating K-3 Northeast Mississippi school districts. Tutors were asked to return the completed questionnaire to the principal, in a sealed envelope for confidentiality purposes. The principals were asked to collect the questionnaires, which were in sealed envelopes, and mail them back to the researcher via self-addressed stamped envelopes to facilitate the ease of returning the documents.

The questionnaires included a letter to the principals and the tutors about why this research was being conducted (Appendices A & D). If questionnaires were not returned

after two to four weeks, a follow-up phone call, letter (Appendix B), fax, or email was sent. After the majority of the questionnaires were returned to the researcher via U. S. mail, they were analyzed descriptively. The 16 checklist items, since they consisted of nominal variables, were analyzed for percentages. The four open-ended questions were analyzed for common patterns or suggestions and percentages.

An assumption in this research is that the school districts to which questionnaires were mailed all utilized reading tutors. Limitations include limited generalizability, as the findings are generalizable to only the tutors who respond to the self-report questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Before any analysis was completed, the quantitative questionnaire responses were first simply numbered, which equaled 104. Then question six of each questionnaire was looked at individually to see if that participant met the criteria of this study in that the participants tutored K-3 grade students. If they did not, then that questionnaire was taken out of the total set. After this was completed, the number of participants who met the criteria equaled 88. After all the questionnaires were examined, they were then renumbered and tallied to count each possible response for the first 16 checklist questions. Items one to five were demographic in nature and included gender, age, and any prior teaching or tutoring experience. Questions one and two, gender and age, were for informational purposes only. Items six to eight dealt with grade levels tutored, number of students tutored, subjects tutored, and location of tutoring sessions. Questions nine to 11 provided information on whether or not students were taken out of class for tutoring, the length of the tutoring period, and the number of days and when the tutoring

occurred. Items 12 to 14 focused on prior and ongoing training, as well as observations during tutoring sessions. Question 15 was a table about the focus of the tutoring sessions and how often each occurred. Item 16 was also a table and it focused on the materials used in tutoring and how often they were used.

These responses were coded and entered into the SPSS computer program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), then analyzed using descriptive statistics (Bluman, 1995; Gay et al., 2006). The descriptive statistics used in the analysis of these questionnaires show distribution using percentages for each of the first 16 closed-ended questions. Percentages were calculated because the data in these questions are nominal in nature (Gay et al., 2006).

Questions 17 to 20, all open-ended questions, were first read to note any key themes or common answers that emerged from the responses. The responses were then reread, put into tables of general categories that had emerged, and percentages were calculated. These responses were analyzed for perceptions about the tutoring program. Any common patterns or consistencies of the strengths and weaknesses of the tutoring programs were looked for in question 17. Responses to question 18 were looked at for any common assessment procedures and areas of improvement in tutees. Question 19 allowed for suggestions for tutoring program improvement, so these responses were analyzed for any common answers or themes. The last question, number 20, gave an opportunity for addressing anything that was not in the questionnaire.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an analysis of the data in the study conducted on Kindergarten through third grade reading tutors in the Northeast Mississippi school districts. This study had five main purposes. The first purpose was to determine how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize reading tutors: including the grade level(s) and subject(s) tutors work in, the organization of tutoring sessions, the focus of tutoring sessions and the materials used. The second purpose was to discover the educational backgrounds of tutors. The third purpose was to discover the prior educational experiences the tutors have. The fourth purpose was to determine the training provided for tutors. The fifth purpose was to discover the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement.

The researcher-developed questionnaire contained a total of 20 questions, with the first 16 being closed-response or short answer items related to the first four purposes of this study. The last items were open-ended items that corresponded to the fifth purpose of this study. The results for the first 16 questionnaire items, which were nominal in nature, were coded numerically and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program for descriptive analysis of percentages. The responses to the last four open-ended questions were read and re-read to discover any commonalities or patterns that emerged from the responses. The answers for each of these four questions

were recorded, counted, and then displayed in tables to facilitate the identification of any emerging themes among these questionnaire items.

The first five items of the questionnaire were demographic in nature. Items one and two, gender and age, gathered descriptive demographic data and the results are shown in Table 1. Items 3-5 gathered data related to participants' prior teaching experience, grade level experience, and length of tutoring experiences and correlate to the second and third questions of this study. Items six through 16 gathered information related to the tutor and the tutoring sessions, which correlate to the first and fourth questions of this study. Items 17-20 were open-ended questions that correlate to the fifth question of this study.

Each of the five questions and related sub-questions of this study are addressed below. The results for each of the corresponding questionnaire items are also discussed below.

Demographics

The population is made up of individuals serving as reading tutors of K-3 grade students in the 16 Northeast Mississippi counties, in which there are 31 separate school districts. From the total possible population, there are 10 counties participating, with a total of 13 separate school districts, consisting of 45 elementary schools that include K-3 classrooms. From the total population of the 10 participating districts, there were a total of 104 participants who responded to the questionnaire, but there were only 88 participants who met the criteria of being tutors of Kindergarten to third grade students. Of the 88 participants, the vast majority, 85, are female. The age ranges of participants

are presented in Table 1. Only two of the participants were under the age of 25 and only three were over the age of 65.

Table 1. Demographics of Kindergarten to Third Grade Reading Tutors in the Northeast Mississippi School Districts

Total Participants

N = 88

Age Gender	No response	18-25	26-33	34-41	42-49	50-57	58-65	65+
Male			1(1%)		1(1%)	1(1%)		
Female	2(2%)	2(2%)	16(18%)	18(21%)	17(19%)	16(18%)	11(12%)	3(3%)

Research question one gathered data concerning the use of tutors and the organization, focus, and materials of the tutoring sessions. The question and the results are listed below.

Research Question One

1. How do K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize tutors?
    a. In what grade level and subjects do the tutors work?
    b. How are the tutoring sessions organized?
    c. What is the focus of the tutoring sessions?
    d. What materials are used in the tutoring sessions?

This question was divided into four sub-questions. The results and discussion for each of the sub-questions are given below.

Sub-question *a*

Sub-question *a* asked about the grade level and subjects the tutors worked in. Questionnaire items six and seven addressed this question. Item six asked what grade level(s) were tutored. There were 8 (9.1%) who worked with Kindergarten, 12 (13.6%) who worked with first grade, 14 (15.9%) who worked with second grade, and 8 (9.1%) who worked with third grade. The majority of the participants, 46 (52.2%), worked with more than one grade level.

Item seven asked what other subjects were tutored besides reading. Three participants (3.4%) did not respond to this item. Twenty-seven (30.7%) of the respondents tutor only in reading and 15 (17.0%) of the respondents tutor in reading and math. Thirty-nine (44.3%) tutor in reading, math, and language while 4 (4.5%) tutor in all subjects.

The grade levels that tutors work in is about evenly dispersed between Kindergarten to third grade. However, just over half of the participants work with more than one grade level. Additionally, about one-third of the tutors only tutor in reading and more than half tutor in the major subjects, which consists of reading, math, and language. Only four of the respondents tutor in the major subjects as well as science and social studies.

Eighty-four of the 88 participants tutor only in the major subjects of reading, math, and language. Research has shown that tutoring enhances learning across a wide variety of students and content areas (Gordon et al., 2004). However, most of the reviewed research concerned the use of tutoring for the major subject areas. Cohen et al. (1982), Slavin et al. (1989), and Wasik and Slavin, (1993) reported that the use of

tutoring was especially effective in the area of reading in the early grades. Similarly, Ritter et al. (2006) concluded that tutoring programs positively influenced reading and language arts skill in grades Kindergarten to eighth grade. Tutoring was also found to improve math skills, according to Baker et al. (2000). This research coincides with the finding of this study.

Since schools are concerned with improving test scores and the fact that the MCT2 tests the subjects of reading, language, and math, it is not surprising that nearly all of the respondents tutor only in the major subjects. It is also not surprising that there are a lot of tutors who tutor more than one grade level. The fact that Northeast Mississippi schools utilize tutors beginning in Kindergarten indicates that schools are starting as early as possible to try and have students academically ready when they begin taking the required achievement tests. Cohen et al. (1982) and Slavin et al. (1989) reported that the use of tutoring was especially effective in the early grades.

Summary for Sub-question *a*

The majority of the respondents in this study tutor in more than one subject and grade level. The tutoring begins in Kindergarten and mostly consists of utilization in the major subjects of reading, language, and math.

Sub-question *b*

Sub-question *b* asked about how the tutoring sessions were organized. Questionnaire items 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14 addressed this question by asking about how many students were tutored at one time, where the tutoring sessions were conducted, if students were pulled out of class for tutoring and if so, for what subject(s), how long and

for how many days does tutoring occur, and finally, if the tutor was observed and given feedback for tutoring sessions.

Questionnaire item six asked how many students were normally tutored at one time. Three (3.4%) participants did not respond to this item. Eighteen (20.5%) respondents tutor only one student at a time. The majority of the respondents, which numbered 53 (60.2%), tutored small groups of 2-5 students at a time. Seven (8.0%) of the respondents tutor groups of 6-10 students and seven (8.0%) respondents tutor groups of more than 10 students at a time.

