

WHY CAN'T WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
A STUDY OF READING INSTRUCTION
IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Lauren A. Kazmark for the degree of Doctor of Education in the Department of Education presented May 2010.

Title: WHY CAN'T WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE? A STUDY OF READING INSTRUCTION IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Reading initiatives in urban school districts are often implemented as a result of poor student achievement. This study sought to examine factors that affect the success of reading initiatives in an urban school district. Teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership, and grade configuration were investigated as possible factors affecting the successful implementation of reading initiatives in one urban school district. The external research indicated that these four factors were linked to classroom instruction, student learning, and student achievement, and therefore affected the implementation of reading initiatives. Third and fourth grade teachers, literacy coaches, and principals from four elementary schools participated in this study. Two of the participating schools had achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, as measured by the 2008 NJASK 3 and 4, while the two remaining schools were labeled Schools in Need of Improvement. The outcomes of this dissertation defined connections between self-efficacy, expectations for students, school level leadership, grade configuration and not only student achievement but the successful implementation of the reading initiative. These connections were evidenced by feedback from teachers, literacy coaches, and principals, classroom observations, and test data. Analysis revealed differences in self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, the role of the school leaders, and perceptions regarding grade configuration between the two successful schools and the two schools in need of improvement.

DEDICATION

The path to the completion of this doctorate program has been nothing like I planned. Looking back on this journey there are several people I must dedicate this accomplishment to. First and foremost, I could not have completed this without the support of my family. My mother's encouragement and excitement was infectious and helped motivate me as I spent hours writing and rewriting. My brother's sense of humor and support helped me push through the days I didn't think I would make it through. I would be remiss if I didn't thank my father, who lost his battle with cancer during my time in this program. His courage, strength, and resilience were an inspiration and helped me to persevere. His encouragement and faith in my writing ability has driven me to meet both personal and professional goals.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Reading initiatives have been a focus of educational reform for years. Phonics-based instruction, whole language, and most recently balanced literacy have been popular primary reading initiatives over the last forty years. There is countless research supporting and criticizing each reading initiative, and both favorable and unsuccessful results when following through on these best practices. What accounts for differences in student achievement? Why are some schools with high populations of disadvantaged students successful while others with similar demographics and the same reading initiatives are not? For American educators the obstacles are apparent, but the answers remain a mystery. To begin closing the achievement gap educators must first understand the causes and factors that impact it, and begin to modify their practices to empower students. This study investigates the success of primary reading initiatives, through the context of an urban low-performing district.

Reading initiatives often come to urban school districts in the form of mandates and can be costly and time consuming to implement. Whole School Reform is an example of a significant mandate that affected many urban school districts. Whole-school reform (also known as comprehensive school reform) is a process that seeks to simultaneously change all elements of a school's operating environment so those elements align with a central, guiding vision (Hertling, 2000). The ultimate goal, of course, is to improve student performance (Hertling, 2000). Success for All is an example of one whole school reform model. As of 2003 this program was adopted in approximately 1,500 schools in 500 districts in 48 states throughout the United States (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). Most Success for All schools served high poverty communities, with an average of 80 percent of children qualifying for free or reduced meals. Success for All uses a

reading curriculum based on research and effective practices in beginning reading and the effective use of cooperative learning. Although evaluation of the Success for All program showed improved reading among the participants significant effects were not seen on every measure at every grade level (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). As a result, reading initiatives in urban school districts have expanded, and Whole School Reform has been replaced in many districts. Although numerous reading initiatives have produced pockets of success, no instruction model has been able to achieve widespread accomplishments, and many urban districts still struggle with raising district student achievement statistics over sixty-five percent (Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008).

The population characteristics of Urban America differ significantly from the characteristics of the country as a whole. For instance, the population of cities more likely consists of African American, Hispanic, and poor families. One quarter of urban residents are poor and one quarter are minorities, compared with sixteen to seventeen percent nationally (Flood & Anders, 2002). Urban school districts are often described by five main characteristics. These schools are often located in urban areas, have high rates of poverty, high proportions of students of color and students with Limited English Proficiency, and these schools are often designated as “High Need” or “Schools in Need of Improvement” (Gorski, 2008). In 1961 Oscar Lewis used the term “culture of poverty” in his book The Children of Sanchez. His studies uncovered approximately fifty attributes shared within these communities: frequent violence, a lack of a sense of history, and a neglect of planning for the future were several examples. Unfortunately, much of these attributes were constructed from a collection of stereotypes, which however false, seem to have crept into mainstream thinking as unquestioned fact (Gorski, 2008). Regardless of the misconceptions that exist, it is impossible to deny that low income families lack access to health

care, living wage jobs, safe and affordable housing, and clean air and water. Comparisons of reading scores at both the national and state levels show disparities between low-income students and their more affluent counterparts (Gorski, 2008).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) conducts long-term trend assessments, which provide information on changes in the basic achievement of America's youth since the early 1970s. They are administered nationally and report student performance at ages nine, thirteen, and seventeen in reading and mathematics (Department of Education, 2008a). National reading scores from 2007 show an interesting trend for specific demographic groups. At ages nine and thirteen, Caucasian students score at least twenty-one points higher than African-American and Hispanic students (Department of Education, 2008a). This gap widens as students reach seventeen years old, with a twenty-nine-point difference between Caucasian students and their African-American and Hispanic peers (Department of Education, 2008a).

In 2007 the average scaled score in reading for New Jersey's fourth grade students was 231, eleven points higher than the national average (Department of Education, 2008a). However similar to national trends, both African-American and Hispanic students scored approximately twenty-five points lower than their Caucasian peers (Department of Education, 2007). In addition, to these grim statistics it was found that students who are eligible for free and reduced cost lunch, a proxy for poverty, scored twenty-seven points lower on reading assessments than those who did not qualify (Department of Education, 2007).

It has been established that reading initiatives are often developed as a result of poor student achievement, which may be a symptom of a deeper problem. Peter Senge (2000) encourages educators to use systems thinking to see an event, such as poor student achievement, as the tip of an iceberg.

The visible part of the iceberg looks massive and threatening, but most of it is hidden by the surface of the ocean. You cannot navigate around it unless you can somehow penetrate the mysterious ocean and see the structure that holds aloft the visible tip. (p. 81)

Employing systems thinking allows the individual to shift from the perception of a situation as a series of unrelated events, to one that views the underlying patterns that connect them (Senge, 2000). Reading initiatives often result from poor student achievement. What if poor student achievement was the tip of the iceberg, leaving the most threatening cause below the surface? If this is true, reading initiatives may be a band-aid for the most visible problem, and the actual cause may remain below the surface, never to be recognized or addressed.

A potential cause lurking below the surface may be teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as, people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance (Bandura, 1986). Teachers interact with students on a daily basis and therefore the responsibility for the implementation of the initiative is squarely on them. It seems obvious that a teacher's belief in his or her own abilities will impact the delivery of instruction. This is supported by Carol Lyons and Gay Su Pinnell (2001) who believe adult learners:

bring their knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions to new experiences and construct new knowledge or refine previous understanding to gain meaning. In order to gain this meaning, learners must be motivated to learn and must actively engage in the process. (p. 3)

This requires ownership, self-regulation, problem solving, and reflection. The teacher must understand that problems are not someone else's to solve. They are an obstacle the teacher must

overcome to achieve the goal (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). A common theory of teacher self-efficacy is that teachers' beliefs in their own abilities influence positive student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Senge (2000) describes the concept of personal mastery. Personal mastery represents a balance between one's vision and the current reality.

This dual awareness of -what you want and what you have- often creates a state of tension that, by its nature seeks resolution. The most natural desired resolution of this tension is for your reality to move closer to what you want. (p. 59)

People who exhibit the discipline of personal mastery are continually expanding their abilities to grow and create (Isaacson & Bamburg, 1992). The practice of personal mastery is most often done through self-reflection. As teachers refine their vision and gain awareness of their current reality the tension between the two grows stronger, and the individual works harder to move the current reality (Senge, 2000). Teachers who engage in reflection may begin to realize their direct influence over the success of reading initiatives.

Teacher self-efficacy may affect the delivery of instruction, but so might teacher expectations for their students, another potential cause concealed under the iceberg. High expectations are especially important when working with low-income students. For example, Paul Gorski (2008) found that even the most well intentioned teachers could be led into low expectations when working with low-income students. For example, one teacher in an urban school stated: "I love these kids, I adore them. But my hope is fading. They're smart. I know they're smart, but...they don't care about school. They're unmotivated and (they're) unprepared to learn" (Gorski, 2008, p. 32). Research shows that high adult expectations for low-income youth may serve a critical role in their educational success (Benner & Mistry, 2007). Benner and Mistry (2007) found that

high teacher expectations have a generative effect on student achievement. Conversely, low expectations have a disruptive effect on student achievement.

School-level leadership such as the principal or building administrator, may greatly influence the success of a reading initiative, and could be another possible cause hidden at the bottom of the iceberg. “If school leaders believe that literacy is a priority, then they have a personal responsibility to understand literacy instruction, define it for their colleagues, and observe it daily” (Reeves, 2008, p. 91). Unfortunately, in many schools, administrators do not have an understanding of the essential elements of effective literacy instruction (Reeves, 2008). Inconsistent instruction and disconnect between teachers and principals are often the result. Moreover, Reeves (2008) found that when teachers were engaging in practices that were unsupported by research and contrary to district policy, the reasons were sometimes found not in willful insubordination but in lack of clear leadership.

Additionally, the grade configuration of a school may positively or negatively influence the success of a reading initiative, and could be a possible cause disguised under the iceberg. Superintendent Paul Doyle says, “There are pluses and minuses with every grade configuration” (Reeves, 2005). Grade configuration changes are done for a variety of reasons, some for financial or enrollment purposes. Recently many school districts are citing academic achievement as the driving factor behind changes in grade configurations (Reeves, 2005). Rochester Superintendent, Manuel Rivera, defended his grade configuration proposal by stating:

I firmly believe that a change in the grade configuration of our schools was necessary for substantial academic improvement to occur. This change alone will not improve student performance, but I firmly believe it is in the best interest of our students and will set the stage for substantial achievement. (Reeves, 2005, p. 16)

Preliminary research within the district suggested that the various grade configurations might impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives. Perceptions of the staff seems to indicate that in smaller schools with fewer grades it is easier to focus the staff around a common initiative. As a result, schools that service students in grades K-4 versus grades K-8 might implement reading initiatives in different ways, which may contribute to the success of the initiative.

Teacher self-efficacy, support from school level leadership, teacher expectations of students, and the grade configuration of a school may greatly influence the success of a reading initiative in an urban school district. Teachers, who acknowledge the obstacles in front of them, develop a clear vision, and a keen understanding of the current reality may have more success with reading initiatives than their non-reflective, potentially disengaged colleagues. In addition, school leaders who are knowledgeable and supportive of reading initiatives may foster motivation and participation for the reading initiative among their teaching staff. Furthermore, the grade configuration of a school may affect how reading initiatives are implemented. Guided by systems thinking, this study looks beyond the tip of the iceberg, poor student achievement, and considers the impact of teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, school level leadership, and the grade configuration of a school on the success of reading initiatives.

The Problem

Primary educators in the United States are met with countless challenges and an exorbitant amount of pressure each day. These educators must walk the line between teacher, parent, coach, counselor, and friend to each and every student. As the academic rigor increases so do the external pressures on both students and educators. This is especially true in regards to teaching reading. Beginning in the mid- 1960's, the debate over reading instruction heated up. The United

States Office of Education published comparative research on reading instruction models and argued that learning to read was the single most important skill students in kindergarten through second grade master (Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, Massengill, 2005). From that research, two basic views of reading were formed: a skills-based approach (Phonics Based), which emphasized phonics, and a meaning-based approach (Whole Language), which emphasized reading comprehension and enrichment (Frey, et al., 2005).

The term balanced literacy, originated in California in 1996 in response to low reading scores on a national assessment (Frey, et al., 2005). The approach is scientifically based and considers the essential elements and effective practices that are necessary to help children achieve literacy. The National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000), states that the essential elements for learning to read include instruction in, phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. These areas are all interdependent on one another, no one being more important than the other. These five areas must be embedded in effective instruction that scaffolds the learner through the gradual release of teacher support. The NRP reports that in a balanced literacy program, a variety of formal and informal assessments guide individual and group instruction, which is differentiated based on each student's needs (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2006). Since the call for balanced literacy instruction, much debate has ensued over which elements of reading and writing must be balanced in order to promote literacy. Teaching reading and learning to read are complex endeavors (Taberski, 2000), and as a result primary-grade teachers have an important dual challenge. They need to teach children how to read, but also how to fall in love with reading (Collins, 2004).

Statistics on the literacy skills of children in the United States are alarming. Approximately 40 percent of students across the nation cannot read at a basic level, and for low-income students,

the data is much worse (Department of Education, 2002). In response to these figures, federal and state government, in addition to, independent organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), have organized efforts to improve primary reading instruction in the United States.

In 1997, Congress asked the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to form a panel to analyze and assess the diverse methods for teaching reading (Brynidssen, 2002). The National Reading Panel (NRP) conducted a two-year study where, over one hundred thousand studies on how children learn to read were evaluated and input from policymakers, educators, and parents across the nation were solicited (Brynidssen, 2002).

The NRP's findings were published in April of 2000, and were pivotal in the development of Reading First, the literacy component of President Bush's 2001 "No Child Left Behind" Act (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2006). Reading First provides financial support to schools that are using scientifically based reading research to ensure that all students in kindergarten through third grade learn to read. Grants are provided to schools that teach the following five key early reading skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension and show promise of raising student achievement through effective reading instruction (Department of Education, 2008b).

Federal reading reform programs such as Reading First, in addition to state reform programs, aim to increase student achievement and improve classroom instruction, especially in urban school systems that serve economically disadvantaged, often minority students. Although well intentioned, these initiatives often do not achieve the intended success. Results from the Reading First Impact Study (Department of Education, 2008b) revealed that although instructional time in the five essential components of reading instruction increased, there was no significant

improvement in students' reading comprehension scores. In fact, in each of the three grades (first, second, and third) fewer than half of the students in the Reading First schools were reading at or above grade level (Department of Education, 2008b).

There are many ongoing state reading initiatives that have been developed in response to Reading First. While they vary in approach, scope, and success, most share similar instructional concepts. Brynidssen (2002) reported that the Education Commission of the States (2001) found that the most common strategies used by state programs are 1) preventing and intervening with reading difficulties; 2) imposing consequences for students who do not meet reading standards; 3) promoting or mandating particular reading approaches or programs; 4) providing additional or better data; 5) providing teachers with skills and knowledge; 6) setting standards, developing reading plans; and 7) assessing readiness for school (Brynidssen, 2002).

Alabama began a state effort in 1997, which employed the above strategies in urban school districts. The Alabama Reading Initiative was created in response to statistics, which showed that more than 97,000 of the state's third- through eleventh-grade students scored in the lowest quarter of the nation in reading (Brynidssen, 2002). The resulting strategy for improvement is scientifically based and focuses on three areas. The first, Beginning Reading, emphasizes development of phonemic awareness and systematic teaching of language decoding skills. The second, Expanding Reading Power, aims to maintain high literacy levels in middle and high school students through ongoing vocabulary development, increased reading, and building explicit links between reading and writing (Brynidssen, 2002). Alabama's third area of focus is Effective Intervention, which identifies and provides specialized instruction for children who are reading below grade level (Brynidssen, 2002).

An evaluation of the Alabama program, conducted in its second year, showed that statewide students in the participating schools had made gains on the Stanford Reading Test (Brynidssen, 2002). However, Carter (2007) found that there were no differences in reading scores delineated by demographic factors, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity among second and third grade students.

The Missouri Reading Initiative mandated the adoption of a balanced literacy program in schools that were not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The intention was to place a greater emphasis on reading in the primary grades. Schools participated in three years of professional development, yet various schools did not achieve the desired results (Hoover, 2006). Vicki Lynn Hoover (2006) evaluated the implementation of balanced literacy in kindergarten. The findings indicated that there were differences in the quality of instruction and in implementing the components from teacher to teacher. Additionally, Hoover (2006) found that the greatest weaknesses of the initiative were the lack of teacher commitment to the program and the philosophical differences between teachers and the program.

Reading First grants are provided to states and school districts, like the ones described above, with the greatest demonstrated need in terms of reading proficiency and poverty status (Department of Education, 2008b). Typically these school systems are already dealing with the effects of poverty, crime, and drugs. Unfortunately, too often the focus is then shifted to test scores, Annual Yearly Progress, insufficient teachers, inadequate leaders, and instructional fads that come and go with the changing of each school year. As a result these reading initiatives are often unsuccessful resulting in an ever widening achievement gap. As these urban school

districts struggle with meeting the diverse needs of their student populations, the stakes get higher, the bar continues to be raised, and the number of struggling readers continues to grow.

The literacy achievement gap refers to the disparity in academic performance between different groups, different for example, in income, cultural background, or gender (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007). In the United States as a group, children from poverty backgrounds score significantly lower in reading and writing than children from middle and high income backgrounds (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007). Furthermore, a similar gap exists between African American and Latino students and their higher scoring Caucasian peers (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007). In 2005, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) studied fourth and eighth grade reading achievement in eleven urban districts. Results showed that most of the existing gaps are significantly larger for urban students than for the overall student population. For instance, results for fourth grade showed a five-point discrepancy between the national poverty/non-poverty gap (27) and the urban poverty/ non-poverty gap (32) (Department of Education, 2005). Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman (2007) found that comprehension instruction, writing instruction, and background knowledge in the primary grades was compromised to accommodate instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, and fluency in urban schools. They concluded that the absence of these essential reading components resulted in lower reading and writing scores for these urban students (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007).

Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman's (2007) finding support Louise Rosenblatt's (1995) reading theory, which is based on the belief that comprehension and background knowledge are essential to students' reading success. Rosenblatt's theory of reading was developed from examining the reciprocal nature of the literary experience. She proceeded to explain why meaning might neither be "in" the text nor "in" the reader. Each reading may be an event involving a particular reader

and a particular text under particular circumstances (Rosenblatt, 1995). Rosenblatt (1995) theorized that teachers play a pivotal role in how students respond to text. Teachers affect the students' sense of society. Teachers foster general ideas or theories about human nature, conduct, moral attitudes, and responses to human behavior. Awareness of the children's backgrounds and experiences that affect their reactions allows teachers to help children handle their responses and achieve increasingly balanced literacy experiences (Rosenblatt, 1995). Through discussion and demonstration children identify a purpose for reading. This purpose helps them approach a text and maximize their reading successes. Rosenblatt (1995) believes that readers draw on life experiences in order to understand texts. When children relate to texts they are able to recognize meaning allowing them to have greater success with reading.

Richard Rothstein, (2008) claims that until people are willing to accept poverty as a contributing factor to poor student achievement; the achievement gap will continue to widen. Rothstein (2008) found that in general, poor children are not read aloud to as often and not exposed to complex language or large vocabularies. They typically receive more arbitrary discipline. The neighborhoods that these children walk through have more crime and drugs, and fewer adult role models with professional careers. Additionally Rothstein (2008) found that poor children may have limited experiences, which can affect their background knowledge (Rothstein, 2008).

Applying Rosenblatt's (1995) theory to Rothstein's (2008) findings one can infer that gaps in essential early literacy skills combined with limited background knowledge can result in the academic performance of economically disadvantaged students being well below that of their wealthier peers from the moment they start school. This is supported by research, which shows a correlation between socio-economic status and achievement on language arts literacy

assessments (Roether-Pearce, 2007). Student achievement statistics often place students into categories based on their eligibility for free/reduced lunch. Through her research Sharon Roether-Pearce (2007) found a connection between high achievement levels and low percentages of students eligible for free/reduced lunch. Consequently schools with greater numbers of students eligible for free/reduced lunch often carried the label of Schools in Need of Improvement. Many Schools in Need of Improvement are struggling to implement reading initiatives with fidelity while combating the effects of poverty. Why are some schools or classrooms successful while others with similar circumstances are not?

Context Of The Problem

The district represented in this research study is in a city located in Northern New Jersey, approximately fifteen miles west of New York City. Although this was once a city with a thriving economy the loss of silk factories has left a lasting impression on the city. The median household income is \$32,778, leaving twenty-two percent of the population living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The Public School System delivers educational services to approximately 29,000 students in grades Pre-K through 12. Of the thirty-seven elementary schools there are eight different grade configurations. The district's students are among the poorest in the state, and according to the school district's website seventy-five percent of students qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch. The district has been under state control since 1991.

Student achievement continues to be a struggle for this district. It is estimated that approximately fifty percent of high school students drop out each year. High School graduates make up only 58.5% of the population, and a mere 8.2% hold Bachelor's degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). It is well known that parents' level of education is a predictor for students'

academic success (Hannaway, 2005). Too often this, combined with the implications from living in poverty, result in students coming to school with limited experiences, academic pre-readiness skills, and the background knowledge necessary to transfer what they are learning.

Like many districts, increasing student achievement has been a priority for this district for years. Recently a commitment was made to ensuring that children gain a foundation in early reading skills. The district spent millions of dollars on an Intensive Early Literacy Initiative that's goal had been to make certain that all students learn to read by grade three. Balanced literacy, the philosophy adopted by the district, is an approach to reading instruction that provides a rich variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities through whole group, small group, and independent instruction that are designed to meet the needs of all children.

The district has invested a great deal of time and energy in the form of professional development and teacher training in balanced literacy. Each elementary school employed a literacy coach, who facilitated grade level meetings and data team meetings, conducted model lessons, assisted teachers with implementing best practices, and conducted turnkey training. In addition to building based literacy coaches, there were three district level literacy coaches who worked with the buildings and assisted literacy coaches and principals with the implementation of district initiatives. Job-embedded training was part of the district professional development plan. Teachers and literacy coaches received out of classroom training, in addition to classroom demonstrations, and follow-up sessions. All professional development activities have been aligned to the New Jersey Professional Development Standards, which encourage schools and school districts to create professional development opportunities that promote data driven

instruction, quality teaching, collaboration, and the use of research-based best practices (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

A plethora of materials such as classroom libraries, core reading programs, supplemental materials, and technology were purchased to support the Intensive Early Literacy Initiative. Additionally, the district has done extensive curriculum revisions that include the adoption of Curriculum Frameworks, Pacing Guides, District Benchmarks, Literacy Block Schedules, and Screening Assessments, which include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Assessment (DIBELS) and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

Additionally, the district has departmentalized literacy and math classrooms for grades three through eight. Therefore there was one teacher for literacy and one teacher for math. One reason this initiative was put into place was to reduce the burden on the teacher, allowing him or her to concentrate on one subject. Additionally departmentalization provided the literacy coach with more opportunities to work with teachers since the number of literacy teachers in many buildings was cut in half. The intention was that with less material to focus on teachers could become experts in a subject area, therefore improving instruction and fostering student learning.

Balanced literacy initiatives throughout the district have been met with sporadic success. A small number of schools have been successful, while others with similar demographics have not. When looking at a comparison of Schools A and B it is evident that the populations of English Language Learners (ELL) are similar (see Table 1). Then what accounts for the disparity in student performance on standardized tests?

Table 1

School Comparison on LAL NJASK 4

	NJ ASK4 LAL 2007-2008	ELL Population
School A	46.7%	44
School B	82%	40
District Average	55.9%	-

Note. **Yellow:** Above District Average **Green:** Below District Average **Blue:** District Average (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009).

The same statistics can be found in classrooms within the same building. Some classrooms within a building have had high levels of achievement as measured by results on the NJ Ask 3 and 4 Language Arts Literacy (LAL) Assessment. Others with the same materials and mandates do not achieve the same results. Classroom A is a fourth grade class, and Classroom B is a third grade class. Both classes are in School B, a K-4 high performing school. When comparing Classroom A and Classroom B it is evident that Classroom A has better results on state assessments than Classroom B (see Table 2).