Research indicates that one-to-one tutoring is the most effective form of instruction. Balkcom and Himmelfarb (1993) concluded that one-to-one tutoring is the most effective form of instruction. Likewise, the USDOE (1997) indicated that educators have long known the benefits of one-to-one tutoring. Houge et al. (2008) and Wasik and Slavin (1993) also indicated the use of one-to-one tutoring to be most beneficial. The eighteen respondents in this study who work with only one student at a time are very fortunate in that they can give the tutee their undivided attention. This gives the tutor the ability to focus specifically on that one child's needs, thereby providing the opportunity that the tutee will have a greater chance of attaining a higher success rate.

Conversely, the majority of the respondents who participated in this study tutor in small groups consisting of two to five students at a time. This is most likely because school districts do not have the number of tutors needed to work with only one student at a time. Research has shown that there are a large number of students who require tutoring. Gordon et al. (2004) found that students in the bottom 16% of their classes are likely to be involved in some type of tutoring. Even though one-to-one tutoring has been

shown to be most effective, small group instruction has also been shown to be effective and tutoring is often thought of as working with a single student or a small group of students (Allor & McCathren, 2004; The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005).

Questionnaire item eight asked where the tutoring sessions were conducted. Some of the tutors indicated that tutoring is conducted in more than one place. This is probably due to the fact that many of the tutors work with more than one grade level. Twenty-six (30%) of the tutors stated that they work in the regular classroom with students during the regular classroom instructional time. Forty-five (51%) of the tutors said that they tutor in a room other than the classroom. Twenty-eight (32%) respondents stated that they tutor in places other than a classroom including locations such as the hall, the stage or auditorium, the computer lab, or the library.

The majority of the respondents in this study do not tutor students in the classroom during regular classroom instructional time. Tutoring programs of today consist of a variety of methods including tutoring during regular classroom instruction as well as pulling students out of instructional time (Al-Otaiba et al., 2005). It is likely to be more beneficial when students are tutored in a room other than the regular classroom during regular instructional time.

Tutoring in the regular classroom during regular instructional time is likely to be distracting to the tutee. Likewise for being tutored in the hallway. In fact, one of the participants noted in the suggestion for improvement section of the questionnaire that the "Children need to be pulled from classrooms so they can focus with the tutor" (Respondent #11). Another tutor responded by saying "The tutors need to have a classroom so they can have a quiet environment. Most of the students with interventions

are easily distracted so a quiet, low-traffic area would be ideal" (Respondent #21). In reviewing the literature, there was not any information found on how effective tutoring was when conducted in various places. It does not appear that all schools have a specific place set aside for tutoring. Tutoring might be even more successful if schools provided specific tutoring locations.

Questionnaire item nine asked if students were pulled out of classroom instruction for tutoring, and if so, from what subjects were they pulled. One participant (1.1%) did not to respond to this item. Seventy participants (79.5%) stated that students were taken out of class for tutoring while 17 (19.3%) said they were not. As stated above, tutoring programs of today consist of pulling students out of regular instruction as well as tutoring during the regular classroom instruction (Al-Otaiba et al., 2005). When asked what subjects students were pulled from, 48 participants (54.5%) did not respond, with many of them writing in that they did not know. Ten respondents (11.4%) stated that students were not pulled from any specific subjects for tutoring while nine (10.2%) said students were pulled from break time or special subjects. Twenty-one (23.9%) respondents stated that students were pulled from reading, math, or language.

Several respondents in this study listed a weakness of tutoring programs as students being pulled from instructional time. Reasons given for this were that students get behind in other classes and also sometimes they do not like to miss classes, especially if they are not struggling in that particular subject. Other stated that keeping students in the regular classroom for tutoring was too distracting and they suggested pulling the students out.

When reviewing the literature, research was not found to distinguish if pull-out programs were more or less effective than tutoring during regular classroom instruction. Also, there was not any information found to show whether or not it made any difference on the effects of tutoring depending on what subjects the students were pulled from. Schools could possibly make tutoring more effective by looking to see if there are any differences in outcomes for students who are tutored at different times.

Questionnaire item 10 asked how long the tutoring periods were and questionnaire item 11 asked how many days a week and when tutoring sessions occurred. Some tutors had more than one tutoring period listed because they tutor more than one session. Seven respondents (8%) indicated that they tutored in time blocks of 0-15 minutes, 60 (68%) indicated tutoring time blocks of 16-30 minutes, and eight (9%) stated that their time block was 31-45 minutes.

None of the participants in this study tutored less than three days a week. Thirteen (14.8%) tutored three days a week, 12 (13.6%) tutored four days a week, and the majority, which numbered 63 (71.6%) tutored for five days a week. When asked if the tutoring sessions occurred before, during, or after school, four of the participants did not to respond. One participant tutored before school, 75 tutored during school hours, and 15 tutored after school. Some of the respondents chose more than one answer because they participate in more than one tutoring session.

In reviewing the research, no literature was found on the number of days a week that tutoring should occur. Similarly, no literature was found to indicate which time of the day was best to conduct tutoring. Most of the tutors involved with this study tutored on all five weekdays, during the regular school hours for a 30 minute time block. When

tutoring occurs during the regular instructional time period, there is the possibility that the tutee will miss out on some important classroom information or interactions. Consequently, when tutoring occurs before or after school hours, there is a possibility of the tutee becoming frustrated due to the amount of time that is being used for instruction.

Questionnaire item 14 asked if tutors were observed during tutoring sessions and given feedback, and if so, by whom. Eight of the participants did not to respond to this item. Forty-nine (55.7%) of the tutors said they were observed and given feedback about their tutoring sessions while 31 (35.2%) said that they were not observed and given feedback. Fifteen of the observed respondents said that they were observed by the principal, 12 said they were observed by the teacher, and 26 said they were observed by another person. Other observers consisted of reading coaches (3), administrators or supervisors (1), and facilitators or program directors (21).

A little over one-half of the participants of this study who were observed indicated that facilitators or program directors did the majority of the observations, followed by the principal or teacher. Research has shown that successful tutoring programs included tutor monitoring, feedback, training, support, communication, and reinforcement (Deeney, 2008; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik, 1998b). Allor and McCathren (2004) indicated that tutors themselves have expressed a need for training sessions and ongoing communication that includes monitoring and feedback from supervisors. Three of the respondents in this study indicated that they needed more training, observations, and feedback to help them be better tutors.

Summary for Sub-question *b*

The tutoring sessions of the schools districts in Northeast Mississippi that participated in this study are mostly set up with tutors tutoring no more than five students at a time. The majority of the tutoring occurs in a tutoring room or at tables that are set up in the hallways. Most of the students who are tutored are pulled out of classroom instruction or special subjects. The tutoring periods are mainly 16-30 minutes, five days a week, during the school day and for the most part, the tutors are observed and given feedback on their tutoring sessions by the principal, teacher, program facilitator or director.

Sub-question *c*

Sub-question *c* asked about the specific items of focus of the tutoring sessions and how often the focus occurred. The questionnaire item specifically asked about reading comprehension, fluency, phonics and decoding, phonemic awareness, test preparation, homework help, a review of class instruction, and other items of focus. Respondents were then asked if the specified item of focus occurred daily, weekly, monthly, rarely, or never. Item 15 addressed this research question. Table 2 shows the responses and percentages for this item.

Table 2. Focus of Tutoring Sessions and How Often it Occurs

How Often Focus	No response	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Reading comprehension	10(11%)	64(73%)	11(13%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	0(0%)
Phonemic awareness	22(25%)	48(55%)	9(10%)	0(0%)	7(8%)	2(2%)
Test preparation	36(41%)	19(22%)	14(16%)	1(1%)	10(11%)	8(9%)
Homework	42(48%)	11(13%)	4(5%)	1(1%)	14(16%)	16(18%)
Review class instruction	36(41%)	22(25%)	5(6%)	0(0%)	9(10%)	16(18%)
Other	72(82%)	12(14%)	1(1%)	0(0%)	1(1%)	2(2%)

The areas of other focus consisted reteaching, interventions and progress monitoring, and Accelerated Reading. These items were each identified by one respondent.

About one-third of the participants did not respond to this item, possibly because it was a longer format for answering. However, of the participants who did respond, almost 75% stated that they focus on reading comprehension on a daily basis. About 72% who responded say they focus on fluency daily while just over 61% focus on phonics and/or decoding on a daily basis. A little over half of the responding participants focus on phonemic awareness on a daily basis. Approximately one-fifth of the responding tutors work on test preparation daily while about one-tenth focus on homework help on a daily basis. One-fourth of the tutors who responded said they

review classroom instruction daily and about 14% say they focus on other things on a daily basis. The other things consisted of reteaching, Accelerated Reading, vocabulary, alphabet skills, sight words, interventions and progress monitoring, language skills, and math skills.

Participants who tutored in grades Kindergarten to 2nd grade generally focused on reading comprehension, fluency, phonics and decoding skills, and phonemic awareness on a daily to weekly basis. Participants who tutored in the third grade generally focused on reading comprehension, fluency, and test preparation on a daily to weekly basis.

Research has identified five components that should be at the core of all reading instruction, including tutoring programs. These components include phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). It appears that the majority of the Kindergarten to second grade tutors focus on most of these components. Vocabulary needs to be focused on in Kindergarten to third grades. A few of the participants of this study did indicate, under the section marked other, that they did focus on vocabulary skills on a daily to weekly basis.

Research has shown that instruction in these components is most effective when it is taught explicitly and systematically, in both the regular classroom and in tutoring sessions (Al-Otaiba et al., 2005; Ambe, 2007; Ediger, 2003; Houge et al., 2008; Teale et al., 2007; Weiss, 1999). It is not known what impact the tutors who work on test preparation, homework, and review of classroom instruction make on the tutee. It would seem as if this type of instruction may help with test taking skills as well as a deeper understanding of the classroom material and homework. This might be an area that could be explored with further research.

Summary for Sub-question *c*

The findings of this question coincide with the findings in the literature review. The tutors in this study use reading components which research has shown to be effective in the area of reading. Additionally, these components are mostly used on a daily to weekly basis.

Sub-question *d*

Sub-question *d* asked about what specific materials the tutors used in the tutoring sessions and how often they were used. The questionnaire item specifically asked about the use of children's literature, leveled readers, work sheets, class textbooks or workbooks, the Internet, technology, supplemental materials, and other items of use. Respondents were then asked if the specified use of material occurred daily, weekly, monthly, rarely, or never. Item 16 addressed this question. Table 3 shows the responses and percentages for this item.

Table 3. Materials Used in Tutoring Sessions and How Often They Are Used

How Often Name of Material	No response	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Children's literature	32(36%)	26(30%)	15(17%)	2(2%)	6(7%)	7(8%)
Leveled readers	23(26%)	49(56%)	8(9%)	2(2%)	4(5%)	2(2%)
Work sheets	23(26%)	33(38%)	17(19%)	0(0%)	11(13%)	4(5%)
Class textbooks or workbooks	35(40%)	29(33%)	7(8%)	0(0%)	9(10%)	8(9%)
Internet	41(47%)	11(13%)	11(13%)	2(2%)	4(5%)	19(22%)
Technology	33(38%)	22(25%)	12(14%)	1(1%)	2(2%)	18(21%)
Supplemental	33(38%)	38(43%)	11(13%)	0(0%)	4(5%)	2(2%)
Other	67(76%)	15(17%)	4(5%)	0(0%)	1(1%)	1(1%)

The types of other materials used consisted of things such as incentives, manipulatives, flashcards, sight words, pre-decodable books, rhyme and syllabication, and a dyslexia program. Incentives and manipulatives were listed by three and two respondents respectively. All of the others were listed by one respondent.

About one-third of the tutors in this study did not respond, possibly due to the longer answer format. However, of the participants who did respond, 41 (47%) said they use children's literature on a daily to weekly basis. Leveled readers were used on a daily basis by 49 (55.7%) of the respondents. Class textbooks, workbooks, or worksheets were used on a daily to weekly basis by 36 (41%) of the responding tutors. Twenty-two (25%) tutors utilized the Internet daily to weekly while 34 (39%) used technology daily to weekly. Supplemental materials were used daily to weekly by 49 (56%) of the

respondents. Nineteen (22%) of the tutors use other materials daily to weekly and these materials consist of specific programs the school uses, pre-decodable books, manipulatives, flash cards, sight words, and assessment items. Effective components of successful tutoring have been show to include a variety of materials such as leveled texts, children's literature, writing, and technology (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Baker et al., 2006; Rosenblatt, 2002; Tingley, 2003; Weiss, 2006).

The components of this question were equally likely to be used on a daily to weekly basis by tutors of all grade levels Kindergarten to third. The only exception was the use of the Internet, which was a little more likely to be used by third grade tutors. There is a wide variety of internet sites that have been available for several years and these have been a great help to tutors who do use the Internet as part of their tutoring sessions (Knezek, 2009).

The use of technology and children's literature by the majority of the tutors in this study also correlates with reviewed research. Successful and effective tutoring components have included the use such materials as technology and children's literature (Allen & Chavkin; 2004; Baker et al., 2006; Rosenblatt, 2002).

Summary for Sub-question *d*

The findings of this question coincide with the findings of the literature review. The tutors in this study utilize materials that research has shown to be effective in the area of reading. Additionally, these materials are normally used by most of the tutors on a daily to weekly basis.

Some of the Internet sites that tutors in this study indicated they used were www.educationcity.com, www.readingtutor.com and www.starfall.com. Technology

used included such things as DVD's, IPOD touchpad, Leap Frog, Math Shark, and educational videos. Other technology used included programs such as Accelerated Reader, Alphie's Alley (a *Success for All* program), Imagination Station, and Study Island.

Research Questions Two and Three

2. What are the educational backgrounds of the tutors?
3. What are the experiences of the tutors?

Items three to five of the questionnaire address these two questions of the study. Item three asked if the tutors had any prior classroom teaching experience, and if so, in what capacity and for how many years. Eighty-four (95.5%) of the respondents had prior experience while only four (4.5%) did not. Seven of the 84 did not specify what prior experience they had, four were retired teachers, 49 were teacher assistants, and 37 had other experience. The other experiences consisted of teachers (25), substitutes (7), childcare (2), pre-school (1), after-school programs (1), and administration (1). When asked how many years of prior experience respondents had, nine people did not to respond. Twenty-five (28.4%) had 1-5 years of experience and 23 (26.1%) had 6-10 years of experience. Nine (10.2%) people had 11-15 years of experience, eight (9.1%) people had 16-20 years of experience, four people had 21-25 years of experience, and 10 people had more than 25 years of experience.

Item four asked among what grade levels the tutors had experience. Seventy-one respondents had experience in Kindergarten to eighth grade, 17 had experience in Kindergarten to twelfth grade, and 10 had experience in other categories which included pre-Kindergarten, GED classes, 4-H, gifted, special education, and Sunday school.

Item five asked how many years of tutoring experience the tutors had. Four people did not to respond to this item. Of the participants who did respond, 54 (61.4%) had 0-5 years experience, 17 (19.3%) had 6-10 years of experience, six (6.8%) had 11-15 years of experience, five (5.7%) had 16-20 years of experience, two (2.3%) had 21-25 years of experience, but no one had more than 25 years of tutoring experience.

Summary for Questions Two and Three

It was not surprising that nearly all of the respondents in this study had some type of prior experiences involving students. What was surprising was that 24 of the respondents had experience as teachers. Tutors who have some type of experiences with children may be able to successfully meet their students' tutoring needs.

This is also indicative of reviewed research. Woolley and Hay (2007) concluded that certified teachers should be used as tutors, but that supervised paraprofessionals and community volunteers could also be used. Canales et al. (2002) indicated that tutors need a college degree, prior subject-specific teaching experience, and content area certification to be most effective in addressing the learning needs of students. According to Deeney (2008) and Houge et al. (2008), research has shown that successful tutoring programs included tutor monitoring, feedback, training, support, communication, and reinforcement. Additionally, Allor and McCathren (2004) indicated that even tutors themselves have expressed a need for more training sessions and feedback from their supervisors.

The majority of participants in this study had some type of educational experience. It is not known why so many of the respondents had experience, however, research has shown educational experience to be conducive to more successful tutoring.

Research Question Four

4. What training do the tutors have?

Items 12 and 13 address this research questionnaire item. Item 12 asked if the tutors received any training prior to beginning tutoring and if so, how many hours, what type of training, and who delivered the training. Two participants did not to respond to this item, 59 (67%) had prior tutor training while 27 (30.7%) did not. Many people did not respond to the question of how many hours of training they had, possibly because they didn't know the number of hours. Of the participants who did respond, eight had 1-5 hours of training, 12 had 6-10 hours of training, seven had 11-15 hours of training, two had 16-20 hours of training, and eight had more than 20 hours of training. Table 4 shows the number and percentages of the specific types of training.

Table 4. Specific Types of Tutor Training

Specific Types of Training	Number
No response	31(35%)
Phonics	19(22%)
Phonemic Awareness	8(9%)
Reading First	3(3%)
Title I	2(2%)
Fluency	22(25%)
Comprehension	18(21%)
All of the above	12(14%)
Other	12(14%)

The 12 respondents who listed other types of training listed it as workshops or staff development (2) and training for specific programs (10). When asked who delivered the training, 35 people did not to respond. Of the participants who did respond, 10 said the principal delivered the training, nine indicated the teacher, while 34 indicated other trainers. The other trainers included facilitators (26), reading coaches (2), and administrators (5).

Item 13 asked if participants received any ongoing training, and if so, how often. Six people did not to respond to this item. Thirty-seven indicated they receive ongoing training and 45 said they do not receive ongoing training. When asked how often they receive training, 56 did not respond. It is not known why this question had a low response rate. Twelve people said they receive ongoing training weekly, four said monthly, and 16 indicated other, which varied from twice yearly, yearly, 2-3 times a semester, quarterly, as needed, or when available.

Summary for Question Four

A majority of the respondents in this study did receive training prior to beginning tutoring. The amount of training was low and about evenly dispersed among the responses listed on the questionnaire except for the choice of 16-20 hours, which only had a response rate of two. Thirty-one people did not respond to the question of what type training they had, perhaps because they were not sure about the types indicated in the questionnaire. The people who did respond indicated that 20-25% of their training was in fluency, phonics, and comprehension with the majority of the training being conducted by facilitators. Only 37 tutors stated that they received any ongoing training, which varied anywhere from weekly to yearly to as needed.