Table 2

Classroom Comparison on LAL NJASK 3 and 4

	NJ ASK 3 and 4 LAL 2008	ELL Population
Classroom A	89%	40
Classroom B	72%	46
District Average	55.9%	-

Note. **Yellow:** Above District Average **Green:** Below District Average **Blue:** District Average (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009).

These classrooms have the same access to materials, both teachers have been teaching approximately ten years; both classes follow similar curriculum frameworks, receive the same professional development, and have roughly 25 children of similar socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. What accounts for the discrepancy in their performance on standardized tests?

It is unclear as to what accounts for the disparities in these situations, but as district test scores remain low, and the majority of students function below grade level it is imperative that the district investigate possible causes of why district reading initiatives are not successfully implemented consistently.

Purpose Of The Study

The Intensive Early Literacy initiative, which began in 2004, has shown limited progress in student achievement, indicated by both formative and summative assessment data. Possible causes are explored through this research.

Exploratory research suggested that possible causes might include low teacher expectations for student achievement. Preliminary research revealed that many teachers believe that students coming into their classrooms functioning below grade level, and are not likely to catch up. Additional causes may comprise of low teacher self-efficacy. Exploratory research divulged numerous teacher perceptions such as, feeling unequipped to implement district initiatives successfully regardless of the support provided to them. One participant felt that it did not matter how much training was provided if much of what was being asked was unrealistic. Furthermore, preliminary research revealed the impact of school level leadership on the success of reading initiatives. Many teachers commented that without strong leadership there is no follow-through or support for the initiative and the initiative would not produce results. It seems that many felt leadership is the difference between a successful and unsuccessful initiative, as it is entirely

about leadership. Moreover, preliminary research suggested that various grade configurations throughout the district might impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives. Perceptions seem to be that in smaller schools with fewer grades it is easier to focus the staff around a common initiative.

These potential causes serve as the premise for this research study. Thus, the research investigated the impact of teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership, and grade configuration of schools on the implementation of reading initiatives. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine possible causes for why district reading initiatives are not successfully implemented, and provide recommendations for the future.

Problem Statement

Current research supports the notion that teachers and school leaders have a significant role in the implementation of reading initiatives. Preliminary qualitative data suggested that school level leadership could influence the success of a reading initiative. Similarly, teachers may have low expectations for students, as well as their own ability to implement reading initiatives. Finally, various grade configurations at the elementary schools throughout the district may impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

It appears that teachers in this urban Northern New Jersey school district are not implementing district reading initiatives with fidelity in third and fourth grade. This is indicated by exploratory research, which included classroom observations, responses to interview questions and the lack of successful implementation of district reading initiatives, as evidenced by data from district formative assessments and state summative assessments.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does teacher self-efficacy affect the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?
2. To what extent do teacher expectations of student achievement impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?
3. To what extent does school level leadership impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?
4. To what extent does the grade configuration of a school impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives?

The principles of these research questions are supported by external research as possible causation to the problem of unsuccessful implementation of reading initiatives. Albert Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory hypothesizes that expectations, beliefs, self-perceptions, goals, and intentions give shape and direction to behavior. Thus, teachers who believe in their ability to successfully implement an instructional strategy will have a more positive outcome from that implementation than those that are not as confident.

Harry Wong (2001) states that: "(a teacher's) expectations of students will greatly influence their achievement in the classroom and in their lives" (p. 35). Wong (2001) believed that teachers predispose themselves to realize success or failure both personally and with students. Hence, if teachers expect to be successful they are constantly alert and aware of opportunities to be successful. Conversely, if teacher expect students to fail they are constantly looking for justification, proof, and demonstration of that failure.

Michael Fullen's (2001) leadership theory notes that: "leadership that welcomes differences, communicates the urgency of the challenge, and talks about broad possibilities in an inviting way

creates mechanisms that motivate people to reach beyond themselves” (p. 47). Therefore, school leaders who are knowledgeable and supportive regarding reading instruction may have a great impact on teachers’ motivation to implement reading initiatives with fidelity.

Although grade configurations around the country vary, the bottom line is that, it's not necessarily the grade configuration; it's what you're doing in the classroom that is developmentally appropriate (Reeves, 2005). Several recent studies have addressed the issue of configuration and student achievement, and their conclusions, combined with the research on school size, suggest the need to re-examine the popular notion that fewer grades per school is better (Howley, 2002). One study in particular examined the relationship between grade configuration, student behavior, and student achievement (Franklin & Glascock, 1998). Students in elementary (K-6/7), middle (6/7-8/9), secondary (7/8/9-12), and unit (K-12) were examined (Franklin & Glascock, 1998). The researchers found that students in elementary and unit schools out-performed their peers in secondary and middle schools; this was true in both academic performance and behavior (Franklin & Glasscock, 1998). Franklin and Glasscock (1998) concluded that grade configuration is important because it establishes the basic context for the learning environment. Therefore it is imperative school districts keep abreast of research regarding grade configurations, as this may have an effect on the implementation of reading initiatives.

Educational Significance

This is a district that is already dealing with the effects of poverty, crime and drugs, while struggling to improve dismal student achievement statistics. The district has previously invested millions of dollars in an Intensive Early Literacy Initiative, aimed at improving the reading

abilities of the district's youngest learners. Students in kindergarten through fourth grade have been participating in a balanced literacy program for the past four years, and although there are pockets of success, the majority of the district has not seen significant improvement in students' reading abilities.

If it is true that teacher self-efficacy is positively correlated to teacher competence than it is important for districts like the one in question to employ teachers with high self-efficacy. This becomes a struggle because too often teachers with high self-efficacy leave poor performing districts for districts with greater success. A study of New York teachers found that teachers who left the district, or the profession, had a higher level of competency than those who remained (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2001). Studying teacher self-efficacy will support urban low performing districts, like this one with recognizing the importance of teacher self-efficacy, and its effects on student achievement. This study and others like it will enable districts to ensure that building teacher self-efficacy becomes a priority for school improvement planning.

If high teacher expectations positively correlate to improved student achievement, then it is necessary for this district to research teachers' expectations of students. In the world of No Child Left Behind districts struggle to meet AYP. Teachers must realize that their expectations for students shape their instruction, and may ultimately affect student achievement. If teachers believe that student outcome is predetermined or determined by factors beyond their control, they may be less likely to try to reach the student through instructional strategies (Auwarter & Arugnette, 2008). As a result student achievement suffers. As this district examines possible causes for the unsuccessful implementation of reading initiatives, they may find that teacher expectations play an important role. Without high expectations, how can students feel empowered to succeed?

If effective school level leadership is positively correlated to the success of reading initiatives then it is necessary for school districts to commit to increasing school leaders' understanding of reading instruction. Douglas Reeves (2008) encourages school leaders to make a case for consistency in reading instruction, define what good teaching means, and balance the needs for consistency on essentials with the differentiation necessary to meet students' needs. Studying how school leaders affect the success of reading initiatives will help urban low performing districts like this one decide if the support of the school level leader has any effects on the successful implementation of reading initiatives. These school districts can encourage principals and teachers to collaborate so that: "good teaching, effective teaching, is not just about using whatever science says "usually" works best. It is all about finding out what works best for the individual child and the group of children in front of you" (Allington, 2005, p.462).

If grade configuration is correlated to the success of reading initiatives then it is imperative that school districts review current research regarding grade level configurations, and analyze the current grade configurations that exist within their own districts. Mizell, a researcher, told the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education: "In many cases, school system leaders simply fell in line with the national movement for middle schools (and other grade configurations) and responded to its advocates within their school system" (Reeves, 2005, p. 16). Studying the impact grade configuration has on the implementation of reading initiatives will help urban low performing districts like this one understand the effects grade configuration have on reading initiatives. With this understanding the district can make educated decisions regarding reorganization and how it affects the success of reading initiatives. The literature reviewed for this study makes a contribution to professional literature by drawing upon the research for teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership

and grade configuration of schools as they relate to the implementation of reading initiatives.

The study attempts to draw conclusions based on the research, while making comparisons between these areas and their effects on the implementation of reading initiatives. The findings from this study might be transferable to other urban school districts enabling administrators and teachers to look beyond instructional strategies, philosophies, and materials at what may be the underlying cause of the unsuccessful implementation of reading initiatives.

Definition Of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study. These terms are defined for the purpose of this study.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): AYP measures the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state's academic achievement standards to determine if schools are narrowing the achievement gap (New Jersey Department of Education, 2006).

Balanced Literacy: A scientifically and research based philosophy that considers the essential elements of effective practices that are necessary to help children to achieve literacy. These elements include instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Departmentalization: Departmentalization refers to a model where teachers only instruct within one subject area. For example, in one school there are two teachers who both teach third grade. One teacher teaches Language Arts to all of the third graders and the other teacher teaches Mathematics to all of the third graders.

English Language Learners (ELL): Students who are learning English or students whose first language is not English.

Formative Assessment: Formative assessment validates or ensures that the goals of the instruction are being achieved. These evaluations are intended as a basis for improvement (Scriven, 1996).

Grade Configuration of Schools: Grade configuration refers to the specific grades serviced by a particular school. Possible grade configurations in the district used for this study are as follows: Kindergarten, Kindergarten-Second Grade, Kindergarten-Fourth Grade, Kindergarten-Fifth Grade, Kindergarten-Eighth Grade, First-Fifth Grade, First-Eighth Grade, and Fifth-Eighth Grade.

Intensive Early Literacy Initiative (IEL): IEL refers to new materials, instructional strategies, or curriculum additions to the district program for students in kindergarten through third grade.

Literacy Achievement Gap: The literacy achievement gap refers to the disparity in academic performance between different groups, different for example, in income, cultural background, or gender (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007).

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK): NJ ASK is a state assessment of student achievement in language arts, math, and science that was implemented in 2003 to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Schools in Need of Improvement: Schools in Need of Improvement are those schools that have not met proficiency requirements on the NJ ASK.

School Level Leadership: The principal or administrator of a school.

Self-Efficacy: People's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

Summative Assessment: Summative assessment summarizes the development of learners at a particular time.

Teacher Expectation: The teachers' perceptions of what their students can or cannot achieve and what the teacher believes will or will not happen (Wong, 2001).

Chapter 2

Review Of Literature

Each fall, more than three million kindergarten children enroll in public and private schools across the United States (Boyer, 1995). This new generation of students comes from countless neighborhoods; a great diversity of cultures, speaking more languages than most of us could name (Boyer, 1995). The challenge we face in American education today is to ensure that every child will become a confident learner (Boyer, 1995). Patricia Cunningham (2006) articulated the effects poverty appears to have on student achievement:

Poverty is the largest correlate of reading achievement. If you know how many children in a U.S. school qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, you can make a fairly accurate guess about their test scores. Schools with large numbers of poor children seldom achieve their goals for end-of-grade literacy tests. (p. 382)

Regardless of how literacy achievement is measured a universal conclusion has been drawn from countless research studies; a “literacy achievement gap” exists in elementary schools in the United States (Teale & Gambrell, 2007). Students from low-income backgrounds score significantly lower in reading and writing as compared to students from higher income families. Because the students attending urban elementary schools are disproportionately poorer and are often minorities the issue of literacy education in urban school districts is especially significant (Teale & Gambrell, 2007).

Recent statistics report that more than two thirds of students in fourth and eighth grade were unable to read challenging texts successfully (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, Kouzekanani, Bryant, Dickson, Blozis, 2003). As a result, the gap between successful and struggling readers broadens every day, and students who do not learn to read in the primary grades are likely to struggle with

reading instruction throughout their lives (Vaughn et al., 2003). Consequently, effective reading instruction early in students' educational careers is critical.

For urban school districts reading mandates and initiatives such as whole school reform, whole language, and balanced literacy have come and gone, and yet these schools still find their efforts met with pockets of success, but mostly with disappointment and dismal scores on reading assessments. What accounts for the disparities? Why are some schools successful while others struggle? If educators are to answer these questions it is necessary to investigate the factors that positively and negatively impact the success of reading initiatives in urban schools and school districts.

Factors That Negatively Impact Reading Initiatives

After visiting primary grade classrooms and conversing with teachers, curriculum directors, reading specialists, and literacy coaches in urban school systems, Teale and Gambrell (2007) have cited lack of adequate teacher preparation, funding inequity, poverty, high student and teacher mobility, and a home-school disconnect as reasons why urban students have significantly more difficulty reading and writing.

The International Reading Association's volume titled Literacy Development of Students in Urban Schools: Research and Policy discussed the connection between family socioeconomic status and student achievement in reading. Jane Hannaway (2002) focused her research on three ways poverty can affect academic performance of students. It is well documented that parent and family involvement in children's' education influences student achievement (Lee & Burkan, 2002), but Hannaway claims that parent participation is strongly correlated to poverty. Parents who themselves have more human capital, more education, and greater skills are able to convey more to their children (Hannaway, 2002).

The U.S. Department of Education Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort was analyzed by Lee and Burkan (2002). They found that students with the highest socioeconomic status had cognitive scores that were sixty percent (on average) above the scores of the students with the lowest socioeconomic status (Lee & Burkan, 2002). Racial differences were evident as well with African American students scoring twenty-one percent lower, and Hispanic students scoring nineteen percent lower than Caucasian students (Lee & Burkan, 2002). This leads to another factor, which impacts student achievement, but is linked to poverty, out of school experiences.

Disadvantaged youth often experience significant learning loss during summer months often because poor families may be unable to compensate for the school's resources (i.e. computers, books, etc.), and as a result achievement stands still or declines (Hannaway, 2002). Higher family income allows for the purchase of books, computers, educational games, and provides children with the opportunity to attend camp, participate in sports, and go on vacations. Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, and Greathouse (1996) found that the impact of summer vacation for students with lower socioeconomic status equaled a learning loss of approximately one month of instruction.

If a portion of the disparity between students with high and low socioeconomic status can be attributed to out of school experiences then the other portion occurs as a result of factors within school. Differences in teacher quality, teacher expectations, resources, and support from parents all represent inequalities students face in school (Hannaway, 2002). Minority and poor students in particular were typically taught by significantly more than their fair shares of unlicensed, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers who often didn't have records of strong academic performance themselves (Haycock & Crawford, 2008). Additionally, Neuman and Celano

(2001) found roughly ten times greater access to reading material in higher-income schools than in lower-income schools in the same large urban center.

Children confront significant barriers to literacy development if they are sick, hungry, stressed, homeless, or otherwise disadvantaged (Dryfoos, 2005). Consequently, one cannot ignore the impact of poor student health on the success of reading initiatives. Disadvantaged students are more likely to come from high-risk families than students with higher socioeconomic status (Dryfoos, 2005). Students from high-risk families are twenty-nine percent more likely to have fair or poor health as compared to students from no-risk families whose chances are only ten percent (Dryfoos, 2005).

Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman (2007) further investigated dissimilarities in urban schools by identifying a “curriculum gap,” which refers to the absence of or insufficient attention to curriculum elements crucial for success in reading. Their visits to urban primary grade classrooms yielded two dimensions of the curriculum gap: comprehension instruction and instruction that focused on developing children’s knowledge of the world in general and of concepts in content domains like science, social studies, and writing instruction.

While districts struggle to meet the demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the mandates of Reading First, many urban schools have increased instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency so that all students will be reading by third grade. Additionally, the Center on Education Policy (2007) surveyed 349 school districts and results showed that seventy-seven percent of urban school districts increased time for literacy instruction; however, forty-four percent reduced instructional time in other subject areas, primarily social studies and science (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007). Furthermore, many Reading First districts have

devoted their entire literacy block to reading, overlooking the connections between reading and writing.

When exploring reading initiatives in urban school districts, it is evident that in and out of school experiences, poor student health, and the curriculum gap have to be carefully considered as potential detriments to an initiative's success. Similarly, successful reading initiatives must be investigated in order to verify the prospective advantages that may exist.

Factors That Positively Impact Reading Initiatives

Patricia Cunningham (2006) identified twelve factors that appear to be important for literacy achievement in high-poverty schools. These include: assessments that guide instruction, community involvement, high levels of student engagement during literacy activities, direct-explicit instruction, strong leadership, a wide variety of materials, parent participation, perseverance and persistence, on-going professional development, time devoted to "real" reading and writing, and specialist support.

After carefully considering these twelve factors teachers were asked to rank the factors they considered most important to successful literacy achievement. Perseverance, persistence and engagement were ranked more highly than the others (Cunningham, 2006). "In order to get results from anything you have to stick with it long enough to reap what you sow" (Cunningham, 2006, p. 384). Additionally, strong leadership ranked high. "There are some successful classrooms in schools that lack leadership, but there are no successful schools for hard-to-teach children that lack strong leadership" (Cunningham, 2006, p. 384). "Hands-on" principals have high expectations for their teachers and give them daily support and encouragement, which influences teachers' motivation to teach and promotes high expectations for students (Cunningham, 2006).

In a similar study Doris Walker-Dallhouse and Victoria J. Risko (2008) examined common features that characterize the practices of urban schools succeeding with literacy development. They state that three common features of successful urban school practices are teachers who expect student success, teach both basic skills and strategies for deepening text comprehension, and who collaborate with one another, their students, and students' parents (Walker-Dallhouse & Risko, 2008). Other features include creating effective literacy environments with high student engagement, multiple cross-curricular and student-life connections, and the use of student based assessment to differentiate instruction (Walker-Dallhouse & Risko, 2008).

Walker-Dallhouse and Risko (2008) reiterate that teachers who build caring relationships with students and their families communicate high expectations for students' success in school. This is further qualified by research, which states that many students who drop out of school report that they could not identify anyone at school who cared about them or their problems (Howard, 2001). Additionally, making cross-curricular connections with students' knowledge and out-of-school experiences is the goal of effective instruction for all students. The particular application to successful teaching in urban schools, however, is associated with making curriculum content relevant to students who feel their experiences or language are not appreciated within the classroom (Walker-Dallhouse & Risko, 2008).

For students to make cross-curricular connections they need to develop a sophisticated understanding of literacy. Teachers then must have the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary to teach reading and writing (Fisher & Frey, 2007). Additional prescriptive, scripted curriculum or instruction is not what is needed; educators need precision in their teaching (Fisher & Frey, 2007). In order for urban schools to be effective, teachers must clarify their understandings of, and core beliefs about literacy (Fisher & Frey, 2007). Only then can an

instructional framework for teaching students to read and write be developed. Furthermore, focused professional development, via learning communities, will ensure that all teachers have a deep understanding of literacy teaching and learning (Fisher & Frey, 2007).

In addition to academic factors, urban schools battle poverty each day. To address literacy achievement in a meaningful way, Joy Dryfoos (2008) encourages schools to reach beyond the traditional boundaries, and involve the community in combating the effects of poverty on children and their families. A full-service community school remains open for extended hours, weekends, and summers, welcoming families and community members into the building for an array of services and activities provided by community agencies. Needs related to physical and mental health, dentistry, social services, after-school activities, and educational enrichment are addressed on-site (Dryfoos, 2008). Usually one community agency takes the lead and acts as the school's partner. A full-time coordinator from the agency works closely with the principal and the school staff to coordinate the services community agencies provide with what goes on in the classroom (Dryfoos, 2008). Although research (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 1994) has documented various benefits of community schools, it has also found that student test scores improve slowly, and rely on other factors such as teacher commitment, high student expectations, and quality instructional leadership. However, addressing the social needs of the school community improves safety and stability of the family and the neighborhood.

Research has found that perseverance, persistence, leadership, high expectations, student engagement, strong instructional frameworks, and links to the community all positively impact student achievement in urban school districts (Cunningham, 2006). An examination of successful urban schools is needed to truly understand how these factors impact reading initiatives' success.

Success Stories

Rosa Parks Community School in San Diego, California employed a specific philosophy to educate their 1500 students in grades kindergarten through five. The school is located in a community that is recognized as the highest crime area of San Diego, the poorest, and the area with the most need for health and social services, in fact, one hundred percent of the students at Rosa Parks qualified for free lunch (Fisher & Frey, 2006). In 1999 Rosa Parks was the lowest performing school in the area. In 2005 Rosa Parks School had climbed two hundred and ninety-one points on California's Academic Performance Index, and was within reach of the state target score (Fisher & Frey, 2006). Teachers at Rosa Parks School created a multi-year school-wide literacy plan based on a core set of beliefs about literacy. Groups of teachers, administrators, and parents agreed on the following: learning is social, conversations are critical for learning, reading, writing, and oral language instruction must be integrated, and learning requires a gradual increase in responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2006).

Researchers found that the results from Rosa Parks stemmed from the school-wide agreements, the willingness of the faculty to continually reflect on and refine practices, and the commitment of the school leader. The literacy framework resulted in higher expectations for students and provided teachers with an opportunity to focus their teaching, which ultimately resulted in students who read and write at impressive levels (Fisher & Frey, 2006).

Thomas Edison Elementary School in Port Chester, New York, took on the challenge of creating a full-service kindergarten through fifth grade community school. More than eighty percent of the students at Thomas Edison received free or reduced-price lunch, and nearly fifty percent were English Language Learners (Santiago, Ferrara, & Blank, 2008). In 1999 school staff noticed both families and students struggling with the stresses of poverty. The effects of

these stressors on student achievement was evident later that year when only nineteen percent of Edison's fourth graders passed New York State's English Language Arts Assessment (Santiago, Ferrara, & Blank, 2008).

Today, Thomas Edison School provides a range of services including, school-based health care, family counseling, parent outreach and education, and after-school enrichments, which are all delivered right at the school (Santiago, Ferrara, & Blank, 2008). These changes have led to dramatic achievement gains. In 2006, ninety-three percent of Edison's fourth graders passed the New York State Assessment in English Language Arts (Santiago, Ferraro, & Blank, 2008). In addition to the services provided to students and families, Thomas Edison has a long-standing professional development relationship with Manhattanville College, and provides a two-year induction program for new hires. This formal guidance has increased the school's retention of new teachers (Santiago, Ferraro, & Blank, 2008). The staff at Thomas Edison Elementary School trust that reshaping themselves as a community school has enabled the faculty to focus more on teaching and learning, given families direct access to resources that improve their lives, and has expanded their ability to reach children and families (Santiago, Ferraro, & Blank, 2008).

Nathanial Hawthorne Elementary School is an inner-city school located in San Antonio, Texas, whose student population is made up primarily of Hispanic students, in grades Pre-K through eight, from low-income families (Mentzer & Shaughnessy, 1996). The school has encountered all the problems common to an inner city, including low student achievement. Before substantial change took place: "Hawthorne was a closed, uninviting environment" (Mentzer & Shaughnessy, 1996, p. 14).

To begin the process of substantial change Hawthorne developed a partnership with a local university and invited teachers to discuss the issues and situations that frustrated them, along

with any concerns they had for the children, the school, and themselves. Through these conversations teachers began to realize their own fear of change, but also recognized the school's need for change. The administration and university gave teachers time to develop action plans and support in administering these changes (Mentzer & Shaughnessy, 1996). As a result, teachers relaxed and began to work together, self-efficacy increased, as did expectations for students.

Throughout the change process Hawthorne Elementary School survived several adjustments in school leadership. With each leader came a new set of expectations and a new vision for the school, which often upset the change process (Mentzer & Shaughnessy, 1996). The final new administrator embraced the strides Hawthorne's staff had made, and collaborated with them in moving forward. "You can't move forward if people don't trust each other" (Mentzer & Shaughnessy, 1996, p. 19). The staff refined their vision for Hawthorne Elementary and developed plans for expanding teaching and learning. The efforts of Hawthorne Elementary School's staff have been met with much success. Students, who enter Hawthorne Elementary below grade level, leave at grade level or above, and students have ranked twenty to thirty percent higher on national standardized assessments (Mentzer & Shaughnessy, 1996).