Research has shown that successful tutoring programs included components such as having structure as well as providing tutor training, support, feedback, communication, monitoring and reinforcement (Deeney, 2008; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik, 1998b). Additionally, Woolley and Hay (2007) stated that successful tutoring programs require and utilize ongoing training and supervision. Baker et al. (2000) indicated that even when tutors have been shown to only be minimally trained, positive outcomes have been found for many at-risk students. Additionally, Roe and Vukelich (2001) noted that training is important for all tutors. According to Mathes and Fuchs (1994) and Shanahan and Barr (1995), the use of trained tutors has produced some very successful results. The lack of training for tutors in Northeast Mississippi is a concern.

Many of the participants in this study did have training prior to tutoring; however, it was not a lot. The review of literature showed that training was an essential component to successful tutoring. It is not known why the tutors in this study were not provided with more training, but perhaps it is due to the budget concerns that many schools face in the economy today.

Research Question Five

5. What are the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement?

Questionnaire items 17-20 were used to answer this question. These items were open-ended questions in order to gain insight of tutor perceptions. The items were read, put into a table, and tallied so that any patterns or common themes could easily be noted. The results and discussion for these questions are given below.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Question 17 asked what the tutors considered to be strengths and weaknesses of the tutoring program and why.

Seventeen tutors did not respond to this questionnaire item, possibly due to the longer answer format. One-to-one or small group instruction, indicated by 32 people (36%), was listed the most as a strength. One participant in this study indicated "I think one-to-one is the best way to reach a student" (Respondent #32). This statement is certainly consistent with the majority of research that has the same conclusion (Balkcom & Himmelfarb, 1993; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik & Slavin 1993).

Twenty-one people (24%) stated that structure, a specific focus on tutee needs, a variety of materials, and assessment based tutoring sessions were strengths. A respondent to this study listed a strength of the tutoring program as "Very Structured!" (Respondent #48). These coincide with research. Cohen and Kulik (1981) and Deeney (2008) identified structure as one component that helps to make tutoring successful. Other effective components of tutoring were shown to be a variety of materials (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Tingley, 2003; Weiss, 2006). Another finding in this study that is supported by the literature is the use of frequent assessment of student progress (Gordon et al., 2004; Madden & Slavin, 1987).

Additionally, 18 people (20%) said that student grades, confidence, and self-esteem improvement were strengths. Truschel (2008) noted that the effects on tutees can be positive by stating that tutored students meet or exceed their goals and their self-esteem increases. Cohen and Kulik (1991) indicated that tutoring programs had definite and positive effect on the learning and attitudes of tutees, but not self-concept. Perhaps

this study could be replicated to see if the outcome would be any different, especially since it has been nearly 20 years since the analysis was completed. It appears that the outcome would be different due to 18 participants (20%) in this study listing a strength of tutoring as improvement in grades, confidence, and self-esteem.

Nine respondents believed that reinforcement of classroom material and teacher cooperation were strengths. Tutor dedication, 30 minute tutoring sessions, flexibility of teaching techniques, and rewards or incentives for students were each listed as a strength by one respondent (1.1%). Allor (2006) and Wasik (1998b) noted that tutoring support factors included ongoing supervision and adequate communication with supervisors and teachers. Likewise, is has been indicated that tutors are most effective when they have continuous support and on-going feedback (Collins & Matthey, 2001; Saddler & Staulters, 2008).

Thirteen respondents (15%) listed a weakness as not having enough time or tutors to help all of the students who need tutoring. Nine people (10%) also said that there were too many students in tutoring groups. Of the 88 participants, one-fifth reported that they tutor students on a one-to-one basis and 53 tutors (60.2%) tutor students in small groups of 2-5 students. Though research supports one-to-one tutoring, it is surprising that even this many tutors work with small numbers of students given the current economic situation and pressure on school budgets.

Ten people (11%) said there was too much paperwork and different assignments and also not enough preparation time or teacher cooperation. Nine people said that learning in other subjects suffers because students are pulled out of class. Four people (4.5%) stated that some students do not learn or they get bored while three people

(3.4%) said that students do not like missing certain classes or activities. Three other participants said that there was not enough tutor training and two (2.3%) said that tutoring only used specific programs based on school decisions. One respondent (1.1%) each listed that some programs do not fit student needs, tutors are not monitored and given feedback, there is no state funding, they have no specific place for tutoring, students are discipline problems, students get too dependent on one-to-one help, and that schools are stopping tutoring programs in some grades.

Summary for Strengths and Weaknesses

Most of the tutors feel that the strengths are the one-to-one or small group settings and the structure of the tutoring programs. They also said that student grades and improvements in their confidence and self-esteem were strengths as well as the reinforcement of classroom instruction.

Several of the tutors said that the weaknesses were not enough time or tutors to see all of the students who need help. They also said that there were too many in the tutor groups and that other subjects suffered due to students being pulled out. Other weaknesses included there being too many different assignments among students, too much paperwork, not enough preparation time, materials, or teacher cooperation.

Tutoring Assessment

Question 18 asked how the tutors assessed the progress of their students and in what areas did the tutors feel that the students were making progress. Sixty-six (75%) of the respondents stated that they assess students via weekly and periodic testing, which included the use of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills [DIBELS] and

progress monitoring. Ten tutors (11%) use observation, seven (8%) use grades, six (6.8%) use logs and graphs, and one (1.1%) uses journals. The high use of testing by the tutors in this study is consistent with research findings that recommend the use of frequent assessment and tracking of student progress (Gordon et al., 2004; Madden & Slavin, 1987).

When asked what areas tutors felt students were making progress in, 30 (34%) indicated reading, 25 (28%) said fluency, 22 (25%) said comprehension, 10 each (11%) said decoding and math, seven each (8%) said vocabulary and self-esteem. Five (5.7%) respondents said students were improving in language, four (4.5%) said sight words, and two each (2.3%) said phonics and spelling, and one (1.1%) said literacy. Not surprisingly, several tutors indicated improvements in the area of reading, especially since many of them focused on these components in their tutoring sessions. These results are also consistent with research findings that show that tutoring helps provide academic improvements, especially in reading (Cohen et al., 1982; Slavin et al., 1989; Wasik & Slavin, 1993).

It was a little surprising that there were not more tutors who listed students as improving in math and language since several of the tutors indicated that they tutored in these subjects. Research indicates that tutoring programs positively influence reading and language, according to Ritter et al. (2006). Similarly, Baker et al. (2000) indicated improvements in math via the use of after-school tutoring programs. It was also surprising that only seven respondents listed improvements in self-esteem or confidence, especially since 18 of the respondents listed self-esteem as one of the strengths of the tutoring program.

Summary for Tutoring Assessment

Most of the tutors involved in this study assess their tutees with weekly and periodic testing of the students, including the use of DIBELS and progress monitoring. Additionally, the results of this study indicate that even though many tutors tutor in reading, math, and language, their tutees improved mostly in the area of reading. One possible reason for this is that the tutors might have more time allotted for reading than other subject areas. This might be a question that could be incorporated into future research in the area of tutoring.

Tutor Suggestions

Question 19 asked if the tutors had any suggestions for improving the tutoring program. Nineteen (22%) respondents indicated the need for more training and tutor observation, more tutors, and fewer students per tutor. One respondent stated "I feel the more I know, the better I will be for my students. Also, I think more observation of me would be good to make sure I am doing all I can" (Respondent # 63). Research has shown training, observation, and feedback to be important components for successful tutoring (Deeney, 2008; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997). Research also indicates that one-to-one tutoring is the most successful; but that small group tutoring can also be successful (Balkcom & Himmelfarb, 1993; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik & Slavin, 1993).

Six (7%) respondents wanted to be able to help plan lessons and purchase tutoring materials. Five people said they would like to have designated times, places, and materials for tutoring sessions. Three respondents each listed a suggestion for not pulling students from instructional time, to have funding, and to have tutoring in all grades and

subject areas. Two respondents each identified a suggestion as having more cooperation with teachers and administrators as well as being able to communicate with parents, to have certified teachers as tutors, and to reduce the length of the tutoring time block.

Summary for Tutor Suggestions

The majority of the tutors who responded to this question stated the need for more training, more tutors, more observation and feedback for tutors, and fewer students per tutor. Research has indicated that training, observation, and feedback, as well as one-to-one or small group tutoring are some components that help make tutoring successful. However, schools might not have the resources to provide these components since there are around 7 million students in the United States of America receiving some type of tutoring (Gordon, 2002). Schools in Northeast Mississippi who do utilize tutors are probably doing all that they can to provide help to students who are struggling and at-risk of failing.

Items Addressed by Tutors

Question 20 asked if the tutors would like to address anything that was not in the questionnaire. The eight (9%) respondents who answered this question varied across the age ranges of the participants in this study. One person said that the work completed with students should be called an intervention program because she felt that tutoring meant only helping with homework. This researcher feels that tutoring is similar or the same as providing intervention. According to research, the main intention of tutoring is to provide a type of educational intervention that meets the individual needs of struggling students (Woolley & Hay, 2007).

Another respondent indicated the fact that their school used a strong reward system for weekly individual improvement on scores. Research was not found by this researcher on the use of incentives in tutoring programs. This might be an area of possible interest in other research in the area of tutoring.

One respondent stated that it was fortunate that their school district did to spend the needed money for their tutorial program titled *In-School Certified Tutorial Teachers*. This respondent also indicated that their instruction was multi-sensory and based on student learning styles. According to this tutor, as students make improvements, they graduate back into the regular classroom.

"Tutoring is an essential part of our reading program. There are many students who would not be successful without the tutoring help" said one tutor (Respondent #41). Another respondent stated that the tutoring program is great because it helps to give struggling students the boost they need to succeed. One person indicated that their program administrators emphasized remaining positive and encouraging with the students. This respondent said that she felt like this was a must.

Only one participant listed something about money and stated that "Better pay is always good" (Respondent #29). This respondent also said that tutors need to work more hours per day so that more students could be helped. One last respondent answered questionnaire item 20. This person wanted to address the area of job satisfaction. The respondent stated that "Yes, I love tutoring students and then watching them progress and love to hear them read stories" (Respondent #38).

Summary for Items Addressed by Tutors

Though there were only a few people who responded to this item, the responses of these eight participants provide valuable information and insight into tutor perceptions and give areas that could possibly be used for research in future studies in the area of tutoring. Their responses indicate overall job satisfaction and commitment to student learning.

Summary for Question Five

The majority of the respondents in this study indicated that one-to-one or small group size was the major strength of the tutoring programs in the schools they tutor in. The major weaknesses were not enough time or tutors to help all people who needed tutoring and the fact that there needed to be a lower number of students in the tutoring groups. Also, the majority of the tutors used testing as an assessment tool to see whether or not the tutees were improving.

Suggestions included more tutor training and observation as well as lowering the tutor to tutee ratio.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of tutoring is to give educational help to students who are struggling. Tutoring has been used for a long period of time and has become increasingly popular in recent years. This study yielded research findings showing how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilize tutors, what the educational backgrounds, experiences, and training of the tutors are, and the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement. This chapter summarizes those research findings. Conclusions are given about the impact of the study and recommendations are offered in relation to the findings.

Summary

The call for changing and improving education has been around for a very long time. Lindemann (2000) noted that schools and educators have often times had to rely on individual experiences or intuition to decide which of the many strategies would be the best one for them.

The United States has spent billions of dollars with an influx of programs such as *Title I, Right to Read, Reading First*, and numerous others (NRRF, 2009; USDOE, 2004). In 2001, PL 107-110, the NCLB Act, was aimed toward improving U. S. school performance by increasing accountability standards. The NCLB Act (2001) created an increase in tutoring programs in schools across America. When the NCLB Act came to

an end, President Obama suggested two fundamental reforms to the act. These were improvements to assessments and improvements to the accountability system. He sent a 'Blueprint for Reform' to Congress in March 2010 that retains the annual testing and data-driven accountability, but also adds funds and flexibility to meet the new goal of all students graduating from high school prepared for college and a career by the year 2020 (Chaddock, 2010; USDOE, 2010; Weinstein, 2010).

A review of the literature indicated the use of tutoring as a long used popular and successful method of reinforcing educational instruction (Parker et al., 2002; Snow et al., 1998). The arrival of programs in the 80's and 90's led to increased attention given to the use of tutors (Al-Haza & Gupta, 2006; Sweet, 1996). The use of tutoring has been shown to be a very effective method of helping struggling students become successful in academic achievement (Baker et al., 2000; Cohen et al., 1982; Gordon et al., 2004; Ritter et al., 2006).

Even though research has indicated tutoring is effective, it has also indicated that some key features need to be included in the sessions in order for it to be successful. These features included such things as structure, tutor training, support, feedback, communication, monitoring, and reinforcement (Deeney, 2008; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997). Additionally, five components were also identified to be at the core of all reading instruction, including tutoring. These were phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). Other materials also found to be successful in effective tutoring sessions were the use of children's literature and technology (Leal et al., 2004; USDOE, 1996; Wasik, 1998b).

Nonrandom purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. The population consisted of the 16 Northeast Mississippi counties. The participants in this study included 88 people who chose to take part by answering and returning the questionnaire. This study utilized a nonexperimental, descriptive research design. The self-report questionnaire used in this study was created by the researcher and included 16 close-ended and four open-ended items. The questionnaires were examined to see if participants met the criteria of being tutors of students in Kindergarten to third grade. The items were then tallied and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

This research had five purposes which involved tutors and tutoring in the K-3 classrooms in the Northeast Mississippi school districts. Research question one addressed the first purpose of this study, which was how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilized tutors. This question had four sub-questions: (a) in what grade level and subjects do the tutors work; (b) how are the tutoring sessions organized; (c) what is the focus of the tutoring sessions; (d) what materials are used in the tutoring sessions. The data indicated that tutors are about evenly dispersed between K-3 grades and that most tutors work with more than one grade level. Additionally, almost ½ of the participants work with reading, language, and math. The data also revealed that tutors generally have no more than five students at a time and have 16-30 minutes sessions five days a week. Most of the tutors give daily focus to reading comprehension, fluency, phonics and decoding, and phonemic awareness. A majority of the tutors use children's literature, leveled readers, worksheets, class books, the internet and technology, and supplemental materials on a daily basis.

The second and third purposes were to discover the educational backgrounds and experiences of the tutors. Questions two and three addressed these purposes. The data indicated that most tutors had 1-10 years in K-8 as a teacher or teacher assistant and also have 1-10 years of tutoring experience.

The fourth purpose was to determine what training the tutors had. Question four addressed this purpose. The data indicated that most of the tutors have prior tutor training of 1-15 hours. Most of the training is in phonics, phonemic awareness, *Reading First, Title I*, comprehension, and fluency.

The fifth purpose was to discover the perceptions of tutors regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement. Questions 17-20 addressed this purpose. The data indicated that, generally, the strengths were the one-to-one or small group settings and structure. It also indicated that improvements in grades, confidence, and self-esteem were strengths. The weaknesses generally revealed by the data included there not being enough time or tutors to see all struggling students, too many students in tutoring groups, other subjects suffering due to missing class, too many different assignments, and too much paperwork.

Conclusions

This research was conducted to examine five main purposes: how K-3 Northeast Mississippi schools utilized tutors, what the educational backgrounds and experiences of the tutors were, what training the tutors had, and what the tutor perceptions were regarding the effectiveness of tutoring in increasing student achievement. One reason for this study was that research indicated that a lot of schools utilized tutors, but it was not indicated how they were used. Since the use of tutoring seemed to be very prevalent,

according to research, it seemed logical to want to gather information from the tutors themselves regarding the subject of tutoring.

Findings from this study revealed that the participating schools in Northeast Mississippi utilize tutors in grades Kindergarten to third grade. One reason for the use of tutors in Kindergarten may be that students begin school not being academically or emotionally ready. This is supported by the *Quality Counts 2007 Report* which indicated that Mississippi children would do well to have preschool programs because of the many factors that affect a child's chance for educational success, such as lack of parental education and low family income (MDOE, 2007). It is well known that Mississippi has a high drop-out rate and a lot of single-parent families who live in poverty. In fact, for the Northeast Mississippi counties participating in this study, the average poverty rate is 20.26 % while the median income is only $31,715. A parent without a high-school diploma working at a mediocre job, or perhaps on welfare, will most likely have a hard time knowing how to help their child(ren) to be successful.

Additionally, other reasons schools begin tutoring as early as Kindergarten may be that research has shown tutoring to be especially effective in the early grades (Cohen et al., 1982; Slavin et al., 1989). One reason for this may be that even though young children may be behind, they tend to get further behind as they go through school. It is indeed logical to try and get them caught up as much and as soon as possible.

Yet another possible reason for tutors in the early grades is that Mississippi tests students on the MCT2 beginning in third grade. Schools may be trying to have students academically prepared for when they begin testing.

Tutors participating in this study also generally tutor students in more than one grade level. This is most likely due to the fact that there are approximately 7 million students in the United States of America who obtain some type of tutoring (Gordon, 2002). This would also be the likely reason that tutors in this study tutor in more than one subject area, mostly consisting of reading, language, and math even though some research has shown tutoring to be an effective method that enhances learning across a wide variety of content areas (Baker et al., 2000; Cohen et al., 1982; Gordon et al., 2004; Ritter et al., 2006). The MCT2 tests only the subjects of math and reading, which incorporates language skills. The schools in Mississippi are rated based on the scores in these areas, therefore it is logical that these are the areas that tutors concentrate on for tutoring sessions.

Eighteen tutors (20.5%) in this study are fortunate enough to be able to tutor one-to-one, which research has shown to be the most effective method (Balkcom & Himmelfarb, 1993; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik & Slavin 1993). However, this is not a feasible option for many schools. More than half the participants in this study tutor students in small groups of 2-5 students, which research has also shown could be effective (Allor & McCathren, 2004). Though one-on-one tutoring may be optimal, it may not be feasible for cash-strapped Mississippi schools. Nearly one-fourth of the tutors in this study indicated that they work with groups of more than five students at a time. Research was not found to indicate whether or not tutoring larger groups of students could be effective.