Although Rosa Parks Community School, Thomas Edison Elementary School, and Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary School operate in very different parts of the country, they are all located in urban settings and battle poverty each day. One thing these schools have in common is that they are succeeding in implementing reading initiatives with fidelity and raising student achievement for the children they service. Although their methods for change are different, commonalities exist. All schools worked to empower teachers and gave them the resources to incorporate best practices in literacy. This resulted in high expectations for students and

meaningful connections to each student and their family. Each school's success was contingent upon the support, encouragement, and involvement of a school level leader who promoted the shared vision of the school community. For Rosa Parks, Thomas Edison, and Nathaniel Hawthorne teacher self-efficacy, high expectations for students, and supportive school leadership are features that impacted their success. Interestingly, the grade configurations of these schools were varied with two servicing students in grades Kindergarten through fifth grade, while the third being a Pre-K through eighth grade model. Therefore, it is necessary to fully examine the relationship between grade configuration and the success of reading initiatives in urban schools.

Grade Configuration Of Schools

The relative benefit of one particular grade configuration over another has been the subject of debate for years. Craig Howley (2002) raised several questions: "Which configuration for a school is most cost effective? Which yields higher student achievement? How does grade configuration affect the community" (p. 24)? There are no easy answers to these questions nor is there any conclusive evidence that one grade configuration is better than another (Howley, 2002). School districts making these decisions must take into account factors beyond simply what is best for the students. They also must consider projected enrollments, transportation costs, number of transitions, size of the school, and overall school goals (Howley, 2002). These discussions and their ultimate outcomes are not without controversy.

Prior to the mid 1900's, the majority of schools in the United States were one-teacher schools, which typically served a small rural community, and had about thirty children enrolled (Howley, 2002). However, talks of larger more centrally located schools began as early as 1915 when Ellwood Cubberley, a Teachers College professor, proposed that large schools in central locations could provide more and better education and resources (Howley, 2002). Administrators

began merging one-teacher schools into larger graded schools (Howley, 2002). As a result, the K-8 configuration grew in popularity. As roads improved after World War I to accommodate automobiles, better transportation, and rural economic decline, a focus on efficiency of educational management drove consolidation across larger geographic areas (Howley, 2002). The result was districts and schools that had larger enrollments than ever before.

In 1997, of approximately 82,000 public schools in the United States, only about 1,100 were K-12 schools, and for the most part, those schools served rural areas (Howley, 2002). Today, the most common grade-span configurations are K-5, K-6, 6-8 or 7-9, and 9-12, with the popularity of each configuration varying according to location (Howley, 2002). For example, Howley (2002) found that the percentage of K-5 schools in urban districts is significantly higher than in rural areas (forty-three percent urban vs. eighteen percent rural). Similarly, the percentage of K-8 schools is higher in rural areas than in suburban areas, (ten percent rural vs. four percent suburban) (Howley, 2002).

Educators and policy makers have long suggested a possible correlation between grade span and instruction (Burkam, Michaels, & Lee, 2007). In 1989 the Carnegie Council of America published *Turning Points*, a report on adolescent development and school reform, which encouraged local policy makers to look at how to organize grades in order to provide high quality programs that respond to the needs of the students (Burkam, Michaels, & Lee, 2007). This debate over the grade configuration of a school typically ensues when discussing middle schools. The most common grade configuration for a school district is a K-5 elementary school, 6-8 middle school, and 9-12 high school (Weiss & Kipnes, 2006). A study conducted in the Philadelphia school district found few differences in student outcomes by the type of school attended (Weiss & Kipnes, 2006). Burkam, Michaels, and Lee found the opposite to be true in

their study about the effects of grade configuration on kindergarten. The researchers compared the academic growth of students in preprimary schools with those in schools with grade configurations that included older students (i.e. K-4 and K-8 models). Despite initial academic and social advantages, which included an emphasis on what is developmentally appropriate for kindergarten students, it was found that students in preprimary schools learned significantly less in mathematics and reading than those students in elementary schools (Burkham, Michaels, & Lee, 2007). Their study noted differences in student achievement, the delivery of instruction, and academic growth among students from schools with different grade configurations (Burkam, Michaels, & Lee, 2007).

Grade configuration may not only influence student achievement, but may also affect the school's instructional goals and climate. Epstein (1991) investigated the relationship between grade span and school instructional goals. She found that the priorities assigned to certain school level goals were directly related to grade span (Epstein, 1991). For example, higher level thinking skills may be more emphasized in schools with wider grade spans, and social skills may be more of an emphasis in preprimary schools. Additionally, a wider grade span was found to create more opportunities for younger children to interact with their older peers (Epstein, 1991). This was supported by Love and Marcon's (1991) and Paglin and Fager's, (1997) studies, which have shown that larger grade spans encouraged across grade teacher cooperation and communication, promoted higher expectations for students, and supported the continuity of instruction between grades.

Franklin and Glascock (1998) report that educators have yet to reach consensus regarding which grade configuration options offer the best educational opportunities for students. Many schools have created their own grade configurations in response to contextual issues such as,

administrative needs, population pressures, and educational theory (Franklin & Glascock, 1998). Regardless of the rationale behind different grade configurations, the basic assumption is that the grade configuration has little or no relationship to student performance (Franklin & Glascock, 1998). Franklin and Glascock (1998) examined the effects various grade configurations have on academic achievement and student behavior. Sample schools were randomly selected within grade configuration groups, from the population of all Louisiana schools during the 1993-1994 school year (Franklin & Glascock, 1998). Their results disputed the basic assumption cited earlier, as they found that students in elementary (grades K-6) and unit (K-12) schools outperformed their peers in middle (grades 6/7- 8/9) or secondary (7/8/9 or 9-12) schools (Franklin & Glascock, 1998).

McPartland, Coldiron, and Braddock (1987) found school grade level configuration to be a strong predictor of school's practice (cited in Franklin & Glascock, 1998). McPartland et al. found that larger grade spans tend to influence the practices at the lower grades and increased the likelihood that the school was departmentalized and students were tracked by subject or program. Conversely, Wihry, Coldarci, and Meadow (1992, cited in Franklin & Glascock, 1998) found little evidence supporting a relationship between student achievement and grade configuration.

Often the decisions to remix grade levels are forced by enrollment gains and space constraints. Other times, the rationale is based on academics. Regardless of the reasons for the change, it is clear that school districts that look seriously at the various grade configurations are lacking clear research that cites the benefits of various grade span configurations. Unfortunately, not a great deal of money has been set aside to study the benefits of various grade configurations, and federal statistics tend to lag three to five years behind the current school year data (Reeves, 2005). Much regarding the effects of grade configuration is unclear. What is certain is that those

school districts that consider grade configuration as a potential cause for poor student achievement or ineffective delivery of instruction must consider the specific context as well as how different grade configurations affect teachers' self-efficacy. Given the mixed research regarding the effects of grade configuration on teaching and learning, it is necessary to research further the influence of the teacher on the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is multi-dimensional, context specific, and grounded in social cognitive theory. It is based on the idea that people can exercise some influence over what they do (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy is a belief about what a person can do rather than a judgment about his or her attributes (Bandura, 2006). Albert Bandura (1986) offered a formal definition of self-efficacy: "Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 391). From this perspective self-efficacy affects one's goals and behaviors and is influenced by conditions in the environment (Schunk & Meece, 2006).

Teacher self-efficacy has been increasingly researched over the last twenty years. Although many researchers have used different instruments, it has been documented that teacher self-efficacy can predict teaching practices and student learning (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992). Additionally, teacher self-efficacy has been shown to predict student motivation and achievement, student self-efficacy and attitudes, teachers' goals and aspirations, teacher attitudes toward innovation and change, teachers' tendency to refer difficult students to special education, teachers' use of teaching strategies, and the likelihood that teachers will stay in the profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). In fact, there is some research suggesting that teacher self-efficacy

is strongly related to teacher burnout (Chwakisz, Altmaier & Russell, 1992). Friedman and Farber (1992) found that teachers who considered themselves weak in classroom management and discipline reported higher levels of burnout than teachers with higher self-efficacy.

Einar and Sidsel Skaalvik (2007) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher burnout. They began by examining four strain factors that plague teachers and their effects on teacher self-efficacy. They investigated how issues such as students with behavior problems, conflicts with parents, conflicts among teachers, and organizing teaching in ways one did not believe in impact self-efficacy. After interviewing teachers regarding their feelings about the four strain factors, the researchers were able to identify six separate but correlated dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. These facets included: instruction, adapting education to individual student needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with colleagues and parents, and coping with changes and challenges. The researchers questioned teachers regarding their perceived confidence in each distinct area. Skaalvik and Skaalvik found a strong correlation between the six subscales and teacher self-efficacy. Similar to Friedman and Farber's (1992) research, low teacher self-efficacy was found to correlate strongly to teacher burnout (Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2007).

A common theory of teacher self-efficacy is that teachers' beliefs in their own abilities influence positive student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Historical perspectives such as, Rotter's (1966) concept of internal and external control, and Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy support this theory. Rotter distinguishes between internal and external control, as teacher self-efficacy is said to increase if teachers believe that student achievement and behavior can be influenced by education (Rotter, 1966). Accordingly, teacher self-efficacy decreases if

teachers believe external factors, such as, students' abilities and home environments are more important to the students' learning than the influence a teacher can have. Bandura theorizes that teacher self-efficacy is grounded in the teacher's belief in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to achieve educational goals. Additionally, teachers perceive their sense of self-efficacy in relation to two social systems within schools. The first directs their interactions with students, and the second connects teachers to colleagues and the school administration (Rimm-Kauffman & Sawyer, 2004).

Using Bandura's (1997) theory as the basis for their study, John Ross and Peter Gray (2006) reported that teacher efficacy is of interest to school improvement researchers because teacher self-efficacy consistently predicts willingness to try out new teaching ideas. They stated that teachers with higher efficacy about their own abilities produce higher student achievement in core academic subjects (Ross & Gray, 2006). Ross and Gray reported that teacher self-efficacy contributes to achievement because high efficacy teachers try harder, use management strategies that stimulate student autonomy, and attend more closely to low ability students.

Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2004) researched primary grade teachers' self-efficacy as it related to discipline and teaching practices. They reported that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs linked to their classroom behavior and practices, as well as to improved student achievement. Teachers who feel efficacious were more likely to support positive student attitudes toward school and toward other children (Rimm-Kauffman & Sawyer, 2004). In addition, students reported a higher sense of self-efficacy when they were grouped with efficacious teachers. Furthermore, Rimm-Kauffman and Sawyer reported that the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and student performance was viewed as bidirectional. This meant that teachers have

higher self-efficacy when students do well and students do well when teachers feel more efficacious (Rimm-Kauffman & Sawyer, 2004).

Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) examined the relationship between two dimensions of self-efficacy, general and personal. General self-efficacy refers to the general belief about the power of teaching, while personal self-efficacy reflects the teachers' personal sense of efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Interestingly, the researchers found that general efficacy was tied to morale and climate while personal teacher efficacy was related to classroom organization and management. It appeared that elementary teachers defined success in both affective (making personal connections with students) and academic (student achievement) ways (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Additionally, Hoy and Woolfolk questioned the connection between these two dimensions of self-efficacy and school climate. They found that the relationship between efficacy and school climate was reciprocal. Climate affects a teacher's sense of efficacy, and efficacy affects teachers' perceptions of the school's climate (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Furthermore, results confirmed that teachers can have a high sense of personal self-efficacy, or a feeling that they make a difference with the students they teach, but have low general self-efficacy, or a feeling that the school and/or district cannot overcome environmental factors like poverty or poor home environments (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

Linda Bryant's (2007) research supports Hoy and Woolfolk's findings, by drawing parallels between student achievement, school climate, and teacher self-efficacy. She investigated the difference between teacher self-efficacy in schools that achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and those that do not (Bryant, 2007). Additionally, this study investigated whether self-efficacy-beliefs were influenced by perceptions of institutional factors, such as school climate

and socioeconomic factors (Bryant, 2007). Bryant's study revealed that the teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the AYP schools was significantly higher than those of teachers in the Non-AYP schools for student engagement and classroom management. Results also showed a significant main effect for the institutional factors of socioeconomic status and school climate (Bryant, 2007). This study indicated that the consequence of a school being identified as AYP or Non-AYP appeared to have an effect on the teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy beliefs (Bryant, 2007). These findings correlated with Bandura's theory: "teacher beliefs in their efficacy affect their general orientation toward the process as well as their specific instructional activities" (Bandura, 1997, p. 24).

Bandura (1997) and Rotter (1966) offer two distinct theories regarding teacher self-efficacy. Both Bandura and Rotter's theories recognize that teacher self-efficacy and student achievement are bidirectional. That is, high teacher self-efficacy affects student achievement, and high student achievement affects teacher self-efficacy. However, Rotter distinguishes between internal and external control, while Bandura believes teacher self-efficacy to be grounded in the teacher's belief in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to achieve educational goals. Subsequent research in the area of teacher self-efficacy has used Bandura and Rotter's theories as the basis for the studies. The conclusions from these studies offer perspective on the correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout, school climate, and classroom behaviors and strategies. Additionally, Leroy and Bressoux (2007) found that high teacher self-efficacy mediated contextual variables such as work pressures, and encouraged teachers to support student autonomy and promote high expectations for the students in their classrooms. Given that teacher self-efficacy appears to correlate to teacher expectations for

students it is necessary to examine teacher expectations for students and their effect on the success of reading initiatives in urban school districts.

Teacher Expectations For Students

The word expectation has many interpretations, and has been at the forefront of education for over thirty years. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines an expectation as follows: “Prospects, especially of success or gain.” Teacher expectations refer to inferences that teachers make about the future academic achievement of students (Cooper & Good, 1983).

Harry Wong (2001) trusts that a teacher’s expectations of his or her students will greatly influence their achievement in the classroom and in their lives. Harry and Rosemary Wong (2001) define an expectation as: “knowing what you can or cannot achieve. An expectation is what you believe will or will not happen” (p. 35). Furthermore, Wong distinguishes between positive and negative expectations. An optimist who believes that whomever they teach or whatever they do will result in success or achievement will expect to be successful. Therefore he or she is constantly alert and aware of opportunities to be successful (Wong & Wong, 2001). In contrast, a pessimist believes that whoever he or she teaches or whatever he or she does will not work out (Wong & Wong, 2001). The expectation of failure encourages the teacher to constantly look for justification, proof, and demonstration of why they have failed. Consequently, the teacher predisposes themselves to realize failure both personally and with the people they deal with, such as their students (Wong & Wong, 2001).

Cooper, Findley, and Good (1982) recognized the significance of the definition for expectations, and its potential effect on student achievement. They hypothesized that expectation effects are contingent on how expectations are defined. Their study reported on the relative

effectiveness of different measures of teacher expectations for predicting students' year-end achievement.

Three indexes of teacher expectations measured were: perceived ability, expected improvement, and perceived testing ability discrepancy (Cooper, Findley, & Good, 1982). A positive score indicated that the teacher's ranking of the students was higher than the student's achievement testing. Conversely, a negative score meant the teacher's ranking of the student was lower than his or her achievement scoring (Cooper, Findley, & Good, 1982). The researchers found that different definitions of expectations were not interchangeable. For instance, student's "perceived ability" had very little effect on the teacher's expectation for improvement (Cooper, Findley, & Good, 1982). Furthermore, the three expectations measures were not equally predictive of achievement change (Cooper, Findley, & Good, 1982). While both perceived ability and perceived testing ability discrepancy showed significant positive relations to achievement, the expected improvement measure did not (Cooper, Findley, & Good, 1982).

It is evident that defining teacher expectations is important in determining its effects on student and curricular outcomes. This is especially true for the Pygmalion Study (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). The Pygmalion Study provided teachers with false information about the learning potential of certain students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). The students attended a San Francisco elementary school, and were in grades one through six. Teachers were told that these students had been tested and found to be on the brink of a period of rapid intellectual growth; in reality, the students had been selected at random (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Some of the targeted students, particularly those in grades one and two, exhibited performance on IQ tests

which were superior to the scores of other students of similar ability and superior to what would have been expected of the target students with no intervention (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

The study concluded that students' intellectual development is largely a response to what teachers expect and how those expectations are communicated (Cotton, 1989). Consequently, these results led the researchers to claim that the inflated expectations teachers held for the target students actually caused the students to experience accelerated intellectual growth (Cotton, 1989).

In their research Good (1987) and Cotton (1989) described the process of how teacher expectations affect student outcomes. Early in the school year, teachers form differential expectations for student behavior and achievement. Consistent with these differential expectations, teachers behave differently toward various students (Good, 1987). This treatment tells students something about how they are expected to behave in the classroom and perform on academic tasks (Cotton, 1989). If the teacher treatment is consistent over time and if students do not actively resist or change it, it will likely affect their self-concepts, achievement motivation, level of aspiration, classroom conduct, and interaction with the teacher (Cotton, 1989). These effects generally will complement and reinforce the teacher's expectations, so that students will come to conform to these expectations more than they might have otherwise (Cotton, 1989). Ultimately, this could affect student achievement and other outcomes (Cotton, 1989). High-expectation students will be led to achieve at or near their potential, but low expectation students will not gain as much as they could have gained if taught differently (Good, 1987).

Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, Wisenbaker (1982) and Good (1987), have identified several features that may cause teachers to have lower expectations for some students. These include: gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, type of school (i.e. inner city or rural

versus suburban), appearance, oral language patterns, messiness/disorganization, readiness, seating positions, negative comments about students from other staff members, and tracking or long-term ability groups. These factors may lead teachers to consciously or subconsciously place achievement expectations on students. If these expectations follow students year after year it may result in Sustaining Expectations Effects (Cooper & Good, 1983).

Sustaining Expectations Effects are said to occur when teachers respond on the basis of their existing expectations for students rather than to changes in student performance caused by sources other than the teacher (Cooper & Good, 1983). However, even though the initial expectations formed by teachers may be realistic and appropriate, researchers have found that sustaining expectations effects can limit students' learning and self-concept development (Cotton, 1989). Good (1987) noted: "For sustaining expectations to occur, it is only necessary that teachers engage in behaviors that maintain students' and teachers' previously formed low expectations" (Good, 1987, p. 34).

Brophy (1983) estimated that five to ten percent of the variance in student performance could be attributed to differential treatment based on their teachers' expectations of them. Much of student success can be traced to the attitude of the teacher, says Robert Barr, an expert in at-risk students and author of The Kids Left Behind: Teaching the Underachieving Children of Poverty (Adams, 2008). Teachers have generally been found to hold lower educational expectations for low-income youths as compared to higher income peers (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999). Teachers who assume that the children in their classroom bring with them disadvantaging conditions that cannot be overcome are less likely to engage in more open-ended forms of pedagogy that focus on creating knowledge (Benner & Mistry, 2007). These lower adult expectations are a significant

challenge for low-income children given the link between low teacher expectations and poor grades in school (Benner & Mistry, 2007).

Benner and Mistry (2007) researched how teacher expectations affect the academic achievement of five hundred and twenty two low-income youths. The ethnically diverse sample included low-income urban students, ages nine to sixteen. They found that teacher expectations had direct effects on children's educational expectations, competency beliefs, and academic achievement. Higher teacher educational expectations for children predicted higher youth educational expectations for themselves, as well as stronger competency beliefs related to reading (Benner & Mistry, 2007). Additionally, higher teacher expectations were positively correlated to higher scores on the Woodcock-Johnson Test (Benner & Mistry, 2007). Similarly, Benner and Mistry determined that low teacher expectations and poor academic achievement were related: "Teachers with low expectations tend to provide less positive attention and reinforcement, as well as fewer opportunities to learn" (Benner & Mistry, 2007, p. 150). Moreover, teachers' low educational expectations might influence low-income children's academic performance through strategies such as ability grouping, which often resulted in a higher percentage of low income students being placed in the lower ability groups (Benner & Mistry, 2007).

Researchers have also found that younger children were more susceptible to the effects of expectancy communications than are older students, and that communicating low expectations seems to have more power to lower student performance than communicating high expectations has to raise performance (Cotton, 1989). Tauber (1998), identified climate, feedback, input, and output as the factors teachers use to communicate expectations. Climate describes the socio-emotional mood or spirit created by the person holding the expectation. This is often

communicated nonverbally through smiling and nodding, providing greater eye contact, and leaning closer to the student (Tauber, 1998). Feedback refers to providing both affective information (more praise and less criticism) and cognitive information (more detailed, higher quality feedback) to higher expectations students. Input depicts teachers' tendencies to teach to students of whom they expect more. Output illustrates teachers' encouraging greater responsiveness from those students of whom they expect more (Tauber, 1998).

Tauber (1998) theorized that these four factors, each critical to conveying a teacher's expectations, can better be controlled only if teachers were more aware that the factors are operating in the first place. Marshall and Weinstein (1984) agreed, indicating that teachers could be trained to view intelligence as a multi-faceted and continuously changing quality, and to move away from holding and communicating unfounded or rigidly constrained expectations to their students.

Christine Rubie-Davies (2007) conducted a research study of the classroom practices of high expectation teachers versus low expectation teachers. Twelve primary school teachers from eight schools were identified to participate. The teachers formed three groups, high-expectation, low-expectation, and average-progress teachers. She posits that teachers demonstrate high or low expectations to the entire class, in addition to the differential treatment given to individual students. Twelve teachers were identified as either having expectations that were significantly higher or lower than students' achievement test scores (Rubie-Davies, 2007). The researcher wished to determine whether classroom instructional practices differed between high and low expectation teachers.

Through her research Rubie-Davies (2007) found that high expectation teachers spent more time providing a framework for students' learning, giving students more constructive feedback,

using higher-order thinking questions, and managing student behavior more positively. Rubie-Davies research provided evidence that a teacher's class-level expectations might more significantly affect student learning than the expectations the teacher has for individual students.

Correspondingly, Brophy and Good (1970) compared interactions between the teacher and high expectation or low expectation students. They found that teachers were more likely to praise answers from high expectation students and criticize low expectations students more frequently for incorrect answers (Brophy & Good, 1970). Additionally, teachers often rephrased questions and provided additional reading support to high expectation students and expected poor answers from low expectation students more frequently than their high expectation counterparts (Brophy & Good, 1970). Brophy (1983) argued that these behaviors may have affected the progress of students and therefore, acted as self-fulfilling prophecies. Understanding how teachers with high or low expectations interact with their students explains why whole class factors are important in mediating teacher expectations.

Although teachers within a given school or school district may each have different expectations for their students, high expectations can be a recognized school philosophy. School leadership can support and encourage high expectations as part of the shared vision for the school. Given the potential connection between supportive school leadership and successful reading initiatives, it is necessary to investigate research regarding the influence the school leader has on the success of a reading initiative.

School Leadership

In any profession leaders possess characteristics that define their success. Often these characteristics are related to personality, the ability to foster positive relationships, and knowledge of the job (Hunter, 1998). Successful leadership can only be measured by the

effectiveness of the establishment. Schools without clear goals house unhappy employees who might not be committed. This lack of commitment creates organizations that emphasize product and criticize when the end result is not achieved (Senge, 2000). The consequence is resentment and a sense of powerlessness among its members.

Urban school leaders will face many of the barriers stated above. They may confront teachers with poor self-efficacy, low expectations for students, and who feel ineffective and resentful. They may be part of districts without a clear message, or vision. These schools may be so consumed with paperwork and bogged down in policy that they are not making meaningful connections to anyone or anything. These urban schools will need strong leaders who are well versed in the theory and practice of successful leadership.

To a great extent, the quality of American education depends on the effectiveness of school leaders (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). School districts are identifying future leaders who can think thoroughly and quickly about complex issues, collaborate with diverse groups, show good judgment, stay on the cutting-edge of school improvement, and lead needed school reforms (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). These school leaders cannot just be managers who focus on facilities, equipment, supplies, schedules, discipline, and procedures. These school leaders must possess the characteristics of an instructional leader who focuses on curriculum and instructional development, staff development, students' academic and social achievement, and the continuous improvement of teaching and learning (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006).

The shift from a manager to an instructional leader is about more than just semantics. When learning becomes the preoccupation of the school, when all the school's educators examine the efforts and initiatives of the school through the lens of their impact on learning, the structure and culture of the school begin to change in substantive ways (DuFour, 2002). Richard DuFour, a

former principal, claims: “principals foster this structural and cultural transformation when they shift their emphasis from helping individual teachers improve instruction to helping teams of teachers ensure that students achieve the intended outcomes of their schooling” (DuFour, 2002, p. 12). Principals play an important role in initiating, facilitating, and sustaining the process of shifting the collective focus from teaching to learning (DuFour, 2002). Staff members' consensus to transform does not diminish the need for effective leadership in the school, but the focus of that leadership shifts from teaching to learning (DuFour, 2002). Schools need principal leadership, but from those who understand that the essence of their job is promoting student and teacher learning (DuFour, 2002).

“Deep and sustained reform depends on many of us, not just on the very few destined to be extraordinary” (Fullan, 2001, p. 2). Michael Fullan’s (2001) leadership framework is based on five core aspects of leadership: moral purpose, understanding the change process, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. He argues that effective leaders live and breathe the five aspects of leadership, and therefore more and more people become willing to tackle tough problems (Fullan, 2001). Urban schools are often plagued with aborted change efforts, demoralization of employees, and uncoordinated reform, resulting in wasted effort and resources. According to Fullan, leaders will increase their effectiveness if they continually pursue moral purpose, understand the change process, develop relationships, foster knowledge building, and strive for coherence with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness (Fullan, 2001). If urban school leaders do this the rewards and benefits could include, enhanced student performance, increased capacity of teachers, increased involvement of parents and community members, and greater pride for all in the system (Fullan, 2001).

Effective school leaders create a shared vision of school excellence that is translated into classroom practice (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). They raise teacher expectations for students, they support continued curricular and instructional improvement and they reward and recognize all forms of excellence (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). Sergiovanni (2000) shares this belief, stating: “Schools must be run effectively and efficiently if they are to survive. Yet, for the school to transform itself into an institution, a learning community must emerge” (p. 25).

In effective learning communities, leadership is shared. Creating learning communities requires establishing relationships among teachers, students, parents, and administrators who work together on shared values, purposes, and commitments (Sergiovanni, 2000). Effective learning communities are successful in meeting the needs of students and empowering teachers to be an integral part of the school community (Villani, 2004). The Annenberg Institute at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island has been doing research with educators across the country to determine what makes an effective learning community. Common leadership strategies that are found to be most effective are shared vision, clear priorities, links between the school and community, reorganization of the school structure, professional development, and a strong accountability system (Villani, 2004).

Christine Villani (2004) conducted a case study of an urban elementary school in Connecticut. Newfield School boasts high, standardized test scores in reading and writing, but more importantly is considered a successful learning community. Newfield School’s student population is 98.9% minority, with 86.5% eligible for free and reduced cost lunch (Villani, 2004). Villani analyzed the leadership of Carmen Perez-Dickson, the Principal of Newfield School. Perez-Dickson’s leadership style emulated Michael Fullan’s (2001) belief that school reform depends on many people. Perez-Dickson noted: “it cannot be done unless everyone is

working as a team, and demonstrating mutual respect and accountability for all children” (Villani, 2004, p. 85). Perez-Dickson modeled the behavior she expected, supported the staff with whatever resources they needed, fostered student development, and involved parents in every aspect of the school (Villani, 2004).

Two themes that emerged from Villani’s (2004) research were supportive leadership and high expectations for staff and students. Supportive leadership is the foundation that allowed Perez-Dickson to instill a sense of accountability among her staff. “Educators need to do the job they get paid for, it’s that simple” (Villani, 2004, p. 88). High expectations for students were part of the shared vision at Newfield School. “(We have) very clear expectations of what we expect children and teachers to do” (Villani, 2004, p. 87). As a result, students began to develop high expectations for themselves, as well as an enthusiasm for learning.

Peter Senge (2000) discussed the discipline of shared vision, and the leader’s obligation to involve the school community in developing one. A shared vision refers to a set of tools and techniques for bringing disparate aspirations into alignment around the things people have in common, their connection to a school (Senge, 2000). In building shared vision, a group of people build a sense of commitment together. They develop images of: “the future we want to create together” (Senge, 2000, p. 72), along with the values that will be important in getting there, and the goals they hope to achieve along the way (Senge, 2000). A true, shared vision is never imposed, but rather it emerges from people who truly care about one another and their work (Issacson & Bamberg, 1992). Senge suggests that without a sustained process for building a shared vision, there is no way for a school to articulate its sense of purpose.

Rose Ylimaki, Stephen Jacobson, and Lawrie Drysdale (2007) researched the characteristics of successful principals of challenging schools in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia.

Thirteen schools were the focus of this study, and results showed that the principals who participated had similar leadership styles (Ylimaki, et al., 2007). All of the principals communicated shared goals, a sense of common purpose, shared responsibility, and high performance expectations (Ylimaki, et al., 2007). Each principal distributed his or her leadership, resulting in a flat organization where all stakeholders felt like integral members of the school community.

Additionally all thirteen principals were described as emulating the leadership traits of empathy, passion, persistence, and flexible thinking (Ylimaki, et al., 2007). These characteristics align with those described by Larry Spears and Michelle Lawrence (2004) in their book Practicing Servant Leadership. Spears and Lawrence encouraged leaders to emphasize an increased service to others, while promoting a sense of community, and the sharing power in decision making. Servant leadership may be especially needed in urban schools where students often experience poverty, a lack of ownership, a sense that they don't belong and subtle, often unintended discrimination (Rooney, 2008). Urban school principals who employ the values of servant leadership understand that anyone wanting to be the leader must first be the servant; if you want to lead you must serve (Hunter, 1998). These leaders create programs that are characterized by strong personal relationships, culturally relevant instruction, and a school-wide commitment that empower students and teachers (Rooney, 2008).

The Impact On Reading Initiatives

The most fundamental responsibility of schools is teaching students to read. Research now estimates that ninety-five percent of all children can be taught to read (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 1999). Yet, in spite of all the research that has allowed us to understand how literacy develops, statistics reveal an alarming prevalence of struggling readers (AFT, 1999). In

fact, twenty percent of elementary students nationwide have significant problems learning to read (AFT, 1999). The rate of reading failure for African-American, Hispanic, Limited-English speakers, and poor children ranges from sixty to seventy percent (NAEP, 1995). While many students from high-risk environments come to school less prepared for literacy than their more advantaged peers, their risk of reading difficulties could still be prevented when they are placed into schools with effective principals and knowledgeable teachers (AFT, 1999).

For reading initiatives to succeed, it's not just the children who need to learn. Embracing the idea that strong principals are essential to academic success, top Pittsburgh administrators have launched several ambitious initiatives based on the philosophy that school leaders need to be cultivated as carefully as their students (Samuels, 2008). Administrators are working to mark a turning point for the 28,000-student district, which faces declining enrollment, a persistent achievement gap between black and white students, and a failure to meet federal academic standards for five years (Samuels, 2008).

The Pittsburgh Public Schools recognizes that in order for any curricular initiative to be successful school leaders must be actively involved. Several outside organizations, including the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh and a private educational coaching firm, have been brought in to work closely with principals and central-office staff members regarding curriculum, instruction, and other initiatives (Samuels, 2008). The goal is to build internal capacity to maintain the changes. "Developing a school leader who is an effective instructional leader," the superintendent said: "needs to be at the center of any reform effort" (Samuels, 2008, p. 28).

Schools that are led by effective instructional leaders are important, but it is the teacher who spends the most amount of time with each student. The teacher's expectations for his or her

students can have a great impact on the success of a reading initiative. Researchers like Bandura (1986) have reported that teachers, like all human beings, make decisions based on their personal beliefs (Scharlach, 2008). These decisions and actions are influenced by beliefs, which ultimately significantly impact student learning. Tabitha Scharlach (2008) examined the beliefs of pre-service teachers regarding teaching struggling readers. Her research explores how expectations for students' reading abilities influence students' successful reading instruction (Scharlach, 2008).

Scharlach (2008) found that the majority of the pre-service teachers she worked with believed that children who come from families of low socioeconomic status will struggle with reading. Three out of six participants had lower expectations for struggling readers and their abilities to learn to read. In fact, the majority of the teachers did not believe it was their responsibility to teach struggling readers to read. These teachers had lower expectations for all of their students, and therefore did not believe their students would achieve on grade level status in reading at the end of the school year (Scharlach, 2008). If teachers do not believe their struggling readers can learn to read, then no reading initiative is going to increase student achievement. Before school districts invest money in new curricular programs, it is important to examine the teachers' expectations of their students, and work toward shifting beliefs from "it is not my job" to "it can be done" (Scharlach, 2008).

Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach reading will greatly impact the success of the reading initiative. Efficacy beliefs are often measured in degrees from high to low. Individuals with high self-efficacy about their ability to complete a given task will generally perform well on that task (Barkley, 2006). Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy may find it difficult to teach to the individual needs of their students. Teachers with higher self-efficacy: "tend to

experiment with methods of instruction, seek improvement on teaching methods, and experiment with instructional materials” (Henson, 2002, p. 138). Therefore, highly efficacious teachers may experience greater success implementing reading initiatives than those with lower self-efficacy.

Jordan Barkley (2006) investigated the relationship between students’ reading abilities and teacher self-efficacy. Barkley’s findings supported the notion that teacher self-efficacy is a predictor for students’ achievement on standardized tests. Teacher self-efficacy is correlated to students’ reading abilities. The students of highly efficacious teachers who were confident in their abilities to teach reading comprehension strategies did better on standardized reading tests than the students of low efficacious teachers (Barkley, 2006). These students often participated in cooperative learning activities in a literacy-rich environment that supported the continuous reinforcement of reading strategies. Linnebrink and Pintrich (2003) support Barkley’s research through their determination that instructional environment is linked to students’ development as readers. Readers of highly efficacious teachers are likely to be surrounded by environments that are conducive to successful reading comprehension strategy instruction (Allington, 2001).

The relative benefit of one particular grade configuration over another has been the subject of debate for years. There is no conclusive evidence that one grade configuration is better than another (Howley, 2002). However, large urban school districts with many schools and varied grade configurations must investigate the effects grade configuration has on the implementation of reading initiatives.

David Hough (2005) found two opposing views in the grade configuration debate. The research he conducted and reviewed over the past 15 years suggests the answer lies in the implementation (Hough, 2005). One position presents a case for six through eight middle schools. One side holds that too many 6-8 middle schools have not fully implemented middle

school programs and practices consistent with the philosophy for middle school reading (Hough, 2005). In her April 2004 commentary in Education Week Sue Swaim, executive director of the National Middle School Association stated "The middle school movement cannot be faulted for educational deficiencies it did not create and practices it did not recommend" (Hough, 2005, p. 10). The other view is that six through eight schools do, in fact, implement middle school programs and practices at higher levels than any other grade-span types and plenty of evidence demonstrates these programs and practices have produced positive student outcomes (Hough, 2005).

Another perspective disputes the positive attributes of middle schools and draws from a body of research that document K-8 ele-middle schools as the more enticing grade configuration. Hough (2005) reported that many ele-middle schools realize higher academic achievement and other positive student outcomes when implementing middle-level best practices in the upper grade levels of their school. Although the research on grade configuration of schools is not conclusive, it is obvious that the grade configuration of a school can impact the fidelity of reading initiatives.

Summary

Peter Senge (2000) encourages us to use systems thinking to look beneath the iceberg at the root cause of a given problem. Urban schools across America are facing dismal scores on standardized testing, and a growing number of students who struggle with reading. Consequently, many school districts face state and federal restrictions, which often result in new reading mandates or initiatives that offer no guarantee of success. Looking beyond the tip of the iceberg, poor student achievement, this study investigated potential root causes for poor student

achievement in a particular urban school district. These possible causes include teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership, and grade configuration.

This chapter served as a review of literature and began by exploring the factors that negatively and positively impact reading initiatives. Next, this chapter identified three success stories, and the common features of these schools. These urban schools employed highly efficacious teachers, demonstrated a commitment to high student expectations, and were led by effective instructional leaders. The chapter continued by examining research regarding grade configuration of schools, teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, and school leadership in an effort to understand the relationship between these areas and student achievement. The chapter concluded by considering the impact grade configuration of schools, teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, and school leadership have on reading initiatives. In this day of No Child Left Behind the entire nation is marching toward ensuring that every child is equipped with a full backpack of skills, strategies, habits and a healthy attitude toward literacy.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology used in this qualitative research study. It provides detailed information concerning the research design, research sample, participants, and rationale for selection, in addition to the instruments used for the collection of data. Furthermore, this chapter describes the procedures for data collection and data analysis, as well as the validity, reliability, and limitations of this study.

Research Design

This study was designed to investigate the factors that affect the successful implementation of reading initiatives in an urban school district. This qualitative study emulated the principles of action research. Action research is a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the “actor” in improving and/or refining his or her actions (Sagor, 2000). Action research always involves the same seven-step process; selecting a focus, clarifying theories, identifying research questions, collecting data, analyzing data, reporting results, and taking informed action (Sagor, 2000).

This study consisted of four research questions, which specifically investigated the impact teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership, and grade configuration had on the successful implementation of reading initiatives. In order to assure triangulation, three data sources were collected for each research question (see Table 3).

Table 3

Triangulation Matrix

Research question	Data source 1	Data source 2	Data source 3
1 To what extent does teacher self-efficacy affect the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?	Teacher Survey	Classroom Observation	Literacy Coach Survey
2 To what extent do teacher expectations of student achievement impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?	Teacher Survey	Classroom Observation	Literacy Coach Survey
3 To what extent does school level leadership impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?	Teacher Survey	Principal Interview	Literacy Coach Survey
4 To what extent does the grade configuration of a school impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?	Teacher Survey	Principal Interview	Literacy Coach Focus Group

Study Sample

The focus for this study was four elementary schools, two of which serviced grades kindergarten through four, and two of which serviced grades kindergarten through eight. These schools were chosen as sites for this study based on several characteristics, which include both commonalities and differences (see Table 4).

Table 4
Characteristics of Participating Schools as of 2008

Characteristics	School A	School B	School C	School D
Location	heart of the city neighborhood known for drugs, gangs, and prostitution	outskirts of the city closely borders a middle class suburban town	west of the last remaining housing project in the city high crime rate	downtown near the historic section of the city
Grade configuration	K-8	K-4	K-4	K-8
Total student population	835	315	254	571
Limited English proficiency population	13%	13%	5%	18%
Special education population	12%	18%	6%	20%
Total students in grade 3	57	48	54	55
Total students in grade 4	74	57	49	43
Departmentalized in grade 3 and 4	Yes	Yes	Grade 3: No two self-contained third grade classrooms Grade 4: Yes	Yes

Characteristics	School A	School B	School C	School D
Total population of Hispanic students in grade 3	84%	79%	73%	76%
Total population of Hispanic students in grade 4	83%	69%	70%	71%
Total population of economically disadvantaged students in grade 3 and 4	94%	93%	93%	99%
NCLB status	In Status	Made AYP	Made AYP	In Status
	Year 4	Not in Status	Not in Status	Year 3
Total percent of students proficient on the NJASK3	67%	71%	72%	63%
Total percent of students proficient on the NJASK4	47%	74%	71%	47%

The researcher identified the relevant characteristics, which served as the basis for participation in this study. Since one of the research questions focused on grade configuration it was important to choose schools that serviced different grades. Additionally, district schools were varied in terms of their success, as defined by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations. Given that the study focused on the successful implementation of reading initiatives it was important to choose schools with various levels of success to participate. Two of the participating schools were sanctioned by NCLB, and classified as Schools In Need of Improvement, while two of the participating schools were meeting NCLB regulations in the area of Language Arts Literacy (LAL).

It was imperative to use schools as the site for this study that had differences in academic success as it related to LAL and the implementation of reading initiatives. However, it was equally important to ensure that participating schools had some common factors. Although each participating school was located in a different section of the city, they shared similarities in terms of demographics, economic status, and mobility rates. The majority of students in the third and fourth grade at all four participating schools were Hispanic, with an average of forty-seven percent of the student population speaking Spanish as the first language spoken at home. Approximately ninety-five percent of the students in all participating schools were considered to be economically disadvantaged, as defined by the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) subgroups. The average mobility rate across all four participating schools was twenty-eight percent, approximately eighteen percent higher than the state average. All of the teacher participants taught grades three or four, and ranged in experience from five to twenty-two years. Each school employed one building-based literacy coach who worked with teachers

on effective implementation of reading initiatives. The literacy coaches from all four schools participated in this study, and ranged in coaching experience from three to five years.

School A, was located in the heart of the city, in a neighborhood known for drugs, gangs, and prostitution. The school serviced students in grades kindergarten through eight, with a total student population of eight hundred and thirty-five (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Eighty-four percent of the students spoke Spanish as their first language, and approximately thirteen percent of students were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Twelve percent of students received special education services through either a self-contained or resource program (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). In the 2007-2008 school year there were fifty-seven students in third grade and seventy-four students in fourth grade (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Teachers were departmentalized in both grades, and therefore one literacy teacher saw all students for literacy in three ninety-minute blocks. According to the 2008 NJASK Cycle II Report eighty-four percent of the students who took the NJASK in grade three, and eighty-three percent of the students who took the NJASK in fourth grade were Hispanic. Ninety-four percent of the student population was considered to be economically disadvantaged (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

School A was considered to be a School In Need of Improvement, as it was a Year 4 failing school. Schools were considered to be “in status” when they did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the state assessment, as defined by NCLB guidelines. As a school “in Year 4,” School A was required, by NCLB regulations, to complete a Corrective Action plan. In 2008, sixty-seven percent of third graders at School A were proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 3, and forty-seven percent were proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 4 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008). Since they were a School in Need of Improvement,

School A received additional funding, but with that funding came a great deal of paperwork, as well as careful monitoring from the state and district officials.

School B was located on the outskirts of the city, and closely bordered a middle class suburban town. The school serviced students in grades kindergarten through four with a total student population of three hundred and fifteen (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Sixty-one percent of the students spoke a language other than English as their first language (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Thirteen percent of students were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and eighteen percent of students were receiving special education services through either a self-contained or resource program (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). In the 2007-2008 school year there were forty-eight students in third grade and fifty-seven students in fourth grade (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Teachers were departmentalized in both grades, and therefore one literacy teacher saw all students for literacy in two ninety-minute blocks. According to the 2008 NJASK Cycle II Report seventy-nine percent of the students who took the NJASK in grade three, and sixty-nine percent of the students who took the NJASK in fourth grade were Hispanic. Ninety-three percent of the student population was considered to be economically disadvantaged (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

School B was “out of status,” which meant that they had made AYP, as defined by NCLB guidelines. In 2008 seventy-one percent of the third grade students at School B were proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 3, and seventy-four percent of fourth grade students were proficient or advanced proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 4 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008). School B did not receive additional funding from NCLB, and

was not monitored by the state. They received district support, but were not considered as great a priority as those schools that were in status.

School C was located just west of the last remaining housing project in the city; although the students attending School C did not live in that housing project, the neighborhood had a high crime rate. The school serviced students in grades kindergarten through four with a total student population of two hundred and fifty-four (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Fifty-three percent of the students spoke a language other than English as their first language, with forty-nine of that fifty-three percent speaking Spanish as their first language (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Five percent of students were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and six percent of students were receiving special education services through a resource program (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Limited space prohibited the school from housing a self-contained special education class. Students who required the supports of a self-contained classroom were bused to another school in the area. In the 2007-2008 school year there were fifty-four students in third grade and forty-nine students in fourth grade (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). As is the case with the three other schools, teachers were departmentalized in fourth grade, and therefore one literacy teacher saw all students for literacy in two ninety-minute blocks. School C was the only participating school that was not departmentalized in third grade. Third grade teachers were self-contained, and each teacher had his or her class for the entire day, teaching math, language arts literacy, science, and social studies. As a result, there were two third grade teachers who participated in the study from School C. According to the 2008 NJASK Cycle II Report seventy-three percent of the students who took the NJASK in grade three, and seventy percent of the students who took the NJASK in

fourth grade were Hispanic. Ninety-three percent of the student population was considered to be economically disadvantaged (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

School C was also “out of status” and had made AYP, as defined by NCLB guidelines. In 2008 seventy-two percent of third graders were proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 3, and seventy-one percent of fourth graders were proficient or advanced proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 4 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008). School C did not receive additional funding from NCLB. Since they were considered to be a “high performing school” they were not subject to yearly monitoring from the state. They continued to receive district support; however, the district prioritized their support based on the status of schools. Therefore School B and School C received less support than schools A and D, as they were not “in status.”

School D was located downtown, near the historic section of the city. The school serviced students in grades kindergarten through eight, inclusive of a large special education population, and totaled five hundred and seventy-one students (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Twenty percent of the students spoke a language other than English as their first language, with nineteen of that twenty percent speaking Spanish as their first language (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Eighteen percent of students were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and twenty percent of students were receiving special education services through either a self-contained or resource program (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). In the 2007-2008 school year there were fifty-five students in third grade and forty-three students in fourth grade (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Teachers were departmentalized in both grades, and therefore one literacy teacher saw all students for literacy in two ninety-minute blocks. According to the 2008 NJASK Cycle II Report seventy-six percent of the students who

took the NJASK in grade three, and seventy-one percent of the students who took the NJASK in fourth grade were Hispanic. Ninety-nine percent of the student population was considered to be economically disadvantaged (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

School D was considered to be a School In Need of Improvement, as it was a Year 3 failing school, a status that required a site-based improvement plan. School D had not made AYP, as defined by NCLB guidelines. In 2008, sixty-three percent of third graders at School D were proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 3, and forty-seven percent were proficient on the LAL component of the NJASK 4 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008). Like School A, School D received additional funding, but had to contend with the paperwork and monitoring that comes with being a School In Need of Improvement.

Participants

All of the third and fourth grade literacy teachers from Schools A, B, C, and D participated in this study. Since all schools were departmentalized in fourth grade there was one fourth grade literacy teacher in each school. Three of the four schools that participated were departmentalized in third grade, which meant there was one third grade literacy teacher in Schools A, B, and D. School C was the only school that participated in this study that was not departmentalized in third grade. As a result, there were two third grade literacy teachers who participated in this study from school C. A total of nine teachers participated in this study, four fourth grade teachers and five third grade teachers.

The teachers that participated in this study represented a balance of the variables for this study. After informally observing these teachers, briefly conversing with them, and discussing their performance with the principals of Schools A, B, C, and D it was determined, by the researcher, that these teachers fit the criteria for participation in this study. All nine teachers had

been teaching for no less than five years, with at least two years in the grade level they were currently teaching (third or fourth grade). Brief conversations with each teacher revealed varied beliefs in terms of classroom management, instruction, student engagement, level of questioning, differentiation, and classroom environment. In speaking with principals, it was learned that the nine teacher participants had varied successes in terms of their evaluations and observations. Some had stellar evaluations from administrators, while others were in the process of completing corrective action plans.

Each school employed a building-based literacy coach who worked with all the literacy teachers in the building, providing job-embedded professional development and support. The literacy coaches from schools A, B, C, and D participated in the study, a total of four coaches. Additionally, each school had a building principal, or school level leader. Each principal participated in this study, a total of four principals.