The tutors in this study generally tutor in sessions of 16-30 minutes daily, five days a week, during school hours, although some work in after-school programs.

Additionally, some of the tutors work in the regular classroom during regular instruction while others tutor students who are pulled out of the classroom. This coincides with research findings that shows tutoring programs today consist of a variety of methods from tutoring programs that begin in Kindergarten, pull-out programs during the school day, tutors in the classroom, before and after school programs, and homework help (Al-Otaiba et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2005; Tingley, 2003). Several participants believe that pull-out programs may be more effective. One reason for this is that since the students are already struggling, it would be hard for them to focus in the regular classroom. Similarly, students who are tutored in the hallways are probably easily distracted. Such are the findings of the some participants of this study who tutor in the hallways.

There are both pros and cons to tutoring during and after school. When tutoring occurs during school, the tutees miss regular classroom instructional time, special subjects, or free time. This could become a problem for the tutee. A student could get behind in other classes because of missed time. A student may also become frustrated because of missing special subjects or free time, which are usually enjoyable to the students. Some of the tutors participating in this study indicated that children do not need to miss instructional time because they could get behind.

Conversly, extending the school day cuts into students' personal and home time. There does not seem to be right or wrong answers as for when tutoring should occur for students. It appears that schools just have to make a choice as to what is best for the district and the students.

Nearly all (95.5%) of the tutors in this study have an educational background and experience with children, with 28 of them being teachers (4 retired) and 40 being teacher

assistants. Tutors with educational backgrounds and who have experience with children are more likely to have successful interactions with tutees. These backgrounds likely give them the knowledge and understanding that is needed to make tutoring sessions productive. It is not known why so many of these tutors have educational backgrounds and experiences. Certainly, it does not seem as if this would be the norm in all studies. One wonders if it could be because of the recent budget cuts experienced in education which meant fewer available jobs for licensed teachers. This is an area that would need to be explored by further research.

The findings of this study furthermore support the literature that tutor training, support, and feedback are still common components used in tutoring session today (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 206; Teale et al., 2007). Similarly, additional research has shown that many successful tutoring programs included providing tutor training, support, feedback, communication, monitoring and reinforcement (Deeney, 2008; Houge et al., 2008; USDOE, 1997; Wasik, 1998b). Many of the tutors (67%) in this study have prior tutor training indicating that administrators understand and value training opportunities for the tutors in their schools. It is not known why some of the respondents in this study do not have prior training. Perhaps it is due to the fact that nearly all of the participants have some type of educational background.

Many of the respondents (55.7%) in this study indicated that they are observed and given feedback about tutoring session. Again, it would appear that a lot of administrators realize the need for observation and feedback for tutors to be the most effective. Research has shown that tutors have even expressed a need for training, monitoring, and feedback from supervisors (Allor & McCathren, 2004). Three of the

participants in this study who received prior training, but not on-going training, expressed a desire for more tutor training and observation. One respondent indicated that she felt this would ensure that she was doing the best job she could. Providing additional training and feedback might strengthen the tutoring programs in northeast Mississippi.

This study explored the educational areas as well as the materials that were focused on in tutoring sessions in the schools of Northeast Mississippi. The findings of this study indicate that tutors generally focus on reading components on a daily basis. Research has shown effective tutoring components to consist of the use of phonics, phonological and phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). The findings of this study support these literature findings.

Kindergarten to third grade tutors mostly all focus on reading comprehension and fluency on a daily basis. Furthermore, most tutors of students in Kindergarten to second grade also focus on phonics and decoding as well as phonemic awareness on a daily basis. Though these topics are typically the focus of kindergarten and first grade, there may be some need for instruction in these areas in grades 2 and 3 for students who are struggling and considered at-risk. These findings are also consistent with research that shows that the time to teach phonemic awareness is Kindergarten to first grade and the time to teach phonics is Kindergarten to second or third grade. Little research supports the teaching of either of these beyond the third grade.

Third grade tutors in this study generally work more on test preparation. This may be due to the fact that the schools in Mississippi are rated based on MCT2 scores which begin with third grade students. Administrators often focus on test preparation due to the increased attention to school performance, especially since the NCLB Act demands

for improved test scores as well as the Obama administration's release of *A Blueprint for Reform – The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (2010). This plan keeps in place the annual testing and data-driven accountability which was in NCLB (Baker et al., 2006; USODE, 2010).

Many of the tutors in this study, no matter the grade level, use children's literature and leveled readers on a daily to weekly basis. The use of these materials coincides with research finding which show them to be effective when used in tutoring (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Tingley, 2003; Weiss, 2006). It is not known if the schools or the tutors choose their tutoring materials. It is also not known whether or not the tutors in this study use these materials because they are research based, the materials used by tutors in northeast MS are consistent with research recommendations, especially leveled readers.

Almost half of the respondents in this study also use technology on a daily to weekly basis. An initiative which was developed by the Department of Education required schools to aid learning by increasing student achievement through the use of technology, help students to become technologically literate by grade eight, and ensure that technology be incorporated into the classroom curriculum (USDOE, 1996). There is a wide variety of educational software that has been available for several years which has been a great help to both teachers and tutors. Technology has been used for many educational components of instruction such as reading, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Many tutors have incorporated technology into their tutoring sessions and it has been shown to be a natural part of their learning process (Knezek, 2009). One reason for this is that there is so much technology in the world today and it is an everyday part of the lives of the majority of children. However, it is not

known if tutors use technology because the schools choose for them to do so or if it is of their own accord. Regardless of the reason, consistent use of technology in tutoring is a strength of programs in northeast Mississippi.

Another finding of this study that is supported by the literature is the use of frequent assessment of student progress (Madden & Slavin, 1987). Gordon et al. (2004) also indicated tracking student progress to be effective. Seventy-five percent of the respondents in this study use weekly and periodic testing as assessment to gauge the progress of their students. This gives them information about whether or not the tutoring sessions are being successful. Some of the tutors in this study also assess via the use of observations and grades. Tutoring programs in northeast Mississippi seem to be largely consistent with research recommendations to assess tutees on a regular basis.

A very important question in this study, at least to this researcher, was the one that asked what tutors considered to be the strengths and weaknesses of the tutoring program. This question was asked mainly due to no research being found on tutor perceptions regarding this area. Much research was found on the act of tutoring itself being effective, but not on the reasons why. The tutors themselves provide a first-hand look at what works or does not work with students who are struggling, hence the need to know what they consider to be strengths and weaknesses.

Based on the perceptions of the tutors themselves, the K-3 classrooms in the Northeast Mississippi school districts which utilize tutors generally do so in a manner that coincides with the findings of the review of literature which show tutoring to be effective. However, it is not known whether or not this is due to the schools using researched based information to guide their use of tutors or if it is just by chance. Even

though this study answered some questions, it also made for some additional questions that could possibly be answered by additional research in the area of tutoring.

Implications

The state of Mississippi has low levels of achievement and high drop-out rates with several schools performing at a level of less than successful. Consequently, many of the schools in Mississippi utilize tutors and tutoring as a strategy to help combat these problems.

In reviewing the literature, suggestions and recommendations were found for the use of tutors and tutoring sessions, however, no research was found to determine if schools utilizing tutors do so in the manners suggested by the literature. The findings of this study contribute to the existing research on tutors and tutoring. Specifically, it contributes to the research on how tutors are utilized in schools and if they are utilized in the manner suggested by the literature. It also contributes to research concerning tutor perceptions of the tutoring program.

Based on the findings of this study and the review of literature, I concluded that the tutoring programs in Northeast Mississippi could be improved. One suggestion is that there should be training for tutors before they begin tutoring and on-going training throughout the year. Also, tutoring sessions should be regularly monitored and feedback about those sessions should be provided to the tutors. Additionally, even though one-to-one tutoring is not a feasible strategy for most schools, everything possible should be done to at least try to ensure small group tutoring. One other suggested improvement is that administrators and tutoring supervisors should remain abreast of current research dealing with tutoring.

Even though the findings of this study do answer the questions set forth in the purposes of this study, they also brought out additional questions concerning the area of tutoring. This suggests the need for further research. Based on this conclusion, this researcher suggests the following recommendations:

1. Future studies could examine the effects of tutoring on self-concept. Some of the tutors in this study indicated that students improved in the area of self-concept; however, little research has been conducted recently to discern if this is true.
2. Future studies could examine whether or not rewarding students for improvement makes a difference in their performance. Some of the participants in this study indicated the use of rewards or incentives as a means of encouraging the tutee.
3. Future studies could examine if pull-out programs are more effective than tutoring in the regular classroom. Some of the participants in this study indicated that pull-out programs tended to be better for tutoring success.
4. Future studies could examine the timing of tutoring programs and when it is most effective for the tutoring sessions to occur. Some of the participants in this study indicated that tutees did not like missing class. This might tend to make a tutee less receptive to tutoring.
5. Future studies could examine whether or not most tutors have educational backgrounds and experience and the impact of that experience on the effectiveness of tutoring programs. The majority of the tutors in this study did

have educational experiences and backgrounds. However, it is not know if this is true in all schools who utilize tutors.

6. Future studies could examine whether or not schools in areas other than Northeast Mississippi utilize the components of phonics, decoding, and phonemic awareness in third and fourth grades. Some of the participants in this study indicated the use of these reading components in third and fourth grades. However, it is not known if this is also true in other schools who utilize tutors.

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APPENDIX A

SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL REQUEST

May 31, 2009

Dear superintendent and school board members:

As a researcher currently pursuing my doctoral degree, I am currently conducting a study titled Kindergarten through Third Grade Reading Tutors in Northeast Mississippi. Due to the lack of available literature regarding this topic, I have developed a questionnaire regarding prior teaching experience, educational focus of tutoring and the materials used, training, organization of tutoring sessions, grade level(s) and subject(s) tutors work in, and tutor perceptions about the tutoring program. The intent of the questionnaire is to gather information concerning these areas of interest about the reading tutor as well as the tutoring sessions. This study will have to be approved by Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews all research on human subjects, before any actual research is collected. However, I need to obtain consent from your institution for the IRB application.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would allow this research to be conducted in your school district. I am enclosing a copy of the questionnaire for you to review. I am asking that you please either allow me to come to your K-3 schools and meet with your reading tutors for them to answer the questionnaire or permit the school principal to receive and distribute the questionnaires to reading tutors within your schools. To maintain privacy and confidentiality, names will not be placed on the questionnaires. In addition, participation in completing the questionnaire is completely voluntary. By allowing the reading tutors to provide the requested information, you will be helping to provide more literature about the valuable use and components of tutoring. Please let me know whether or not you will allow this research to be conducted in your school district. If you will allow this research, please inform me of the names of your K-3 schools in your district. I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to allow your tutors to participate in this research study. If there are any questions or you need any information pertaining to this study, please feel free to contact me at 662-492-0676, Fax: 6624947404, or *awilliams@clay.k12.ms.us*.

Sincerely,

Angela Williams

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

July 1, 2009

Dear superintendent and school board members:

This is a follow up letter to inquire about my request to survey your tutors in the fall. I mailed letters and a copy of the survey at the beginning of June. I am checking to see if you received the information because I have not received a response from you. If you did not receive the envelope, I can send the information again. Please respond to let me know if I need to resend the information or if it is possible for me to survey your tutors.

As stated in the letter, I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in education and am writing my dissertation on the exploratory study of Kindergarten through third grade reading tutors in Northeast Mississippi. All names and districts will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time. For further information, you can contact me at 662-492-0676(H), 662-494-7407(F), awilliams@clay.k12.ms.us, or 1181 Lone Oak Road, West Point, MS 39773.

The only information I need at this point is something in writing with your letterhead stating that you would or would not allow me to survey your tutors this fall. Please email or fax your response. 662-494-7407(F), awilliams@clay.k12.ms.us. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Angela Williams

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT OR PRINCIPAL TO BE INCLUDED IN QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET

January 11, 2010

Dear superintendent or principal,

I want to thank you again for allowing me to conduct research concerning tutors and tutor perceptions in your school district.

Please distribute the enclosed questionnaires and envelopes to the tutors in your school. It would be greatly appreciated if you would request that the questionnaires be returned within 3-5 days. Please remind the tutors that there should be no names put on the questionnaires to maintain confidentiality and also that they are to place the completed questionnaire in the provided envelope and seal it before returning it to the school principal. Please make it known that participation is completely voluntary and any questions may be skipped if the participant does not wish to answer them.

When the questionnaires (or the majority) are collected, please enclose them in the self-addressed stamped envelope and return to the researcher.

Thank you,

Angela Williams

APPENDIX D

TUTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

January 11, 2010

Dear reading tutors,

My name is Angela Williams and I am a doctoral student currently working on my dissertation at Mississippi State University. My dissertation is about K-3 reading tutors and their perceptions. I am currently conducting a study titled Kindergarten through Third Grade Reading Tutors in Northeast Mississippi. This study is to find out about tutors and tutor use in K-3 classrooms in Northeast Mississippi schools, therefore, I have developed a questionnaire regarding prior teaching experience, educational focus of tutoring and the materials used, training, organization of tutoring sessions, grade level(s) and subject(s) tutors work in, and tutor perceptions about the tutoring program. The intent of the questionnaire is to gather information concerning these areas of interest. This study has been approved by Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews all research on human subjects prior to any research being conducted.

Answering this questionnaire is completely voluntary, but it would be greatly appreciated if you would engage in a few minutes of your valuable time to complete this questionnaire. The questions should not require a great deal of time to complete. I am asking that you please complete and return the questionnaire to the school principal within two weeks of receiving it. To maintain your privacy and confidentiality please do not put your name on the questionnaire. In addition, you may skip any items that you choose not to answer.

If you would kindly take a few minutes to complete and return this questionnaire, you will be helping to provide more literature about the valuable use and components of tutoring. To maintain confidentiality, you have been provided an envelope to place your completed questionnaire in before you return it to the principal at your school.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this research study. You may keep this letter for your records. If there are any questions or you need any information pertaining to this study, please feel free to contact me at 662-492-0676, fax 662-494-7407, or email me at awilliams@clay.k12.ms.us. You may also contact my

advisors at Mississippi State University. Their contact information is Nancy Verhoek-Miller, nverhoek-miller@colled.msstate.edu, or 662-325-3747 or Devon Brenner, devon@ra.msstate.edu, or 662-325-7119.

Sincerely,

Angela Williams

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

For each item, please put an X beside the appropriate choices.

1. Gender:

Male____ Female____

2. Age:

18-25__ 26-33__ 34-41__ 42-49__ 50-57__ 58-65__ 66+__

3. Do you have any prior classroom teaching experience?

Yes __ No __

If yes, in what capacity?

Retired ___ Teacher's assistant___ other (please specify) _____

How many years? 1-5 __ 6-10 __ 11-15 __ 16-20 __ 21-25 __ 26+___

4. Among what grade level(s) have you had experience?
K-8 ___ 9-12 ___ other (please specify) _____

5. How many years of tutoring experience do you have?

0-5 ___ 6-10 ___ 11-15 ___ 16-20 ___ 21-25 ___ 26+___

TUTOR INFORMATION

For each item, please put an X by the appropriate answers. Check all that apply.

6. What grade level(s) do you tutor? _____

How many students do you normally tutor at one time? _____

7. Besides reading, what other subjects do you tutor?

None _____ Math _____ Writing_____ Language / English_____

Other (please specify) _____

8. Where do you conduct your tutoring sessions?

The regular classroom (during regular class)? ____

A room other than the regular classroom? _____

A place other than the regular classroom?____ (please specify where)

_____

9. Are students taken out of class for tutoring?

Yes___ No___

If yes, what subject(s) are they pulled from? _____

10. How long is your tutoring period?

0-15 minutes _____ 16-30 minutes _____ 31-45 minutes_____

More than 45 minutes_____

11. How many days a week do you tutor?

1___ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____

Is it before school? ___ during school? ___ after school? ___

12. Did you receive training for your tutoring/interventionist duties prior to beginning tutoring? Yes___ No___

If yes, how many hours? ___

What type of training?

Phonics___ Phonemic Awareness___ Reading First___ Title I___
Comprehension___ Fluency___ Other (please specify) _____

Who delivered the training?

Principal__ Teacher__ Other (please specify) _____

13. Do you receive any ongoing training?

Yes___ No___

If yes, how often?

weekly____ monthly___ other (please specify) _____

14. Are you observed during your tutoring sessions and given feedback?

Yes___ No___

If yes, by whom?

Principal__ Teacher__ Other (please specify) _____

15. What is focused on in your tutoring sessions and how often?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Reading Comprehension					
Fluency					
Phonics / Decoding					
Phonemic Awareness					
Test prep					
Homework					
Completing classroom instruction					
Other (please specify)					

16. What materials do you use in your tutoring sessions and how often?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Children's literature					
Leveled readers					
Worksheets					
Class textbooks / workbooks					
Internet					
Technology / software (please specify)					
Supplemental materials (please specify)					
Other (please specify)					

17. What do you perceive as strengths/weaknesses in the tutoring program? Why?

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

18. How do you assess the progress of your students? _____

_____

In what areas do you feel they are making improvements?

_____

_____

19. What suggestions, if any, do you have for tutoring program improvements?

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. Was there anything not addressed in this questionnaire that you would like to address?