Data Sources

The following data sources were collected and entered into the data pool. The data pool was used to study the research questions. A Triangulation Matrix (see Table 3) was created in order to indemnify the validity of the research process. Five data sources were collected systematically in an effort to assure triangulation. Research question one asked, “To what extent does teacher self-efficacy affect the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?” In order to gather data to answer question one the following instruments were used: Teacher Survey (see Appendix A), Classroom Observation (see Appendix B), and Literacy Coach Survey (see Appendix C).

Research question two asked, “To what extent do teacher expectations of student achievement impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?” In order to

gather data to answer question two the following instruments were used: Teacher Survey (see Appendix A), Classroom Observation (see Appendix B), and Literacy Coach Survey (see Appendix C).

Research question three asked, “To what extent does school level leadership impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?” In order to gather data to answer question three the following instruments were used: Teacher Survey (see Appendix A), Principal Interview (see Appendix D), and Literacy Coach Survey (see Appendix C).

Research question four asked, “To what extent does the grade configuration of a school impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?” In order to gather data to answer question four the following instruments were used: Teacher Survey (see Appendix A), Principal Interview (see Appendix D), and Literacy Coach Focus Group (see Appendix E).

Surveys. Surveys provide data that is efficient and versatile. Surveys are frequently used by educational researchers because they are helpful in gathering information concerning affective, cognitive, or attitudinal issues (Sagor, 2000). Additionally, surveys, such as the ones that were used, obtain information about people’s perspectives on an issue, rather than their actual behaviors (Stringer, 2008). The use of a survey in this study was an effective tool for gathering data as the intent was to gage participants’ perceptions regarding how reading initiatives were impacted by teacher self-efficacy and expectations for students. The survey also questioned participants concerning the role of the school leader and the effects of grade configuration on the success of reading initiatives.

The teacher survey was created to address each research question. A Test Specification Matrix (see Table 5) ensured that each test question addressed one of the research questions.

Table 5

Test Specification Matrix: Teacher Survey

Test question	Research question
1	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
2	2 Teacher Expectations
3	3 Leadership
4	4 Grade Configuration
5	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
6	2 Teacher Expectations
7	3 Leadership
8	4 Grade Configuration
9	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
10	2 Teacher Expectations
11	3 Leadership
12	4 Grade Configuration
13	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
14	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
15	2 Teacher Expectations
16	4 Grade Configuration
17	2 Teacher Expectations
18	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
19	2 Teacher Expectations

20	4 Grade Configuration
21	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
22	2 Teacher Expectations
23	3 Leadership
24	4 Grade Configuration
25	2 Teacher Expectations

The teacher survey contained a total of twenty-five statements. Seven questions targeted research question one, teacher self-efficacy, and eight questions targeted research question two, teacher expectations of students. Four questions reflected question three, the role of the school leader, and six questions reflected question four, grade configuration. The teacher participant responded to each statement by choosing the numbers one to four, one representing “strongly disagree”, two representing “disagree”, three representing “agree”, and four representing “strongly disagree.” A Likert Scale was considered, but ultimately rejected, to prevent the participants from relying on the “neutral” option when taking the survey. The final statement was open-ended and required the participant to list the greatest strength that contributes to the successful implementation of reading initiatives and the greatest challenge, which impedes the success of reading initiatives.

The literacy coach survey was created to address three of the four research questions. As was done with the teacher survey, a Test Specification Matrix (see Table 6) ensured that each test question addressed one of the research questions.

Table 6

Test Specification Matrix: Literacy Coach Survey

Test question	Research question
1	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
2	3 Leadership
3	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
4	3 Leadership
5	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
6	2 Teacher Expectations
7	3 Leadership
8	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
9	2 Teacher Expectations
10	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
11	2 Teacher Expectations
12	3 Leadership
13	2 Teacher Expectations
14	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
15	2 Teacher Expectations
16	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
17	1 Teacher Self-Efficacy
80	
18	2 Teacher Expectations
19	2 Teacher Expectations
20	2

	Teacher Expectations
21	3 Leadership

The literacy coach survey contained twenty-one statements, and required the coach to respond by choosing the numbers one to four. One represents “strongly disagree”, two represents “disagree”, three represents “agree”, and four represents “strongly disagree.” As was the case with the teacher survey, a Likert Scale was rejected to encourage the participants to either agree or disagree with each statement. Eight survey questions were intended for question one, teacher self-efficacy, and eight questions were intended for question two, teacher expectations for students. The remaining five questions targeted question three, the role of the school leader. The final statement was identical to the one used in the teacher survey and was open ended, requiring the literacy coach to list the greatest strength and challenge as it related to the implementation of reading initiatives.

Classroom observation. Classroom observations were conducted in all nine of the participating classrooms. Observations were conducted by two observers who observed each classroom together and compared results following each observation. The principal purpose of observations was to familiarize the researcher with the context in which literacy initiatives were implemented (Stringer, 2008). Stringer (2008) noted:

Careful observation enables participants to ‘build a picture’ of the context and the activities and events within it, revealing details of the setting, as well as the mundane, routine activities comprising the life-world of teachers, students, and administrators. Sometimes, however, the opportunity to observe is revelatory, providing keen insights or illuminating important but taken-for-granted features of school and classroom life. (p. 70)

Research questions one and two focused on teacher self-efficacy and teacher expectations of students. In this study classroom observations were recorded using an observation checklist, which provided a clear record of the classroom activities and interactions between the teacher and student. The observation checklist was focused, so that only the details relevant to research questions one and two were recorded. The information gathered from classroom observations was analyzed in conjunction with the responses accumulated from the teacher survey. Classroom observations were an important tool for this study, as it provided concrete examples that validated the survey responses.

The observation checklist consisted of nine broad categories that were observed throughout the ninety-minute block. Research has shown that teachers with high self-efficacy elicit more meaningful student feedback and higher levels of student engagement, have better classroom management, and often create a classroom environment that supports learning (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007). Furthermore, teachers often demonstrate high expectations for their students through challenging lesson objectives, infusion of higher level thinking questions, meaningful feedback, and varied teaching techniques and activities (Rubie-Davies, 2007). Supported by research, the nine categories that made up the observation checklist are as follows: Lesson Objective, Level of Questioning, Differentiation, Classroom Management, Classroom Instruction and Activities, Student Engagement, Classroom Environment, Teacher Feedback, and Student Feedback.

The observation checklist was created in a table to maintain organization and focus during the observation. Each category was rated on a scale from one to four. A rating of one indicated that there was no evidence of implementation; a rating of two signified that there was some evidence of implementation; a rating of three denoted that there was evidence of consistent

implementation; and a rating of four suggested model implementation. Each category received a rating along with a series of anecdotal notes, which supported that rating.

Focus group. The literacy coach focus group addressed the fourth research question. Literacy coaches serviced the entire building, regardless of whether that school housed five or nine grades, and as a result all the coaches were affected by the grade configuration of their school. For this reason, a focus group devoted entirely to the topic of grade configuration was used. Focus groups allow individuals to explore their experiences interactively, and come together to discuss issues of common interest (Stringer, 2008). A total of four coaches participated in the focus group.

Stringer (2008) advises the focus group facilitator to frame the issue and follow a series of focused questions that are similar in format. Therefore the focus group consisted of three questions, which asked participants to think about and respond to several perspectives on grade configuration. The first question provided a framework for the session asking: “Is the success of reading initiatives impacted by the grade configuration of your school? How?” The second question required the participant to agree or disagree with a statement and explain their opinion: “It is more difficult to provide support regarding the implementation of reading initiatives in a K-8 school, as opposed to a K-4 school. The final question also asked participants to agree or disagree with a statement and explain their opinion: “Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.” These questions were meant to stimulate a productive discussion around the topic of grade configuration.

Interview. Interviews enable participants to describe the situation from their own perspective and to interpret events on their own terms (Stringer, 2008). The principal interview was an important tool to inform this study, as it reflected the school leader’s point of view. The principal

interview addressed research question three and research question four, which focused on the role of the school leader and grade configuration. A principal or school level leader led each participating school. These principals ranged in experience from four to nine years.

Sagor (2000) recommended that interviewers follow specific guidelines when planning interviews. He suggested that interviewers limit the number of questions and avoid leading questions that adversely affect the objectivity of responses (Sagor, 2000). With that in mind, the interview consisted of five questions. Two questions spoke directly to the role of the school leader. Question one asked: “What is the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives?” and followed up with, “How do you support the implementation of reading initiatives as a school level leader?” Question two asked: “In your opinion what is the single most important thing a principal can do to support the implementation of reading initiatives? What is the greatest challenge facing a principal in regard to the implementation of reading initiatives?” Question three rose, “How is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school?” Question four posed: “What are the greatest benefits and challenges of a K-4 school in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives?” Or: “What are the greatest benefits and challenges of a K-8 school in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives?” The final question required the participant to agree or disagree with a statement and explain their opinion: “Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.” These questions were meant to stimulate a productive discussion around the topic of grade configuration and the role of the school leader.

NJASK 3 and 4 data. The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) was a standardized test given to all New Jersey public school students in grades three through eight, and was administered by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results of the NJASK 3

and 4 from the 2008-2009 school year informed this study. Each district was provided with a report, the Cycle II Report, summarizing each school's performance on the test. The information provided in the report was delineated by grade and subject area. Scores were reported for the total population of students, but were further broken down into subgroups. These subgroups include: General Education, Special Education, and Limited English Proficient. Additional breakdowns are by economic status, which included economically disadvantaged, as well as ethnicity for example, Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, White, Pacific Islander, or other. On this report, student scores were reported in three categories, "Partially Proficient," "Proficient," and "Advanced Proficient." Individual student scores were not reported, instead the Cycle II Report provided the reader with the number of students who fall into each category, and the corresponding percentage. This research study utilized the information in the 2008 Cycle II Reports for Language Arts Literacy in grades three and four, for Schools, A, B, C, and D. The Cycle II data was used to choose sites as participants for this study. At the time, the 2009 NJASK 3 and 4 tests had not taken place, and therefore data from that assessment was not available.

Twelve percent of the total number of classroom teachers in the four schools participated in this study. The majority of the teachers who participated in this study taught language arts to all students in grade three or four. Consequently, Cycle II data was a relevant data source as high levels of proficiency for students in a particular grade indicated a correlation between the successful implementation of reading initiatives and student achievement.

Data Collection Procedures

Data Collection procedures were systematic and efficient. Data collection began by gathering information from the literacy coaches. After scheduling a date and time that was convenient for each participant, the focus group met in the conference room at the central offices. The four

participating literacy coaches began by taking the literacy coach survey. The only instructions that were given to the coaches at that time were those directions printed at the top of the survey. All surveys were taken using a pen, to minimize erasers and potentially the changing of answers. Following the completion of the survey all participants were part of a focus group. The focus group lasted approximately one hour. Prior to beginning the discussion, a scripted introduction (see Appendix F) was read to the participants giving them some background knowledge regarding how grade configuration was defined, for the purpose of this study. This was followed up by the focus group questions, which were also read from a script.

After data had been collected from the literacy coaches, principal interviews began. Each principal who agreed to participate in this research study was interviewed individually. The interview was scheduled based on a time that was convenient for the principal, and took place at their school. The interview lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes, and began with a scripted introduction (see Appendix G), which provided some background on the study and the topics being discussed. This was followed up by the interview questions, which were read from the same script.

The final group of participants to gather data from was the teachers. Teachers took the survey during a scheduled grade level meeting at their individual school. Each school scheduled at least a thirty-minute block of time each week for teachers at a particular grade level to meet. Both the teachers and principals agreed to use one of their scheduled grade level meetings, which took place during the school day, to complete the teacher survey. The only instructions that were given to all teachers at the start of the meeting were those directions printed at the top of the survey. All surveys were taken using a pen, to minimize erasers and potentially the changing of

answers. After all participants had taken the survey the classroom observations were scheduled. Each participant was observed at least three times, during a ninety-minute literacy block.

Timelines For Data Collection

Data collection began in June of 2009 and was completed by the end of October of 2009. The survey and focus group for the literacy coaches took place in June of 2009. All principals were interviewed in July of 2009. The teacher survey was administered in September of 2009, and classroom observations took place from September to October of 2009. The test data used for this study was from the May 2008 administration of the NJASK 3 and 4.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was ongoing and cyclical. The data pool consisted of all data sources, inclusive of surveys, focus group, classroom observations, and interview responses. Data analysis began by looking at one data source from one participant. That piece of data was analyzed for the purpose of identifying any big concepts. This initial data source was compared to others of the same type, for example, a comparison of all teacher surveys, in an attempt to discover any common threads. This helped to generate a tentative pattern. Additional data sources were analyzed in a similar manner, which helped to confirm whether the original pattern continued.

Different types of data sources were then compared, in an effort to achieve triangulation. For example, the patterns generated from the teacher surveys were compared to those uncovered from the classroom observations, and expectantly supported the same conclusions. The conclusions drawn from two data sources were compared with an additional data source to provide further clarification regarding any discovered patterns.

As a final point, the data was analyzed using discourse and text analysis that was ongoing and cyclical. The preliminary patterns were identified within small pieces of the data. These

preliminary patterns were compared with larger pieces of data. As needed, the patterns were modified and compared to the data sources. The data analysis was used to generate hypotheses regarding the research question and served as the basis for subsequent conclusions and recommendations.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed regarding the request for their voluntary participation in this study. They were informed that the topics were being investigated in order to further understand the factors that both impede and nurture the success of reading initiatives in the district. The consent forms (see Appendix H, I, and J) provided detailed information regarding the scope of their participation, any risks or benefits to the participant, and reiterated that participation was both confidential and voluntary to all involved participants. It was explained to all participants that they would not be asked to do anything beyond their job responsibilities, and as a result there were no anticipated risks to them as participants.

Teachers who participated in this study took a survey during the regular school day. They were not required to give up any preparation or lunch periods. Additionally, all classroom observations were not evaluative, and were scheduled in collaboration with the teacher. Furthermore literacy coaches took a survey, and participated in a focus group. Both activities took place during the school day, and did not require the literacy coach to give up any preparation or lunch periods. Finally, all principals gave an interview, scheduled according to a date and time that was most convenient for them.

To conclude, all data collection exercises were not beyond the purview of the teachers, principals, or literacy coaches' responsibility. Since the requirements for participation in this

study were consistent with the confines of all participants' job descriptions, there were no anticipated risks to the participants.

Validity And Reliability

The validity of this study was verified through procedures establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Stringer, 2008). For instance, the data in this study was collected systematically and triangulation was assured because of the variety of data sources including: Teacher Survey, Literacy Coach Survey, Classroom Observation, and Principal Interview. Additionally, the observation checklist was created based on research, which contributed to the validity of that source. Both the literacy coach survey and teacher survey were accompanied by a test specification matrix, which helped to assure that the questions being asked were measuring what they were intended to measure. Finally, face validity was established for all interview, focus group, and survey questions, as the instruments were shown to five people who all agreed that the questions did relate directly to a research question for this study.

Reliability refers to the extent to which similar results may be expected from similar samples with the population studied, across different contexts and at different times (Stringer, 2008). For example, the data collected for this research was naturally occurring in the setting of four elementary schools. Both the literacy coach and teacher survey contained questions that were reworded and repeated to insure the reliability of responses. Although the teacher survey was administered in each of the four participating schools, reliability was built because all survey administrations occurred during a grade level meeting, which always took place in the literacy coach's office. Additionally the same directions were read during each survey administration. Two colleagues reviewed these directions to insure that they could be easily understood. Additionally, the teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and observation checklist were pre-tested

by four colleagues to insure their reliability. Furthermore, reliability criteria for both teacher and literacy coach survey questions were set for the purposes of data analysis. For example, teacher survey questions where seven or more teachers responded similarly were considered to be reliable and literacy coach survey questions where three or more literacy coaches responded similarly were considered reliable. Finally, inter-rater reliability was utilized as two people reviewed the teacher and literacy coach survey, conducted classroom observations simultaneously, and recorded and analyzed interview and focus group responses. These elements contributed to the validity and reliability of this study.

Limitations

The qualitative results from this study were obtained from elementary teachers, coaches, and principals from one urban school district. Since all but one school utilized departmentalization, meaning teachers only taught one subject, only twelve percent of the total number of classroom teachers in the four schools participated in the study. Consequently, there was one Language Arts Literacy teacher per grade level at three of the participating schools. School C was the only school not departmentalized in third grade, which meant there were three literacy teachers from School C who were eligible to participate, as opposed to only two literacy teachers from Schools A, B, and D.

Furthermore, the NJASK 3 and 4, which was used as a tool to choose sites to participate in this study was changed significantly for the 2009 test administration. There were more reading passages and brand new writing prompts in the 2009 test. Additionally, reading was weighed more heavily than it had been in previous years. For example, in third grade the reading portion of the test accounted for sixty percent of the points on the test as opposed to fifty percent in previous years. In fourth grade the reading section accounted for sixty-six percent of the test as

opposed to fifty-three percent in previous years. Students were asked to read three reading passages in both third and fourth grade, which was raised from two passages in previous administrations. The picture prompt for writing was eliminated and replaced with a speculative prompt and the explanatory prompt expanded to include a poem prompt or a scenario prompt.

Combined with the changes to the format of the test, was an extensive change in the cut scores for proficiency and advanced proficiency on the 2009 test (see Table 7).

Table 7

2008 and 2009 NJASK 3 and 4: LAL Cut Scores and Percent Correct

		Proficient		Advanced Proficient		Total Points
		Raw Score	Percent Correct	Raw Score	Percent Correct	
2008	LAL 3	16	40	28	70	40
	LAL 4	19	44	30	70	43
2009	LAL 3	25	50	36	72	50
	LAL 4	32	54	45	76	59

The cut scores changed so drastically that the raw score that had indicated advanced proficiency status in 2008 was less than the raw score necessary to achieve proficiency in 2009. The changes to the 2009 test served as a limitation for this research study since the scores for the four schools that participated in this study dropped dramatically in 2009 (see Table 8).

Table 8

2008 and 2009 scores Schools A, B, C, and D

	2008		2009	
	Proficient 3 rd	Proficient 4 th	Proficient 3 rd	Proficient 4 th
School A	67%	47%	38%	28%
School B	72%	89%	22%	58%
School C	72%	74%	27%	32%
School D	63%	47%	18%	35%

The extreme decrease in scores for all four schools that participated in this research study adjusted the status of Schools B and C from Out of Status to Early Warning Schools.

Additionally, School A outperformed the other schools, which was not the case in 2008. The data from 2006 and 2007 supported the use of the 2008 data in choosing schools as participants for this study. However, the changes that are evident in the 2009 data served as a limitation for this study.

Additionally, School A had a larger population of Spanish speaking students in fourth grade as compared to the other three schools. Sixty-seven students in fourth grade at School A spoke Spanish, as opposed to an averaged thirty-four students at the remaining three schools. Furthermore, at the closing of the 2008-2009 school year, the literacy coach position was abolished and replaced by an interdisciplinary coach position, which encompassed all content areas. This was the result of a district-wide restructuring plan, combined with the effects of

budgetary constraints placed on the district by the State of New Jersey. As a result, the findings might not be applicable as reliable indicators in other school districts when examining the factors that affect the success of reading initiatives in urban school districts.

Chapter 4

Data And Analysis

Reading initiatives are ever present in education today. There is often great emphasis placed on these initiatives in urban school districts that struggle with student achievement while trying to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. In order to examine the factors that influence the success of reading initiatives a study was conducted in an urban school district in New Jersey. This chapter describes the results of this study, and seeks to determine the patterns that exist among five data sources. To begin, each section reports the findings for one specific data source. Following those descriptions is an explanation of the major findings as they relate to each research question.

Literacy Coach Survey

Each of the four schools that participated in this study employed one building-based literacy coach. The role of the literacy coach was to provide job-embedded staff development, model lessons, classroom support, constructive non-evaluative feedback, and turnkey training to all of the literacy teachers in the building. All participants were asked to react to each survey question by choosing one of four responses. These included: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree (see Table 9). The use of a survey in this study was an effective tool for gathering data as the intent was to gauge participants' perceptions regarding how reading initiatives were impacted by teacher self-efficacy and expectations for students. The survey also questioned participants concerning the role of the school leader on the success of reading initiatives.

Table 9

Responses from Literacy Coach Survey Multiple Choice Questions

Survey question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Teachers in my building work hard to implement district reading initiatives successfully.	1		1	2
2. The school level leader is not knowledgeable regarding district reading initiatives.		2	1	1
3. External factors (such as a student's home environment) have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.			2	2
4. I am comfortable discussing reading initiatives with the school level leader.				4
5. Teachers in my building believe they can usually reach even the most difficult or unmotivated student.			3	1
6. Teachers in my building believe that their students have the potential to meet or exceed academic standards.			2	2
7. The school level leader in my building has an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives.			1	3
8. Teachers have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.			2	2
9. Teachers in my building often spend time modifying grade level class work because it is too difficult for the students.		2	1	1
10. Teachers in my building believe if the parents would do more with the student they could do more to help them.			1	3
11. The teachers in my building believe that most of their students will be successful in their school careers.		2	2	
12. It is not necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives.	2		2	
13. Teachers in my building believe that most of their students are capable of completing grade level work independently or with minimal supports.	1	1	2	
14. If students do not understand			3	1

something that was taught most teachers in my building would know how to re-teach that concept to increase the students' understanding.				
15. Teachers believe that many of the students in their class are ill prepared for the work that is expected of them.		2	2	
16. Teachers in my building believe that there are some students who regardless of what the teacher does, will not achieve academic success.	1	1	2	
17. The teachers in my building are confident in their abilities to teach every student.			3	1
18. The teachers in my building have high expectations for all of their students.			2	2
19. Teachers in my building believe that many of their students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers.	2		2	
20. Teachers in my building believe that many of their students do not want to learn.	2	2		
21. The school level leader is able to convey their understanding of literacy initiatives to teachers.		1	3	

Note. The number indicates the total responses from each participant

Eight of the twenty-one survey questions solicited feedback regarding the concept of teacher self-efficacy. Of those eight questions there were two pairs of questions, five and sixteen and fourteen and seventeen, that were parallel questions. This meant that if participants answered a particular way to one question they should have answered in that same way to the other question (see Table 10 and Table 11).

Table 10

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Self-Efficacy Parallel Questions: Literacy Coach Survey

	Q 5. Teachers in my building believe they can usually reach even the most difficult or unmotivated student.	Q 16. Teachers in my building believe there are some students who regardless of what the teacher does, will not achieve academic success.
Participant 1	Agree	Agree
Participant 2	Agree	Disagree
Participant 3	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 4	Agree	Agree

Note. If participants agreed to question five than they should have disagreed to question sixteen; If participants disagreed with question five than they should have agreed to question sixteen

Questions five and sixteen were considered to be unreliable as only two out of four participants answered in a consistent manner, meaning if they agreed to question five then they disagreed to question sixteen. Therefore these questions were not used for analysis purposes. Questions seventeen and fourteen were considered to be reliable as all participants answered in the same manner (see Table 11), and therefore responses were used for the purposes of data analysis.

Table 11

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Self-Efficacy Parallel Questions: Literacy Coach Survey

	Q 14. If students do not understand something that was taught most teachers in my building would know how to re-teach that concept to increase students' understanding.	Q 17. The teachers in my building are confident in their abilities to teach every student.
Participant 1	Agree	Agree
Participant 2	Agree	Agree
Participant 3	Agree	Agree
Participant 4	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree

Note. If participants agreed to question fourteen than they should have agreed to question seventeen; If participants disagreed with question fourteen than they should have disagreed to question seventeen

A pattern emerged from these questions. Literacy coaches believed that the teachers in their building knew how to teach and address the needs of all students, but did not believe that all students would benefit from this instruction. This pattern was further validated when an analysis of the remaining four questions, which focused on teacher self-efficacy, was done. For instance, three out of four of the participating literacy coaches felt their teachers worked hard to implement district reading initiatives (as noted in question one). This was echoed in question eight where all participants felt their teachers influenced the success of reading initiatives. Interestingly, in questions three and ten, all of the literacy coaches who were surveyed felt that teachers believed that external factors such as home environments and parent involvement greatly influenced the success of reading initiatives.

In addition to the eight questions focusing on teachers' self-efficacy there were eight questions which focused on teacher expectations. Of those eight questions there were two pairs of questions, thirteen and fifteen and eighteen and nineteen, that were parallel questions (See Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Expectations Parallel Questions: Literacy Coach Survey

	Q 13. Teachers in my building believe that most of their students are capable of completing grade level work independently or with minimal supports.	Q 15. Teachers believe that many of the students in their class are ill prepared for the work that is expected of them.
Participant 1	Strongly Disagree	Agree
Participant 2	Agree	Disagree
Participant 3	Agree	Disagree
Participant 4	Disagree	Agree

Note. If participants agreed to question thirteen than they should have disagreed to question fifteen; If participants disagreed with question thirteen than they should have agreed to question fifteen

All four literacy coaches answered questions thirteen and fifteen in a consistent manner. Thus, if they agreed to question thirteen then they disagreed to question fifteen, and if they disagreed to question thirteen then they agreed to question fifteen. Therefore questions thirteen and fifteen were considered to be reliable and the responses were used for the purposes of data analysis.

Discrepancies in the responses of the four literacy coach participants were noted for the next pair of parallel questions, which were eighteen and nineteen (see Table 13).

Table 13

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Expectations Parallel Questions: Literacy Coach Survey

	Q 18. The teachers in my building have high expectations for all of their students.	Q 19. Teachers in my building believe that many of their students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers.
Participant 1	Agree	Agree
Participant 2	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 3	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 4	Agree	Agree

Note. If participants agreed to question eighteen than they should have disagreed to question nineteen; If participants disagreed with question eighteen than they should have agreed to question nineteen

Questions eighteen and nineteen were considered to be unreliable as only two out of four participants answered in a consistent manner, meaning if they agreed to question eighteen then they disagreed to question nineteen. Therefore these questions were not used for analysis purposes. However, an interesting observation was noted between the two pairs of parallel questions. In parallel questions, five and sixteen and eighteen and nineteen, answers were inconsistent among participants. However, two of the four literacy coaches answered consistently. These coaches were from Schools B and C, or the higher performing schools. Conversely, the coaches from Schools A and D were inconsistent in their responses.

This initial pattern for Schools A and D indicated that although the belief was that teachers have high expectations for their students, the literacy coaches' true feelings were that students struggle in school and may always have a difficult time with academic work. This was further

clarified by reviewing the remaining four questions regarding teacher expectations. For instance, all of the literacy coaches surveyed agreed that teachers believed their students had the potential to meet or exceed academic standards. Yet, the two literacy coaches from Schools A and D responded that teachers spent time modifying grade level class work because it was too difficult for the students. Furthermore, all of the participants felt that teachers believed that students wanted to learn, but only the two participants from Schools B and C felt that teachers believed most of their students would be successful in their school careers.

The preliminary analysis of the eight literacy coach survey questions regarding teacher expectations seemed to have revealed some inconsistencies regarding perceptions of teachers' expectations of students. There were some conflicting viewpoints as some participants believed teachers had high expectations for their students; however, later responses indicated that those expectations might not be set as high as was initially perceived.

The final five questions focused on the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives. Of those five questions there was one pair of questions, two and twenty-one, which were parallel questions (see Table 14).

Table 14

Reliability Matrix for School Leadership Parallel Questions: Literacy Coach Survey

	Q 2. The school level leader(s) is not knowledgeable regarding district reading initiatives.	Q 21. The school level leader is able to convey their understanding of literacy initiatives to teachers.
Participant 1	Strongly Agree	Agree
Participant 2	Disagree	Agree
Participant 3	Disagree	Agree

Participant 4	Agree	Disagree
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Note. If participants agreed to question two than they should have disagreed to question twenty-one; If participants disagreed with question two than they should have agreed to question twenty-one

Questions two and twenty-one were considered reliable as three out of four of the participants were consistent in their response, meaning they followed the pattern for the parallel questions. Participant one's response was in the minority as his or her response was inconsistent with the other three literacy coaches. He or she agreed that the school level leader was not knowledgeable about reading initiatives, but also agreed that the leader was able to convey their understanding about literacy initiatives to the teachers. This contradiction indicated a discrepancy between the literacy coach's perception of the school leaders' knowledge and their ability to convey that knowledge to the teachers in the building.

In an effort to provide further clarity, the final three questions were analyzed. Although all of the participants felt that the school level leader in their building had an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives, only two of the participants felt it was necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives for those initiatives to be successful. Similar to the pattern noted earlier, these two participants were from Schools B and C. Additionally, all of the literacy coaches who were surveyed felt comfortable discussing the implementation of reading initiatives with the school level leader in their building.

In attempting to determine early patterns, it was noted that although school level leaders were involved with the implementation of reading initiatives, and all coaches felt comfortable discussing initiatives with the school level leader, some of these leaders were not knowledgeable about the initiatives. Additionally, the coaches were split as to whether they believed it was necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of reading

initiatives. Literacy coaches from Schools B and C believed school leaders had to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives in order for the initiative to be successful, while literacy coaches from Schools A and D did not. This was a significant finding, since it not only influenced the way the initiative was implemented, but also the amount of sustained success the initiative had. This could ultimately impact student achievement since consistent and effective instruction will always affect students' academic success.

The final element of the literacy coach survey was an open-ended question, which asked participants to give their opinion regarding the greatest strength contributing to the success of reading initiatives and the greatest challenge that impedes the success of reading initiatives. Although there was a diversity of responses concerning strengths which contributed to the success of a reading initiative, the following patterns were noted: support from leadership, willingness of the staff to work together and teach according to student needs, and giving teachers an opportunity to see initiatives work in an authentic classroom setting. Although answers varied in regard to challenges impeding the success of reading initiatives, two themes that were repeated by all participants were: inconsistent implementation of initiatives and (differences in) teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the initiative and how children learn.

Although some preliminary patterns emerged from the analysis of the literacy coach survey, additional data sources were necessary to either prove or negate these initial patterns. The literacy coach survey indicated that there were discrepancies between the perceptions that appear on the surface and what might actually be the true beliefs of those who worked to implement district reading initiatives.

Literacy Coach Focus Group

The four literacy coaches who completed the literacy coach survey also participated in a one hour focus group. The focus group took place at a district office conference room. This was a location that all parties were familiar with, and one where similar conversations had taken place before. The four literacy coaches were read a script prior to the start of the focus group (see Appendix F). This script informed the participants that they would be discussing the topic of grade configuration. Grade configuration was defined as the specific grades serviced by a particular school. Participants were told that for the purposes of this conversation the number of students serviced in the building, nor the size of the school was relevant. It was then revealed that the two grade configurations that were the focus for this discussion were kindergarten through fourth grade and kindergarten through eighth grade. Participants were also told the conversation would proceed as each person responded to three questions regarding the topics of grade configuration and reading initiatives.

The first question posed asked, “Is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school? This question led to quite a lengthy discussion regarding the benefits of looping, self-contained classes versus departmentalization, and an additional prevailing view regarding whether middle school students’ needs could be met in the climate of an elementary school. For instance, three out of the four participants felt that the K-8 environment hindered the middle school students making it harder for them to adjust to the high school schedule and independence. The facilitator then had to bring the conversation back to the topic at hand by repeating the question, and reminding the participants that the focus was the effects of grade configuration on reading initiatives.

All participant comments indicated that the smaller the grade configuration the easier it was to focus on the initiative and provide support to schools. For instance one participant stated, “In a K-8 school it is hard to find an area of focus for the entire staff. You end up splitting up initiatives for middle school and elementary school. I always feel that the intermediate grades (4-5) are somewhat lost in the process.” Another comment built on that concept, “I agree, but another thing is that most of us (literacy coaches) have an area of expertise. We were either middle school or elementary school teachers. There are some of us who have taught both, but the majority have not. For that reason you end up spending most of your time supporting the initiatives you understand, in the grades you are familiar with. It is unusual to find a K-8 school where the coach is comfortable with all of the grades. When schools have fewer grades it is easier to find people with experience in all of the grades serviced in that school.”

Preliminary analysis for question one revealed that all of the literacy coaches who participated in the focus group felt their role in implementing reading initiatives was impacted by grade configuration. They all believed that with fewer grades to service (i.e. K-4) it was easier to focus attention on initiatives that affect the entire school, rather than trying to keep on top of various initiatives across many different grades. An interesting comment came at the end of the discussion and turned out to be the prevailing view, “If every staff member was a stakeholder in each child’s education I feel all schools would succeed (regardless of grade configuration).” This was adamantly agreed upon by all participants who felt that other factors had greater precedence over the success of the reading initiative than simply the grade configuration of the school.

The second question asked participants to agree or disagree with the following statement and explain their answer. “It is more difficult to provide support regarding the implementation of

reading initiatives in a K-8 school as opposed to a K-4 school.” Three of the four participants agreed with this statement, while one participant disagreed with the statement. The predominant perspective was illustrated by one participant, “It is more difficult to provide support regarding the implementation of reading initiatives in a K-8 school due to the transition from elementary to middle school. There is a gap between the programs on the primary level and the middle school level.” This was immediately followed by another comment, “there’s a vast array of reading strategies to implement in a K-8 school versus a K-4.” However, one participant disagreed with the group, “I disagree, and with the right amount of staff the reading initiative can be implemented.” This participant expressed that K-8 or K-4 schools face different challenges, but it is the staff (i.e. teachers) not the coach that will make or break the initiative. Furthermore, the participant expressed that even though the K-8 coaches have a greater number of grades to service, if the instruction is effective the reading initiative will be successful. Although the other participants understood the point, they still disagreed and the prevailing view was that it was more difficult to provide support regarding reading initiatives in K-8 schools.

Preliminary analysis for question two exposed that the predominant perspective from three of the four literacy coaches who participated in the focus group was that it was more difficult to provide support regarding the implementation of reading initiatives in a K-8 school, as opposed to a K-4 school. The remaining one participant felt that the grade configuration and the role of the coach were secondary to the effectiveness of the staff. This point was recognized by the other participants, however they still believed that, “the literacy coach has a lot to do with supporting the implementation of reading initiatives, and a larger grade configuration just means that the coach will be spread too thin.” There was no evidence to indicate that literacy coaches were looking at grade configuration in relation to student learning. Their perceptions about the effects

of grade configuration were in relation to their work with teachers and not which grade configuration would best foster student learning.

The final question had a similar format to the second question, asking the participants to agree or disagree with a statement and explain their answer; Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives. The prevailing viewpoint, which was agreed upon by all participants was that departmentalization itself does not impede the success of reading initiatives, but rather the way it is handled. Therefore, the success of reading initiatives is based on several factors: Teachers' interest, knowledge, and skills/experience in the areas being taught, class size, time to prepare and how classes are constructed all affect departmentalization (as it would in any other environment).

Preliminary analysis of this focus group question showed disagreement among participants in regards to the effects of departmentalization on the implementation of reading initiatives. Two participants felt departmentalization was a good thing, and did not have any negative effects on reading initiatives. One of the participants felt that departmentalization did impede the success of reading initiatives, as it makes it difficult for literacy to carry over into other content areas. The final participant was not willing to place the blame solely on departmentalization, but rather how it is put into practice. This led to a lengthy conversation regarding the misuse of this initiative. All of the participants felt that if departmentalization was better implemented and teachers were given time to plan together across content areas, departmentalization might have no effect on the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

The focus group yielded one preliminary pattern. Literacy coaches believed that grade configuration had some effect on the implementation of reading initiatives. Furthermore, consensus among the four literacy coach participants could not be reached regarding the effects

of departmentalization on reading initiatives. Consequently, the perspective shared by all literacy coaches was that grade configuration was not as influential as other factors when examining the success of reading initiatives.

Principal Interview

The principals of the schools that were the site for this research study participated in an interview. Their experience as principals ranged from four years to nine years respectively (see Table 15).

Table 15

Tenure for Principal Participants

Total years as a principal	Participants
4Years	1
5Years	2
9 Years	1

Note. Total Participants: 4

Each principal was read a script prior to the start of the focus group (see Appendix G). This script informed the participants that they would be discussing the role of the school leader and grade configuration as they related to the implementation of reading initiatives. For the purposes of this study the school leader was defined as the principal and grade configuration was defined as the specific grades serviced by a particular school. Participants were told that for the purposes of this conversation neither the number of students serviced in the building, nor the size of the school was relevant. It was then revealed that the two grade configurations that were the focus for this discussion were kindergarten through fourth grade and kindergarten through eighth grade. Participants were also told the conversation would proceed with five interview questions

regarding the role of the school leader, grade configuration, and their effects on reading initiatives.

The first question asked, “What is the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives?” This was followed up by, “How do you support the implementation of reading initiatives as a school level leader?” In regards to the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives, one concept was unanimous among all participants. All four principals felt it was important for the leader to be trained and have a complete understanding of the initiative. Although each participant was interviewed separately, their explanations regarding the need for training were the same. One participant articulated, “I need to be in-serviced by the district to understand the initiatives in the classroom and make sure the initiatives are implemented effectively.” Another participant stated that they needed a, “good understanding of initiatives in order to present to staff and provide follow-up.” A third participant summed up their thinking by communicating, “the leader must be trained in order to be in tune and know what to expect from teachers. This is the only way to ensure that the implementation is effective.” It was noted that all four principals focused their initial role in reading initiatives on their own understanding of the topic or concept.

When a follow-up question was asked regarding how they, as the school leader, support the implementation of reading initiatives, all four answers continued to be similar. Three of the principals interviewed felt that they support the implementation of reading initiatives by conducting observations, classroom walk-throughs, and making initiatives a point of discussion at grade level meetings. One participant simply stated, “I am the instructional leader. I have to know instruction.” Another participant elaborated on this idea, “Once you have a strong understanding in the initiative, the support comes from working closely with teachers and

coaches and being visible in the classrooms.” An interesting trend was beginning to emerge early into analysis. All principals emphasized the importance of being knowledgeable regarding the reading initiative and then following up by observing classrooms. Not one participant emphasized their role as being one for support, motivation, or uniting staff around the reading initiative.

Question two inquired, “In your opinion what is the single most important thing a principal can do to support the implementation of reading initiatives?” This was followed up with, “What is the greatest challenge facing a principal in regard to the implementation of reading initiatives?” All participants had different views regarding the most important thing they could do to support the implementation of reading initiatives. Two of the participants felt the most important thing they could do was be in the classrooms monitoring instruction. One participant felt this went beyond the classroom observation or walkthrough and included modeling instruction and reading with students.

The final two participants responded with answers that were aligned to Standard Two from the New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders indicating that, “school administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.” They believed the most important thing they could do was to support teachers with the implementation of the initiative. Supporting reading initiatives involved providing training for teachers, making sure that outside obstacles don’t disrupt the reading initiative, and building a community of readers made up of both staff and students. Interestingly, all of the principal participants initially described their role as being fairly cut and dry; the principal should be knowledgeable about the initiative and then follow-up in the classroom by

monitoring the implementation. In question two, some participants expanded on that idea by saying the most important thing they could do was provide teacher and community support around the initiative.

In continuing to look to the New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders as a guide the follow-up question that arose after question two in regard to the greatest challenge facing principals when supporting the implementation of reading initiatives elicited interesting responses. Two out of the four participants felt that finding the time for follow-up both in the classroom and to converse with classroom teachers was their greatest challenge. These participants seemed to focus their role on Standard Three, “School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.” The remaining two participants articulated the difference between tasks related to managing the school environment and being an instructional leader. For example, “the greatest challenge involves combating resistance from teachers, especially if the initiative is valid.” Additional insecurities were felt by two participants who did not have a background in teaching reading. “I am not a reading teacher. I was a high school math teacher. Knowing how important reading is, how do I effectively monitor it when it is not my area of expertise?”

Similar to the responses regarding the most important thing a school leader can do to support the reading initiative, the responses regarding the greatest challenge facing school leaders varied. It appeared that two participant stuck to the same theme throughout both questions. For example, in response to the first question they felt their role was to understand and monitor the implementation of the reading initiatives by conducting classroom walkthroughs, reviewing lesson plans, and ensuring that curriculum protocols are being followed. For question two they

believed the most important thing they could do to support the initiative was monitor the implementation and the greatest challenge they faced was finding the time to get into classrooms and monitor instruction. The remaining two participants deviated slightly between their answers to question one and question two. For example, both agreed with the other participants when answering question one. They felt the most important thing they could do was to understand and monitor the implementation of the reading initiative. However, when responding to question two they expanded their answer to include support for teachers implementing the initiative and for the initiative itself.

The differences in responses among the four participants appear to relate directly to student achievement as the participants who stuck to the theme of monitoring the implementation of reading initiatives were from Schools A and D, which were Schools in Need of Improvement. Conversely the participants who articulated the role of instructional leader were from Schools B and C, which were schools that had achieved Adequate Yearly Progress.

The remaining questions shifted the focus from the role of the school leader to the effects of grade configuration on the success of reading initiatives. Question three posed, “How is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school?” This question led three participants to the same conclusion. “Grade configuration doesn’t matter.” “Reading initiatives are not impacted by grade configuration.” “Consistency of teaching practices is what’s important.” One of the participants interviewed disagreed with the majority, stating, “The K-8 span is too wide. The upper grades lose something because of it.”

Question four expanded upon the topic of grade configuration, asking what are the greatest challenges and benefits of a K-8 or K-4 school respectively. Two of the school leaders surveyed were principals of a K-4 school. Their responses were similar. The benefits to a K-4 school were

small groups of teachers in a small setting allowed the school to devote time to teachers for both professional development and classroom time. They also felt it allowed the support staff to provide individual attention to teachers and students. The participants also agreed that the challenges of the K-4 model were a lack of upper grade mentoring and role models for the younger students. Although this might not directly impact reading initiatives, it does appear to limit the opportunities and experiences of the students, which could contribute to reading difficulties students have with specific reading initiatives.

The remaining school leaders were principals for K-8 schools. They also seemed to agree on the benefits of a K-8 school. Fascinatingly, the benefits they stated were exactly the same as the challenges presented by the K-4 principals. This included a presence of older role models. One principal stated that the K-8 model allowed for expanded collaboration among the staff and more opportunities for job-embedded professional development. The challenges presented for a K-8 model varied from a loss of focus, since there was a tendency to become like a high school to difficulty uniting the staff under a common initiative, which could cause an “us versus them” mentality among the grade levels.

The final question asked the participants to agree or disagree with the following statement and explain their answer. “Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.” Similar to the results of the literacy coach focus group, this question drew the most disparities in responses. Three of the principals did not commit either way to denouncing departmentalization or agreeing with it. Most responses built in explanations or contingencies into the answers. For example, most principals felt that departmentalization was not ideal in kindergarten through fourth grade because it could impede the success of reading initiatives if teachers didn’t plan collaboratively or if there wasn’t an interdisciplinary approach. Additionally, many responses

indicated that departmentalization can fragment the friendliness of the building. However, one of the participants interviewed agreed with departmentalization in all grades but kindergarten stating that having the teachers grouped by content helped them to focus on one content area. Each of the four principals had different views regarding the effects departmentalization had on the success of a reading initiative. As a result, no prevailing view was evident, indicating that departmentalization does not have as great an influence on the success of reading initiatives as other factors.

The principal interviews yielded some preliminary patterns. Participants felt their influence over the implementation of reading initiatives rested on their ability to understand the initiative, and therefore required that they also be trained on the expectations for implementation of the reading initiative. Additionally, two out of four of the principals interviewed believed their most important role was to monitor implementation of initiatives and classroom instruction as opposed to being an instructional leader; however, their greatest challenge was finding the time to do this. This indicated disconnect among what their beliefs were of their role as principals, and what they were doing on a day to day basis. Additional inconsistencies were found regarding the effects of grade configuration. Although three of the principals interviewed felt that departmentalization and grade configuration did not affect the implementation of reading initiatives, all of the participants were able to note challenges and strengths to departmentalization and the K-4 or K-8 model. Additionally, these challenges and strengths were consistent among all participants.

Teacher Survey

The use of a survey in this study was an effective tool for gathering data as the intent was to determine participants' perceptions regarding how reading initiatives were impacted by teacher self-efficacy and expectations for students. The survey also questioned participants concerning

the role of the school leader and the effects of grade configuration on the success of reading initiatives. Nine teachers from the four participating schools completed the Teacher Survey. These teachers were employed as third or fourth grade teachers. All of the fourth grade teachers who completed this survey were departmentalized, meaning they only taught literacy. Seven of the nine third grade teachers were departmentalized. The two third grade teachers from School C were self-contained, meaning they taught all academic subjects. Descriptive information was collected based on the responses of the nine literacy teachers who completed the survey. Each teacher provided information about themselves that helped to identify characteristics of the sample population of teachers (see Table 16).

Table 16

Descriptive Information: Teachers

	Less than 5 years	5- 10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	21-25 Years
Total Years as a Teacher	0	3	3	1	2
Total Years as a Teacher in the School They Currently Work In	5	2	1	0	1

Note. Total Participants: 9

Currently teaching grade 3	Currently teaching grade 4
5	4

Note. Total Participants: 9

Highest Level of Education	BA	Working toward an MA
Participants	9	1

Note. Total Participants: 9

All participants were asked to react to each survey question by choosing one of four responses.

These included: Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, or Disagree (see Table 17).

Table 17

Responses from Teacher Survey Multiple Choice Questions

Survey question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I work hard to implement district reading initiatives successfully.			6	3
2. Most of my students come to my class prepared for a learning experience.		6	3	
3. It is not necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives.	2	3	4	
4. The amount of grades serviced in a school impacts the success of a reading initiative.	1	3	4	1
5. External factors (such as a student's home environment) have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.			3	6
6. Most of my students have the potential to meet or exceed academic standards.		4	5	
7. The school level leader in my building has an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives.	2	2	5	
8. It is more difficult to receive support regarding reading initiatives in K-8 schools than in K-4 schools.	1	4	4	

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9. I can usually reach even the most difficult or unmotivated student.		2	6	1
10. Most of my students come to school motivated to learn.		5	4	
11. I am comfortable speaking about the implementation of reading initiatives with the school level leader.		4	4	1
12. Departmentalization supports the implementation of reading initiatives.		4	5	

13. As a teacher I have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.		1	6	2
14. If the parents would do more with the student I could do more to help them.			3	6
15. Most of my students come to class unprepared for grade level work.		3	6	
16. K-4 schools receive less support than K-8.		4	5	
17. I often spend time modifying grade level class work because it is too difficult for my students.		1	6	2
18. If students do not understand something I have taught I usually know how to re-teach that concept to increase the students' understanding.		4	2	3
19. Many of my students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers.		5	4	
20. Departmentalization makes it more difficult to implement reading initiatives successfully.		5	4	
21. I believe that there are some students who regardless of what I do may not achieve academic success.		1	8	
22. Most of my students are capable of completing grade level work independently or with minimal supports.	2	6	1	
23. The school level leader has a clear understanding of district reading initiatives and conveys that understanding to teachers.	2	4	3	
24. Grade configuration has no effect on the success of reading initiatives.	2	5	1	1
25. Many of my students are unmotivated and do not want to learn.	1	6	2	

Note. Each number indicates the total responses from each participant

Seven of the twenty-five survey questions solicited feedback regarding the concept of teacher self-efficacy. The seven statements regarding teacher self-efficacy revealed preliminary patterns regarding participants' beliefs in their own abilities as teachers. Interestingly, all nine teachers agreed that they work hard to implement district reading initiatives and eight out of nine

participants felt that as teachers they greatly influenced the success of a reading initiative. Contradicting these responses were reactions to questions five and fourteen, which focused on external factors, such as a student's home environment or parent support. All nine participants responded that these external factors also have a great deal of influence over the success of the reading initiative. Furthermore, seven out of nine teachers agreed with the statement in question nine, which stated, "I can usually reach even the most difficult or unmotivated student. However, in question twenty-one, eight out of nine participants felt there were some students who, regardless of what the teacher did may not achieve academic success. This indicated a conflict among the perceptions of the participants. Finally, the teacher participants seemed to be split regarding their abilities to re-teach concepts in order to increase student understanding. Four out of nine teachers disagreed with the statement, indicating that they did not usually know how to re-teach a concept, while the remaining five agreed with the statement, feeling confident in their abilities to re-teach. Interestingly, the four teachers who disagreed with this statement were from Schools A and D, which were Schools in Need of Improvement. The five remaining teachers were from Schools B and C, which were schools that had maintained Adequate Yearly Progress.