_____

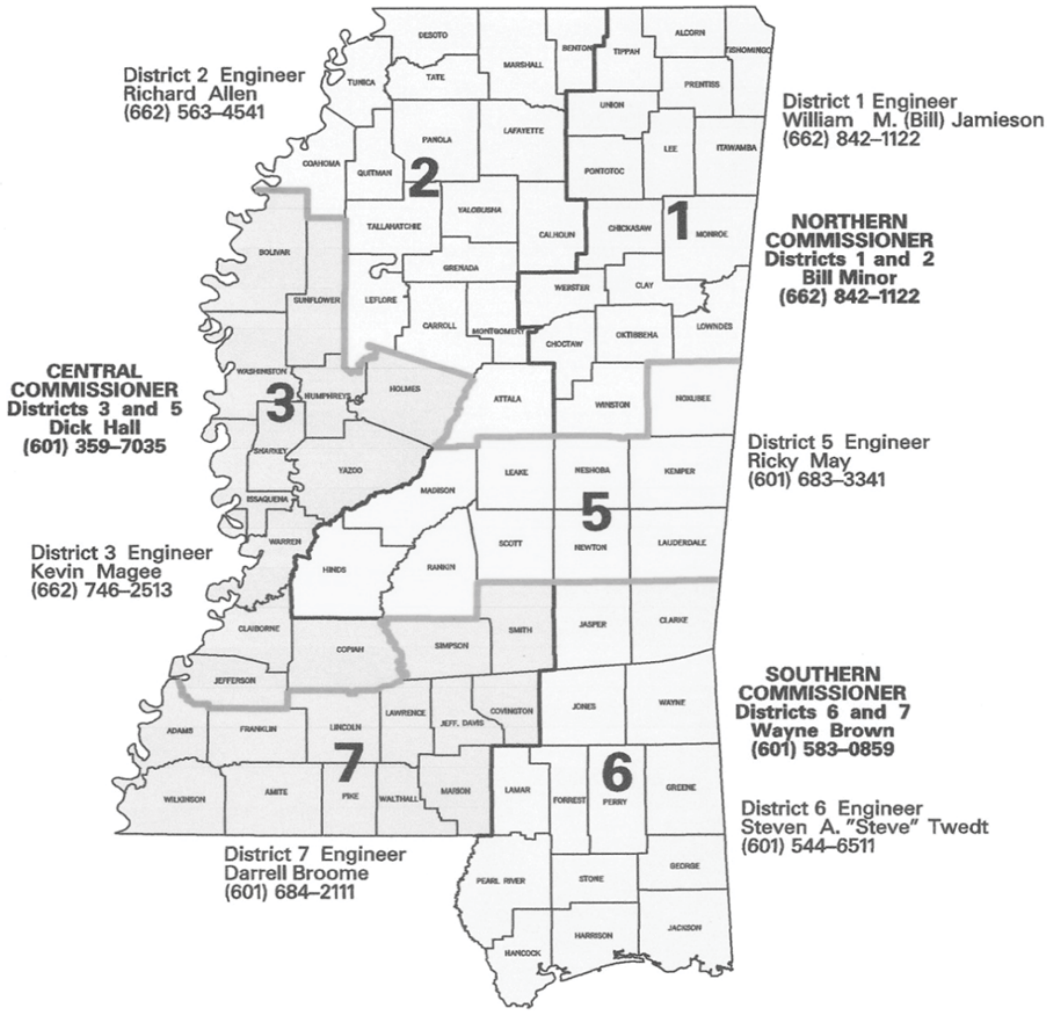
_____

_____

_____

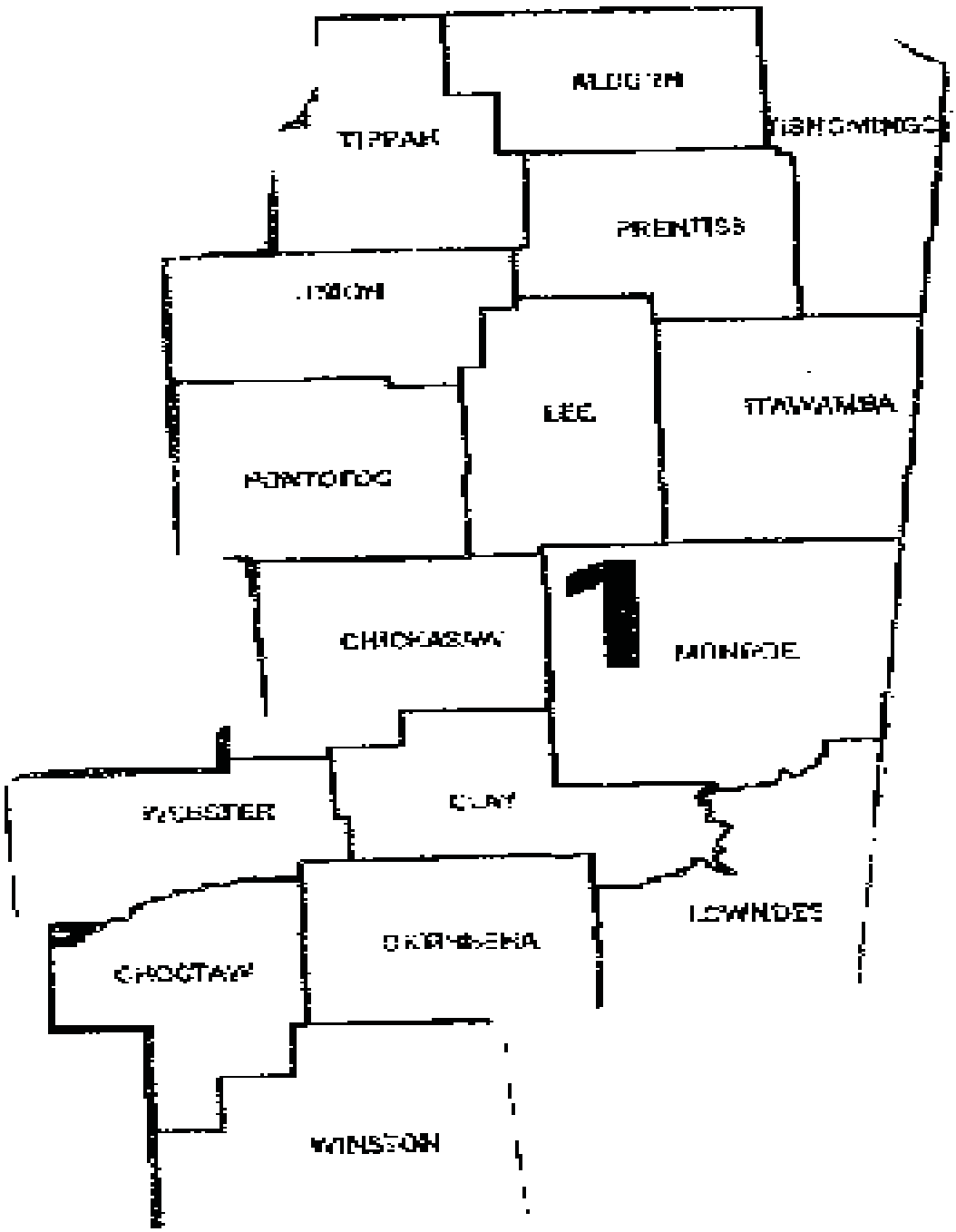
APPENDIX E

COMMISSIONER MAP OF MISSISSIPPI (MDOT)


District 2 Engineer
Richard Allen
(662) 563–4541
District 1 Engineer
William M. (Bill) Jamieson
(662) 842–1122
NORTHERN
COMMISSIONER
Districts 1 and 2
Bill Minor
(662) 842–1122
CENTRAL
COMMISSIONER
Districts 3 and 5
Dick Hall
(601) 359–7035
District 5 Engineer
Ricky May
(601) 683–3341
District 3 Engineer
Kevin Magee
(662) 746–2513
SOUTHERN
COMMISSIONER
Districts 6 and 7
Wayne Brown
(601) 583–0859
District 6 Engineer
Steven A. "Steve" Twedt
(601) 544–6511
District 7 Engineer
Darrell Broome
(601) 684–2111
DESOTO
MARSHALL
BENTON
TIPPAH
ALCORN
TISHOMINGO
TUNICA
TATE
PRENTISS
UNION
LAFAYETTE
PANOLA
LEE
ITAWAMBA
COAHOMA
QUITMAN
2
PONTOTOC
YALOBUSHA
1
TALLAHATCHIE
CALHOUN
CHICKASAW
MONROE
BOLIVAR
GRENADA
WEBSTER
CLAY
SUNFLOWER
LEFLORE
CARROLL
MONTGOMERY
CHOCTAW
OKTIBBEHA
LOWNDES
WASHINGTON
HUMPHREYS
HOLMES
ATTALA
WINSTON
NOXUBEE
3
SHARKEY
YAZOO
LEAKE
NESHOBA
KEMPER
MADISON
ISSAQUENA
5
WARREN
SCOTT
NEWTON
LAUDERDALE
HINDS
RANKIN
CLAIBORNE
SMITH
JASPER
CLARKE
COPIAH
SIMPSON
JEFFERSON
COVINGTON
JONES
WAYNE
ADAMS
FRANKLIN
LINCOLN
LAWRENCE
JEFF. DAVIS
7
6
WILKINSON
AMITE
PIKE
WALTHALL
MARION
LAMAR
FORREST
PERRY
GREENE
PEARL RIVER
STONE
GEORGE
HARRISON
JACKSON
HANCOCK

APPENDIX F

CLOSE-UP VIEW OF NORTHEAST COUNTIES


ALCORN
TIPPAH
PRENTISS
LEE
ITAWAMBA
PONTOTOC
CHICKASAW
MONROE
WEBSTER
CLAY
LOWNDES
CHOCTAW
OKTIBBEHA
WINSTON