The seven statements that focused on teacher self-efficacy yielded preliminary patterns, which showed discrepancies in teachers' perceptions regarding their own self-efficacy. All but one teacher felt they worked hard to implement initiatives and that as teachers; they greatly influenced the success of reading initiatives. However, all nine participants placed great emphasis on the role of parental support and other external factors, such as a student's home environment, on the success of the reading initiative. These responses contradicted each other indicating that teachers believed that things they have no control over have as much influence on the reading initiative's success as the teacher does. Additionally, the majority of participants

believed that they could usually reach the most difficult or unmotivated students, but also believed there were some students who would never achieve academic success regardless of how hard they worked. Furthermore, teachers were split regarding their own teaching abilities and the probability of success.

Eight out of twenty-five questions on the teacher survey requested a response on the topic of teacher expectations. The eight statements regarding teacher expectations revealed preliminary patterns regarding teachers' expectations for the students in their classes. Of those eight questions there were three pairs of questions, two and fifteen, ten and twenty-five, and seventeen and twenty-two, that were parallel questions (see Tables 18, 19, and 20).

Table 18

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Expectations Parallel Questions: Teacher Survey

	Q 2. Most of my students come to my class prepared for a learning experience.	Q 15. Most of my students come to class unprepared for grade level work.
Participant 1	Disagree	Agree
Participant 2	Disagree	Agree
Participant 3	Agree	Disagree
Participant 4	Disagree	Agree
Participant 5	Agree	Disagree
Participant 6	Disagree	Agree
Participant 7	Agree	Disagree
Participant 8	Disagree	Agree

Participant 9	Disagree	Agree
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Note. If participants agreed to question two than they should have disagreed to question fifteen;
If participants disagreed with question two than they should have agreed to question fifteen

All nine participants answered questions two and fifteen consistently, meaning if they disagreed with question two then they agreed with question fifteen. Therefore, questions two and fifteen were considered reliable questions and the responses were used for data analysis.

For questions ten and twenty-five, discrepancies among the participants' answers were noted (see Table 19).

Table 19

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Expectations Parallel Questions: Teacher Survey

	Q 10. Most of my students come to school motivated to learn.	Q 25. Many of my students are unmotivated and do not want to learn.
Participant 1	Disagree	Agree
Participant 2	Disagree	Agree
Participant 3	Agree	Disagree
Participant 4	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 5	Agree	Disagree
Participant 6	Disagree	Disagree
Participant 7	Agree	Disagree
Participant 8	Disagree	Disagree
Participant 9	Disagree	Disagree

Note. If participants agreed to question ten than they should have disagreed to question twenty-five; If participants disagreed with question ten than they should have agreed to question twenty-five

Questions ten and twenty-five were considered to be unreliable as only six out of nine participants answered in a consistent manner, meaning if they agreed to question ten then they disagreed to question twenty-five. Therefore these questions were not used for analysis purposes.

Questions seventeen and twenty-two were considered to be reliable as all participants answered in the same manner (see Table 20), and therefore the responses were used for the purposes of data analysis.

Table 20

Reliability Matrix for Teacher Expectations Parallel Questions: Teacher Survey

	Q 17. I often spend time modifying grade level class work because it is too difficult for my students.	Q 22. Most of my students are capable of completing grade level work independently or with minimal supports.
Participant 1	Agree	Disagree
Participant 2	Agree	Disagree
Participant 3	Disagree	Agree
Participant 4	Agree	Disagree
Participant 5	Agree	Disagree
Participant 6	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 7	Agree	Disagree
Participant 8	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree

Participant 9	Agree	Disagree
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Note. If participants agreed to question seventeen than they should have disagreed to question twenty-two; If participants disagreed with question seventeen than they should have agreed to question twenty-two

A pattern emerged from these parallel questions. Some teachers have low expectations for their students. This pattern was further validated by an analysis of the final two questions. Question six asked teachers to respond to the following statement, “Most of my students have the potential to meet or exceed academic standards.” Five teachers agreed with this statement, while four disagreed. A similar trend was noted when responses to question nineteen were analyzed. Question nineteen stated, “Many of my students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school career.” Four teachers agreed with this statement, while five disagreed. This showed a clear divide among the expectations of the teacher participants in this study. Interestingly, the five teachers who worked at the schools that were achieving AYP agreed that their students had the potential to meet and exceed academic standards. Conversely, the four teachers who worked in the schools that were considered Schools in Need of Improvement agreed that many of their students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers. Therefore, preliminary analysis of the eight questions regarding teacher expectations from the teacher survey indicated that some teacher participants have low expectations for the students in their classes.

Four of the twenty-five survey questions focused on the role of the school level leader, or principal. The four statements regarding leadership revealed preliminary patterns regarding teacher’s beliefs on the role of the school level leader in the success of a reading initiative. Discrepancies among participants followed a similar pattern as compared to the analysis from the teacher expectations questions. For example, in question three, the five participants from Schools

B and C disagreed with the statement, “It is not necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of a reading initiative.” This was further validated by the split in responses for question seven, which stated “The school level leader in my building has an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives.” In this question the same five participants agreed, while the remaining four teachers from Schools A and D disagreed. Similar results were evident for question eleven, which stated, “I am comfortable speaking about the implementation of reading initiatives with the school level leader.” The five participants from Schools B and C agreed while the remaining four teachers disagreed.

The three survey questions discussed above show a split among participants. This same split was evident in some questions regarding teacher expectations and teacher self-efficacy. The five-four split was significant as five teacher participants worked at schools that were considered “successful,” while the four remaining teachers worked at schools deemed “In Need of Improvement.” The only responses to a survey question regarding the role of the school level leader that deviated from the five-four split was question twenty-three, which stated, “The school level leader has a clear understanding of district reading initiatives and conveys that understanding to teachers.” In this question three participants agreed, while six disagreed. This indicated that although five teacher participants believed their school leader was involved in the initiative, they did not all feel that the leader truly understood the initiative’s purpose or how it should be implemented.

The final six survey questions focused on the topic of grade configuration. The six statements divulged preliminary patterns concerning teachers’ perceptions of the effects of grade configuration on the success of a reading initiative. Consistent with the split that has been noticed throughout this survey, four of the statements regarding grade configuration yielded a

five-four split among participants. All six grade configuration statements were included in a parallel question. The first pair of parallel questions was questions eight and sixteen (see Table 21).

Table 21

Reliability Matrix for Grade Configuration Parallel Questions: Teacher Survey

	Q 8. It is more difficult to receive support regarding reading initiatives in K-8 schools than in K-4 schools.	Q 16. K-4 schools receive less support than K8 schools.
Participant 1	Agree	Disagree
Participant 2	Agree	Disagree
Participant 3	Disagree	Agree
Participant 4	Disagree	Agree
Participant 5	Strongly Disagree	Agree
Participant 6	Disagree	Agree
Participant 7	Disagree	Agree
Participant 8	Agree	Disagree
Participant 9	Agree	Disagree

Note. If participants agreed to question eight than they should have disagreed to question sixteen; If participants disagreed with question eight than they should have agreed to question sixteen

Questions eight and sixteen were considered to be reliable as all participants answered in a consistent manner, meaning if they agreed to question eight then they disagreed to question

sixteen. Therefore, the responses were used for the purposes of data analysis. Interestingly, the five-four split that had occurred throughout this survey repeated itself here, as five of the nine teachers who participated in the study worked at K-4 schools, while four teachers worked in K-8 schools. This showed a correlation between the perceptions of teachers and the grade configuration of the schools they worked in.

This was further corroborated when parallel questions twelve and twenty were analyzed (see Table 22).

Table 22

Reliability Matrix for Grade Configuration Parallel Questions: Teacher Survey

	Q 12. Departmentalization supports the implementation of reading initiatives	Q 20. Departmentalization makes it more difficult to implement reading initiatives successfully.
Participant 1	Agree	Disagree
Participant 2	Agree	Disagree
Participant 3	Disagree	Agree
Participant 4	Disagree	Agree
Participant 5	Disagree	Agree
Participant 6	Disagree	Agree
Participant 7	Agree	Disagree
Participant 8	Agree	Disagree
Participant 9	Agree	Disagree

Note. If participants agreed to question twelve than they should have disagreed to question twenty; If participants disagreed with question twelve than they should have agreed to question twenty

All nine participants answered these questions consistently, which meant that questions twelve and twenty were considered to be reliable and the responses were used for data analysis purposes. Although the five-four split was noted here, it did not apply to this question in the same way since seven of the nine participants work in a departmentalized situation at their respective buildings. Therefore, the results from this data source indicated that not all of the teachers who worked in departmentalized situations believed that the structure supported the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

The final two questions regarding the effect of grade configuration on the successful implementation of reading initiatives were questions four and twenty-four (see Table 23).

Table 23

Reliability Matrix for Grade Configuration Parallel Questions: Teacher Survey

	Q 4. The amount of grade serviced in a school impacts the success of a reading initiative.	Q 24. Grade configuration has no effect on the success of a reading initiative.
Participant 1	Agree	Disagree
Participant 2	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 3	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Participant 4	Strongly Agree	Disagree
Participant 5	Disagree	Agree
Participant 6	Agree	Disagree

Participant 7	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Participant 8	Agree	Disagree
Participant 9	Strongly Disagree	Disagree

Note. If participants agreed to question four than they should have disagreed to question twenty-four; If participants disagreed with question four than they should have agreed to question twenty-four

If participants agreed with question four they should have disagreed with question twenty-four.

Yet, this was not the case. Five participants agreed with question four, and, seven participants disagreed with question twenty-four. It appeared that two people disagreed that the number of grades serviced by a school impacted the success of the reading initiative, but also disagreed that grade configuration had no effect on the success of the reading initiative. Although this could be indicative of a belief that grade configuration goes beyond the grades serviced by a particular school these questions were not used for analysis purposes.

The final element of the teacher survey was an open-ended question, which asked participants to give their opinion regarding the greatest strength contributing to the success of reading initiatives and the greatest challenge that impedes the success of reading initiatives. Answers regarding strengths varied. The following are examples of the responses that were reiterated by the most participants: small class size, academic support teachers, resources at various levels to support instruction, and support from parents. Although answers varied in regard to challenges three examples were consistently found throughout the nine surveys: lack of parent support, lack of administrative support and understanding for initiatives, lack of student motivation, and no academic support teachers to help out in the classroom. One trend that appeared to be consistent among all the examples mentioned above was that they were all beyond the purview of what the classroom teacher can control. This combined with the responses

from the survey questions regarding teacher self-efficacy point to low teacher self-efficacy among some of the participants.

The teacher survey indicated that there were some discrepancies between the perceptions of teachers regarding the factors that influence the successful implementation of reading initiatives. The five-four split between teachers who worked in schools that were achieving AYP and those who worked in schools that were considered Schools in Need of Improvement was evident throughout the teacher survey.

Classroom Observation

The principal purpose of observations was to familiarize the researcher with the context in which literacy initiatives were implemented and provide concrete examples that validated the survey responses. Twenty-seven observations were conducted in the third and fourth grade classrooms of all nine teacher participants. These observations were approximately thirty minutes and occurred during the ninety minute literacy block. Each classroom was observed three times, during a thirty minute chunk of the literacy block. For example, one observation occurred during the first thirty minutes, the second observation occurred during the middle thirty minutes, and the third observation occurred during the last thirty minutes of a block. All observations occurred between September 22, 2009 and October 14, 2009 and were conducted by two observers simultaneously, the researcher and a district supervisor.

A Teacher Observation Checklist/Anecdotal Notes sheet (see Appendix B) was used in all nine classrooms for all twenty-seven observations. The checklist consisted of nine categories, which were supported by research: Lesson Objective, Level of Questioning, Differentiation, Classroom Management, Classroom Instruction and Activities, Student Engagement, Classroom Environment, Teacher Feedback, and Student Feedback. Each category was rated on a scale from

one to four. A rating of one indicated that there was no evidence of implementation; a rating of two signified that there was some evidence of implementation; a rating of three denoted that there was evidence of consistent implementation; and a rating of four suggested model implementation (see Table 24). Each category received a rating along with a series of anecdotal notes, which supported that rating.

Table 24
Classroom Observation Ratings

	Sc. A Gr. 3	Sc. A Gr. 4	Sc. B Gr. 3	Sc. B Gr. 4	Sc. C Gr. 3 Cl. 1	Sc. C Gr. 3 Cl. 2	Sc. C Gr. 4	Sc. D Gr. 3	Sc. D Gr. 4
Lesson Objective	2	2	4	3	3	3	3	1	2
Questioning Level	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	2
Differentiation	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	1	1
Classroom Management	2	2	4	3	3	4	3	1	2
Classroom Instruction/ Activities	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Student Engagement	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	2
Classroom Environment	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	1	2
Teacher Feedback	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	2
Student Feedback	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	1

Note. Table shows the rating most often received for the three observations

Note. Sc. = school; Gr. = grade; Cl. = classroom

The activities observed in all classrooms fell into four categories, phonics/spelling, reading, writing, or centers. These activities were consistent with the philosophy of balanced literacy, which this district had adopted. However, the level of implementation for these activities varied

significantly among the classrooms observed. Similarities were noted across all nine classrooms in the areas of ‘lesson objective’ and ‘classroom instruction and activities.’ For example, eight of the nine classrooms observed had their objectives posted on the board, yet the quality and clarity of the objective varied across classrooms. Variations in terms of how the objectives were reinforced throughout the lesson, use of child-friendly language, and students’ abilities to restate the objective and why it was relevant to their lives were noted. Additionally, it appeared that classrooms where objectives were clearly stated and reinforced throughout the lesson were correlated to the use of higher level thinking questions. Furthermore, classrooms that used higher level thinking questions were more likely to display greater student engagement and exhibit more meaningful teacher and student feedback.

Interestingly, classroom activities and instruction did not vary significantly across the nine classrooms, as all classes utilized the same reading program. At least one of the observations in all classrooms consisted of a lesson from the basal series, Harcourt Trophies. Additionally, all teachers were following the district pacing guide as the units they were working on were equivalent to the unit noted in the pacing guide. Yet, variations in terms of instructional strategies and implementation were immense. The teachers from Schools B and C supplemented the basal series during their lessons more frequently, and used a greater repertoire of instructional strategies beyond those specified in the Teacher’s Manual. For example, the teachers at School C utilized independent reading and literature circles as an extension to the required reading instruction. The teachers at School B employed word sorting to extend phonics and spelling lessons. The teachers at School B and C were consistent with differentiating instruction for various student levels. This extended beyond center time, and appeared to be an important part of each lesson or activity. Conversely, the teachers at Schools A and D stuck to

the lessons from the basal series, and often did not extend activities beyond the whole group lesson. As a result, their ratings in student and teacher feedback as well as the level of student engagement were lower.

Although all nine classrooms had rules and expectations in place the classroom management plans across the classrooms varied as well. Classroom observations revealed that teachers at Schools B and C had explicit expectations and efficient classroom management plans, which included organized routines, clear expectations, and consequences for not following rules. Additionally, these teachers followed through on the plans, and as a result students began to self-monitor their own behavior as well as the behavior of their peers. On the contrary, in the classrooms at Schools A and D teachers were found to be yelling or commanding students. Limited follow-through by the teachers was noted, thus students did not display self-monitoring behaviors as frequently.

One area of the observation checklist did not seem to contribute positively to the study. The classroom environment was defined by the setup of the classroom furniture as well as the presence or absence of instructional support and print-rich materials. The classroom environment in each of the nine classrooms varied in terms of organization, content, and use by students. Yet, this did not appear to positively or negatively impact any of the other areas. Therefore, if the teacher was purposeful and consistent in their delivery of instruction and feedback to students than the classroom environment did not seem to matter. Similarly, if the instruction and teacher feedback was capricious and unplanned than the classroom environment, no matter how good, did not have a positive impact on student learning.

After reviewing the scores and notes for all twenty-seven observations classrooms in Schools B and C were more consistent and specific with their lesson objectives and classroom

management. This positively correlated to better student engagement and more meaningful teacher and student feedback. Additionally, Schools B and C varied their levels of questioning beyond the literal, encouraging students to make connections and apply their learning. This contributed to increased student engagement and more significant student feedback. These factors were directly correlated to teacher expectations and self-efficacy. By extending their activities beyond those specified in the basal series, they were able to differentiate instruction for the various learners in their rooms and encourage students to be independent learners.

Conversely, School A and D scored lower in all areas of the checklist. The teachers' classroom management, level of questioning, and feedback was less consistent and as a result student engagement and student feedback suffered. Furthermore, most activities were directly from the basal series, and did not allow for differentiation of instruction. Therefore, preliminary results from the classroom observations showed that the classrooms in Schools B and C scored higher on the observation checklist than those from School A and D.

Major Findings For Research Question One

Research question one posed, "To what extent does teacher self-efficacy affect the successful implementation of reading initiatives?" The findings reported below were determined based on the data collected from the following data sources: classroom observation, teacher survey, and literacy coach survey.

Major finding one. Teachers believed that external factors they had no control over greatly influenced the success of a reading initiative, therefore indicating low teacher self-efficacy for some participants.

All three data sources supported major finding one, providing triangulation for this finding. It was evident during all classroom observations that teachers placed an emphasis on external

factors during their interactions with students. For instance, teachers often referred to how students did not complete homework. Additionally, some teachers commented that students did not read enough at home or that parents did not do enough to help students with homework assignments or projects. Furthermore, all four literacy coaches and all nine teachers agreed that external factors such as, a student's home environment, greatly impacted the success of a reading initiative. Both teachers and literacy coaches agreed with the statement from their survey that said, "External factors (such as a student's home environment) have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative." A second statement in both the teacher and literacy coach survey yielded similar responses from all literacy coaches and teachers. "If the parents would do more with the student I could do more to help them." All participants agreed with this statement, further demonstrating the importance they were placing on external factors having an impact on reading initiatives. Additionally, both literacy coach and teacher participants cited limited assistance from parents or lack of parental support as challenges impeding the success of reading initiatives in the open-ended portion of their surveys. Furthermore, teachers also expressed that lack of student motivation and the limited availability or non-existence of academic support teachers posed challenges to the success of reading initiatives.

Responses from the teacher and literacy coach survey along with anecdotal notes from the classroom observations indicated that participants placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of external factors that teachers, and in some instances schools, have no control over. Since there is no way for the teacher to control the home environment of a student it should not impact a teacher's self-efficacy for implementing reading initiatives successfully.

Major finding two. Teachers believed there were some students who regardless of what they do will never achieve academic success, which indicated low teacher self-efficacy and could impact the implementation of the reading initiative.

Two of the three data sources supported major finding two. All four literacy coaches believed that teachers knew how to address the needs of the students in their classrooms; however, those teachers did believe that their efforts to provide effective instruction benefited all of their students. Eight out of nine participants agreed with the statement, “I believe that there are some students who regardless of what I do may not achieve academic success.” Moreover, both literacy coach and teacher participants mentioned that although they work hard with all students there were some difficult students whom they may never reach. Yet, information gathered from the classroom observations did not support the other two data sources. There was no evidence that supported the views presented in the teacher and literacy coach survey. Responses from the teacher and literacy coach survey indicated that teachers and literacy coaches believed that they could reach difficult students; however, many felt there were some students that would not achieve academic success regardless of the teacher’s actions. Given that teachers’ belief in their own abilities to teach all students contributes greatly to their own personal self-efficacy, the information above suggested that if teachers believed that some students would never succeed then their faith in their own abilities as teachers would suffer.

Major finding three. Teachers at School A and School D had lower teacher self-efficacy than the teachers at School B and School C.

Evidence from all three data sources supported major finding three, therefore providing triangulation for this finding. Teacher observations consistently demonstrated higher scores in the areas of student feedback, student engagement, and classroom management from teachers at

Schools B and C. For example, the average score in the above areas at School B was three, indicating that there was evidence of consistent implementation. This was also the case at School C, where there were classrooms that received a score of four in the areas of classroom management and student engagement, indicating model implementation. Conversely, at Schools A and D the scores in the areas of classroom management and student engagement averaged at a two, indicating that there was some evidence of implementation for each of the respective areas. However, there were classrooms where the average score for student feedback was a one, indicating that there was no evidence of implementation. Based on the data from the classroom observations teachers in Schools B and C had solicited more meaningful student feedback and higher levels of student engagement. Additionally, teachers at Schools B and C had more effective classroom management.

Data collected from the classroom observations was further supported by the data gathered from the teacher and literacy coach survey. The teacher survey questioned participants regarding their level of confidence in teaching every student. The results demonstrated a clear split between the teachers at Schools A and D and the teachers at Schools B and C. For example, question eighteen on the teacher survey stated, “If students do not understand something I have taught I usually know how to re-teach that concept to increase the students’ understanding.” This question elicited a five-four split among the nine teachers who were surveyed. The four teachers from Schools A and D were not confident in their ability to re-teach concepts, while the five teachers from Schools B and C were highly confident in their abilities. This was further validated by the literacy coach survey. Question sixteen asked coaches to respond to the following statement, “The teachers in my building believe that there are some students who regardless of what the teacher does, will not achieve academic success.” A two-two split was evident among

the four literacy coaches who participated. The two coaches from Schools B and C felt that their teachers were confident in their abilities, while the two coaches from Schools A and D were not.

To conclude, the teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and classroom observations provided triangulation for major finding three. There were clear discrepancies between the scores teachers received during classroom observations. Teachers from Schools B and C consistently scored higher by approximately one or two points in each area relating to teacher self-efficacy.

Additionally, the teacher and literacy coach surveys revealed results indicating a split among the perceptions of the teachers at Schools A and D and their counterparts at Schools B and C.

Therefore, one can conclude that the third and fourth grade teachers at Schools A and D, which currently struggle with student achievement and are designated as Schools in Need of Improvement appear to have lower teacher self-efficacy than the third and fourth grade teachers at Schools B and C, which have achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and boast higher student achievement statistics.

Major Findings For Research Question Two

Research question two posed, “To what extent do teacher expectations of student achievement impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?” The findings reported below were determined based on the data collected from the following data sources: classroom observation, teacher survey, and literacy coach survey.

Major finding four. High expectations for students are not as prevalent as literacy coaches and teachers believe them to be, since discrepancies existed between what the initial beliefs about expectations for students were and what were the true beliefs of literacy coaches and teachers.

Two of the three data sources supported major finding four. All four literacy coaches believed that teachers had high expectations for students, as noted from their responses to question eighteen, “The teachers in my building have high expectations for all of their students.” However, two of the four participants also felt that teachers in their buildings believed that many of their students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers. Additionally, all four literacy coaches responded that their teachers believed most of their students would be successful in their school careers and were motivated to learn. Furthermore, two of the four participants felt that teachers believed that many of their students were ill prepared for the work that was expected of them. These discrepancies were noted among the two participants from Schools A and D. Interestingly, this pattern was further validated by the teacher survey where three out of nine teacher participants disagreed with the following statement, “Many of my students are unmotivated and do not want to learn.” However these same participants also disagreed with question ten, which stated, “Most of my students come to school motivated to learn. In addition, eight out of nine participants agreed with a second statement, “I believe that there are some students who regardless of what I do may not achieve academic success.” Yet, information gathered from the classroom observations did not support the views presented in the teacher and literacy coach survey. Further investigation into the types of assignments that were given to students could have yielded results to support this finding.

Responses from the teacher and literacy coach survey indicated that on the surface teachers and literacy coaches believed that teachers have high expectations for students. However, the inconsistency of responses to statements regarding teacher expectations indicated that these expectations were not as high as was initially perceived. Given that teachers who hold students to high expectations was positively correlated to the successful implementation of reading

initiatives, discrepancies in beliefs regarding student expectations contributed to the implementation of reading initiatives.

Major finding five. Teachers at School A and School D had lower student expectations than the teachers at School B and School C.

Evidence from all three data sources supported major finding five, therefore providing triangulation for this finding. Classroom observations consistently demonstrated higher scores in the areas of student and teacher feedback, lesson objectives, level of questioning, and classroom instruction and activities from teachers at Schools B and C. For example, the average score in the above areas at School B was three, indicating that there was evidence of consistent implementation. This was also the case at School C. In both schools some classroom observations yielded scores of four in the areas of teacher feedback, lesson objectives, and classroom instruction and activities, indicating model implementation. Conversely, at Schools A and D scores in the areas of classroom management and student engagement averaged at a two, indicating that there was some evidence of implementation for each of the respective areas. However, one classroom at Schools A and D received a score of one in the above areas, which indicated that there was no evidence of implementation. Based on the data from classroom observations it appeared that teachers in Schools B and C communicated challenging lesson objectives, varied their level of questioning, and responded with more meaningful teacher feedback. Additionally, data revealed that teachers at Schools B and C varied their instruction and activities, all of which indicated higher expectations for students in comparison to the teachers at Schools A and D.

Data collected from the classroom observations, was further supported by the data gathered from the teacher and literacy coach survey. The teacher survey questioned participants regarding

their expectations for their students' academic success. The results demonstrated a clear split between the teachers at Schools A and D and the teachers at Schools B and C. For example, question six on the teacher survey stated, "Most of my students have the potential to meet or exceed academic standards." This question elicited a five-four split among the nine teachers who were surveyed. The four teachers from Schools A and D disagreed with the statement, while the five teachers from Schools B and C agreed with the statement. Moreover, question nineteen posed the statement, "Many of my students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers." Another five-four split occurred between the teachers from Schools A and D and those from Schools B and C. This was further validated by the literacy coach survey. Question thirteen and fifteen asked coaches to respond to statements regarding teachers' beliefs in their students' ability to complete grade level work. A two-two split was evident among the four literacy coaches who participated. The two coaches from Schools B and C felt that their teachers believed that students were capable of completing grade level work, while the two coaches from Schools A and D did not believe their teachers felt this way.

To conclude, the teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and classroom observations provided triangulation for major finding five. There was a clear discrepancy between the scores teachers received during classroom observations. Additionally, teachers from Schools B and C consistently scored higher by approximately one or two points in each area relating to teacher expectations for students. Furthermore, the teacher and literacy coach surveys revealed a split among the perceptions of the teachers at Schools A and D and their counterparts at Schools B and C. Therefore, one can conclude that the third and fourth grade teachers at Schools A and D, which currently struggle with student achievement and are designated as Schools in Need of

Improvement appear to have lower expectations for students than the third and fourth grade teachers at Schools B and C, which have achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and boast high student achievement.

Major Findings For Research Question Three

Research question three posed, “To what extent does school level leadership impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?” The findings reported below were determined based on the data collected from the following data sources: teacher survey, principal interview, and literacy coach survey.

Major finding six. The school level leaders from Schools B and C were more involved with the implementation of reading initiatives than the school level leaders from Schools A and D.

Evidence from all three data sources supported major finding six, therefore providing triangulation for this finding. The literacy coach survey showed an interesting dynamic among the four participants. For instance, all agreed that the school leader had an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives. Yet, there was a two-two split between the teachers from Schools A and D and those from Schools B and C, regarding whether it was necessary for the school leader to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives. The coaches from Schools A and D did not believe it was necessary for the school leader to be directly involved with the implementation of reading initiatives, while the coaches from Schools B and C felt this was absolutely necessary. This illustrated the differences in the perceived role of the leaders present at the respective buildings. Since this same split was evident in the teacher survey it was concluded that leaders from Schools B and C were more involved with the implementation of reading initiatives than the leaders from Schools A and D.

This was further validated by responses from the school leader during the principal interviews. For example, the school leaders from Schools A and D felt that their role in the implementation of reading initiatives focused on monitoring implementation. They believed the greatest way they could support the initiative was by conducting classroom observations and classroom walk-throughs. Additionally, they felt that time was the greatest challenge impeding their ability to support reading initiatives. These responses indicated a peripheral involvement in the implementation of reading initiatives, and were in line with the responses given by their teachers. On the contrary, the school leaders from Schools B and C believed the best way they could support reading initiatives was to model instruction, interact with students, and support teachers in regards to materials, training, and time devoted to instruction. Furthermore, they felt the greatest challenges impeding their support of reading initiatives, was balancing the role of manager versus instructional leader. The responses from the school leaders at Schools B and C show a direct involvement in the implementation of reading initiatives.

As a final point, the teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and principal interviews provided triangulation for major finding six. The responses from the teacher and literacy coach survey show a clear split between the perceptions of the teachers at Schools A and D and their counterparts at Schools B and C. Although all participants felt the school leader had an integral role in the success of reading initiatives, only those from Schools B and C believed it was necessary for the school leader to be involved in the implementation of reading initiatives. Data collected from the principal interviews illustrated that only the school leaders from Schools B and C believed that direct involvement in implementation contributed to the success of an initiative. Therefore, the school level leaders from Schools B and C were more involved with the implementation of reading initiatives in comparison to the leaders from Schools A and D.

Major finding seven. Some school level leaders were involved with the implementation of reading initiatives, but did not have a clear understanding of those initiatives, thus impacting the successful implementation of the reading initiative.

Evidence from all three data sources supported major finding seven, therefore providing triangulation for this finding. Question twenty-three of the teacher survey asked teachers to respond to the following statement, “The school level leader has a clear understanding of district reading initiative and conveys that understanding to teachers.” This elicited various responses from participants. Three participants agreed with this statement while six disagreed. This was further validated by the literacy coach survey, in which questions two and twenty-one expressed the same sentiment. The data collected from the principal interview supported these findings as all four participants agreed that the leader needed to be trained so that they fully understood the reading initiative and how it should be implemented.

Although all participants agreed that the school leader must understand the reading initiative, all participants did not agree that these leaders had a clear understanding of the initiative. This might indicate a lack of involvement in the initiative. Since all school leaders agreed that it was their priority to be trained and have a full understanding of the initiative one would expect all the leaders to understand and be involved in the current reading initiative. Additionally, all participants felt that the school leaders were involved in the initiative, but not all were able to agree that the leaders truly understood those initiatives. For example, teachers cited that one of the biggest challenges impeding the success of reading initiatives was lack of administrative support and understanding for initiatives. Similarly, literacy coaches stated that one of the biggest strengths contributing to the success of reading initiatives was a strong knowledge base and support from the leadership.

The teacher and literacy coach surveys along with the responses from the principal interviews provided triangulation to support major finding seven. It appeared that although principals were involved in reading initiatives, they might not fully understand the initiative. This could ultimately impede the initiatives' success and hinder the implementation of the initiative with fidelity.

Major Findings For Research Question Four

Research question four posed, "To what extent does the grade configuration of a school impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives?" The findings reported below were determined based on the data collected from the following data sources: principal interview, literacy coach focus group, and teacher survey.

Major finding eight. The grade configuration of a school impacted the perceptions of those who worked in that school and therefore affected the success of reading initiatives.

Evidence from all three data sources supported major finding eight, therefore providing triangulation for this finding. During the literacy coach focus group all four literacy coaches agreed that reading initiatives were impacted by grade configuration. Additionally, all participants believed that fewer grades to service made it easier to focus attention on initiatives, rather than having various initiatives spread across multiple grades. Furthermore, three of the four coaches agreed that it was more difficult to provide support regarding reading initiatives in K-8 schools as opposed to K-4 schools. As a result responses from the literacy coach focus group indicated that participants believed grade configuration had some effect on reading initiatives.

Additional data was collected from the principal interviews. Although more disparities existed, there was a belief by two participants that the K-8 grade span was too wide. Interestingly these two participants were principals at the K-8 schools, which served as sites for this study.

Although all participants cited challenges and benefits for both the K-4 and K-8 grade configurations, they all agreed that the K-8 grade span had clear benefits, which included older role models and more opportunities for job-embedded professional development. However, all principals also agreed that the K-8 span made it more difficult to unite the staff under common reading initiatives. As was true in the focus group, the perceptions of the principals were influenced by the grade configurations of their buildings. These opinions were supported by student achievement data for the schools that participated in the study. For instance, Schools A and D are designated as Schools in Need of Improvement, and happen to be K-8 buildings, while Schools B and C have made Adequate Yearly Progress and are K-4 buildings.

The final data source was the teacher survey. This showed a clear split among the beliefs of the four teachers from the K-8 schools as compared to the five participants who taught in the K-4 schools. This was evident in questions sixteen and eight, where five teachers from the K-4 schools agreed that K-4 schools received less support than K-8 schools. Similarly, four teachers from the K-8 schools agreed that it was more difficult to receive support in K-8 schools as opposed to K-4 schools.

Responses from the teacher survey, principal interview, and literacy coach focus group provided triangulation to support major finding eight. It appeared that the grade configuration of a school impacted the perceptions of those who worked in that school. This was true for all participants in this study. If principals, coaches, and teachers allow grade configuration to influence their perceptions regarding the implementation of reading initiatives the success of that initiative would be impacted.

Major finding nine. Grade configuration of a school was less important than other factors that influenced the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

Evidence from all three data sources supported major finding nine, therefore providing triangulation for this finding. Although grade configuration influenced the perceptions of staff members, participants did not feel it had as great an influence on the success of a reading initiative as other factors. The literacy coach focus group clearly supported major finding nine, as all four literacy coaches agreed that outside influences had greater precedence over grade configurations. Additionally, all participants agreed with one comment, “grade configuration was secondary to effective staffs who become stakeholders in each child’s education.”

This was further validated by responses made during the principal interviews. For instance, although participants discussed the pros and cons to different grade configurations in the end three out of four agreed that grade configuration was not what was important. One participant discussed the importance of “consistency of teaching practices.” Furthermore, teacher survey comments did not mention anything about grade configuration negatively impacting the success of reading initiatives.

Responses from the teacher survey, principal interview, and literacy coach focus group provided triangulation to support major finding nine. Although grade configuration appeared to influence the perceptions of the participants in this study, they did not believe it had a greater impact on reading initiatives than other factors.

Summary

Five data sources were used to determine how teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, the role of the school leader, and grade configuration impact the success of reading initiatives in an urban school district. Individually, each data source yielded preliminary patterns, which were analyzed to provide major findings for each of the four research questions. Triangulation was achieved for seven of the nine major findings indicating different degrees of

certainty. This meant that all three data sources collected for a given research question supported the major finding for that question. This was not the case for two of the major findings; however the results from two of the three data sources were strong and therefore supported its position as a major finding. Results from the analysis of the five data sources indicated a correlation between the areas addressed in each research question and the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

Chapter 5

Discussion And Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the findings determined from this research study as well as a discussion of the results. Additionally, both theoretical implications and recommendations for the school district are explored. Finally, recommendations for future research are offered.

Summary Of Findings

This qualitative study investigated the success of primary reading initiatives, through the context of an urban low-performing district. Data was collected within four areas to see if these factors impacted the successful implementation of reading initiatives. The study was designed to examine whether or not teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, school level leadership, or grade configuration impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives. Data was gathered through a variety of sources, which included surveys, interviews, a focus group, and classroom observations. Data was collected from four literacy coaches, four school leaders, and nine teachers.

The third and fourth grade classrooms from four elementary schools served as the sites for this study. These schools were chosen based on similarities in terms of student population, grade levels, and teacher experience as well as differences in regards to student achievement and grade configuration. Test data from the 2008 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) for grades three and four was used to inform the selection of schools for participation in this study. School B and School C were high performing schools that had achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the 2008 NJASK for grades three and four. Schools A and D had not met AYP, and as a result were designated Schools in Need of Improvement. All third and fourth grade teachers, literacy coaches, and school leaders participated in this study.

Teacher participants took a survey where they responded to twenty-five statements using the following criteria: strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, or disagree. Three classroom observations took place in each of the nine classrooms at different thirty minute intervals during the literacy block. An observation checklist containing nine areas was used to collect anecdotal notes. A rating scale ranging from one to four was utilized. A rating of one indicated there was no evidence of implementation, two specified some evidence of implementation, three signified consistent evidence of implementation, and four pointed toward model implementation. Additionally, four building-based literacy coaches participated in this study by taking a survey where they responded to twenty-one statements and contributed to a focus group where they provided responses to three guiding questions. Finally, school leaders from each of the four elementary schools gave their opinions during a principal interview where they responded to five questions. The responses from these data sources were reviewed and analyzed. This analysis determined nine major findings across the four research questions.

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Teachers believed that external factors they had no control over greatly influenced the success of a reading initiative, therefore indicating low teacher self-efficacy for some participants. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.
2. Teachers believed there were some students who regardless of what they do will never achieve academic success, which indicated low self-efficacy and could impact the implementation of the reading initiative. This finding was supported by two data sources signifying an adequate degree of certainty.

3. Teachers at School A and School D had lower teacher self-efficacy than the teachers at School B and School C. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.
4. High expectations for students are not as prevalent as literacy coaches and teachers believe them to be, since discrepancies existed between what the initial beliefs about expectations for students were and what were the true beliefs of literacy coaches and teachers. This finding was supported by two data sources signifying an adequate degree of certainty.
5. Teachers at School A and School D had lower student expectations than the teachers at School B and School C. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.
6. The school level leaders from Schools B and C were more involved with the implementation of reading initiatives than the school level leaders from Schools A and D. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.
7. Some school level leaders were involved with the implementation of reading initiatives, but did not have had a clear understanding of those initiatives, thus impacting the successful implementation of the reading initiative. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.
8. The grade configuration of a school impacted the perceptions of those who worked in that school. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.

9. Grade configuration of a school was less important than other factors that influenced the successful implementation of reading initiatives. This finding was supported by three data sources signifying a high degree of certainty.

Discussion Of Findings

This research study attempted to determine whether connections existed between the successful implementation of reading initiatives and teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, grade configuration, and the role of the school leader. The findings from this research study indicated that connections do exist, however linear relationships may not. The findings, their correlation to the research question, and the context for the findings are discussed below.

Research question one. The first research question asked, to what extent does teacher self-efficacy affect the successful implementation of district reading initiatives? Three major findings resulted from the data collected regarding teacher self-efficacy. The teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and classroom observations yielded responses that informed the research question.

Responses from the teacher and literacy coach surveys revealed that participants placed a great deal of emphasis on the impact external factors had on the success of reading initiatives. Nevertheless, a contradiction existed between teacher responses. For instance, eight out of nine participants agreed that as teachers they greatly influence the success of a reading initiative. However, all nine teacher participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement, “External factors (such as a student’s home environment) have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.” Believing that external factors have control over the success of reading initiatives showed that participants were placing less emphasis on how they could best impact the success of the initiative.

Research has found that teaching requires ownership, self-regulation, problem solving, and reflection. The teacher must understand that problems are not someone else's to solve. They are an obstacle the teacher must overcome to achieve the goal (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Accordingly, teacher self-efficacy decreases if teachers believe external factors, such as, students' abilities and home environments are more important to the students' learning than the influence a teacher has (Rotter, 1966). Additionally, Hoy and Woolfolk's (1993) results confirmed that teachers can have a high sense of personal self-efficacy, or a feeling that they make a difference with the students they teach, but have low general self-efficacy, or a feeling that the school and/or district cannot overcome environmental factors like poverty or poor home environments.

Further results regarding teacher self-efficacy yielded a similar finding regarding the presence of low teacher self-efficacy among some participants. While seven out of nine teachers agreed that they can usually reach the most difficult or unmotivated student, eight out of nine teachers believed there were some students who regardless of what they did may never achieve academic success. Although this initially presented as a contradiction, when these responses were compared to the literacy coaches' responses the presence of low teacher self-efficacy was revealed. For instance, all four literacy coaches believed that teachers do not believe their efforts to provide effective instruction benefited every student. Moreover, both literacy coach and teacher participants mentioned that there were some difficult students whom they may never reach.

These responses indicated that self-efficacy among some participants was low. For instance, if participants believed that there were some students who may never achieve academic success; their faith in their teaching abilities would be affected. In fact, a common theory of teacher self-

efficacy is that teachers' beliefs in their own abilities influence positive student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teacher self-efficacy is said to increase if teachers believe that student achievement and behavior can be influenced by education (Rotter, 1966).

Patterns regarding teacher self-efficacy emerged, which led to major finding three, teacher participants at School A and School D appeared to have lower teacher self-efficacy than teacher participants at School B and School C. For instance, teacher observations consistently demonstrated higher scores in the areas of student feedback, student engagement, and classroom management from teacher participants at Schools B and C, indicating a higher level of self-efficacy in comparison to the teachers at Schools A and D. Research has shown that teachers with high self-efficacy elicit more meaningful student feedback, bring out higher levels of student engagement, have better classroom management, and often create a classroom environment that supports learning (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007).

The teacher survey questioned participants regarding their level of confidence in teaching every student. The results demonstrated a clear split between the teachers at Schools A and D and the teachers at Schools B and C. A five-four split among the nine teacher participants was clearly evident throughout the survey. The four teachers from Schools A and D were not confident in their ability to re-teach concepts, while the five teachers from Schools B and C were highly confident in their abilities. This was further validated by the literacy coach survey. The two coaches from Schools B and C felt that their teachers were confident in their abilities, while the two coaches from Schools A and D were not.

Linda Bryant's (2007) research supports this finding as she investigated the difference between teacher self-efficacy in schools that achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and those that do not. Bryant's study (2007) revealed that the teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the AYP

schools was significantly higher than those of teachers in the Non-AYP schools for student engagement and classroom management. This study indicated that the consequence of a school being identified as AYP or Non-AYP appears to have an effect on the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Bryant, 2007). Additionally, these findings correlated with Bandura's theory: "teacher beliefs in their efficacy affect their general orientation toward the process as well as their specific instructional activities" (Bandura, 1997, p. 24).

Although the three major findings regarding teacher self-efficacy do not have a linear relationship to the successful implementation of reading initiatives their connections are evident. For example, if teachers believe that external factors, such as a student's home environment, greatly influence the successful implementation of reading initiatives they could blame these factors for why programs or initiatives have not worked, instead of looking at what they can do to improve the initiative's success. It could also prevent them from engaging in self-reflection, a skill Peter Senge believes helps teachers to refine their vision and gain awareness of their current reality (Senge, 2000). Therefore, teachers who engage in reflection would begin to realize their direct influence over the success of reading initiatives.

Furthermore, teachers who believe that there are some students who may never achieve academic success may use this to justify why students struggle and why reading initiatives fail. In fact, Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2004) researched primary grade teachers' self-efficacy as it related to teaching practices. They reported that the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and student performance is viewed as bidirectional. This means that teachers have higher self-efficacy when students do well and students do well when teachers feel more efficacious (Rimm-Kauffman & Sawyer, 2004). Therefore, low teacher self-efficacy may not only negatively impact the implementation of the reading initiative, but how students respond to the implementation of

the initiative. Teachers who do not feel efficacious do not implement reading initiatives with as much success as those highly efficacious teachers.

The final major finding indicated a discrepancy between the self-efficacy of the teachers at Schools A and D, and the teachers at Schools B and C. The appearance of lower teacher self-efficacy at Schools A and D correlated to student achievement at these schools, which were considered Schools in Need of Improvement. Furthermore, higher self-efficacy for the teachers at Schools B and C was connected to higher student achievement, as those classrooms were able to meet Adequate Yearly Progress requirements. John Ross and Peter Gray (2006) reported that teachers with higher efficacy about their own abilities produce higher student achievement in core academic subjects (Ross & Gray, 2006). Additionally, Ross and Gray (2006) reported that teacher self-efficacy contributes to achievement because high efficacy teachers typically try harder, use management strategies that stimulate student autonomy, and attend more closely to low ability students.

Based on the information gathered from this study and the supporting research the successful implementation of reading initiatives was affected positively by high teacher self-efficacy and negatively by low teacher self-efficacy.

Research question two. The second research question asked, to what extent do teacher expectations of student achievement impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives? Two major findings resulted from the data collected regarding teacher expectations for students. The teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and classroom observations yielded responses that informed the research question.

Responses from the teacher and literacy coach survey indicated that on the surface teacher and literacy coach participants believed that teachers have high expectations for students.

However, the inconsistency of responses to statements regarding teacher expectations indicated that these expectations were not as high as was initially perceived. For instance, all four literacy coaches believed that teachers felt their students would be successful in their school careers.

However, the two participants from Schools A and D agreed that teachers believed there were some students who were currently struggling in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school career, and that many students were ill prepared for the work that was expected of them. Similar discrepancies were noted in the teacher responses to survey questions. Six teachers believed that many of their students were motivated to learn. However, all but one teacher participant believed there were some students who regardless of what they did might not achieve academic success. The discrepancies noted here contradict initial responses from both literacy coach and teacher participants who believed that high expectations for all students existed in their buildings.

The discrepancies that existed between responses to statements from the teacher and literacy coach surveys regarding teacher expectations for students, impact the success of reading initiatives. This idea is supported by Harry Wong's (2001) theory for teacher expectations. A teacher with positive expectations who believes that whomever they teach or whatever they do will result in success or achievement will expect to be successful. Therefore he or she is constantly alert and aware of opportunities to be successful (Wong & Wong, 2001). In contrast, a teacher with negative expectations believes that whomever he or she teaches or whatever he or she does will not work out (Wong & Wong, 2001). The expectation of failure encourages the teacher to constantly look for justification, proof, and demonstration of why they have failed. Consequently, the teacher predisposes themselves to realize failure both personally and with the people they deal with, such as their students (Wong & Wong, 2001). This expectation for failure

transfers to the implementation of reading initiatives. If teachers are implementing initiatives with low expectations for students and an expectation for failure, then those expectations will affect the way they instruct and implement the initiative.

Patterns were noted in both surveys and were supported by anecdotal notes and rating scores from classroom observations. This led to major finding five; teacher participants at School A and School D had lower student expectations than the teacher participants at School B and School C. Classroom observations consistently demonstrated higher scores in the areas of student and teacher feedback, lesson objectives, level of questioning, and classroom instruction and activities from teacher participants at Schools B and C. Research has shown that teachers often demonstrate high expectations for their students through challenging lesson objectives, infusion of higher level thinking questions, meaningful feedback, and varied teaching techniques and activities (Rubie-Davies, 2007).

The teacher survey revealed findings similar to those previously discussed and supported in major finding five. Participants were questioned regarding their expectations for their students' academic success. The results demonstrated a clear split between the teacher participants at Schools A and D and the teacher participants at Schools B and C. Teacher participants from Schools B and C felt most of their students had the potential to meet or exceed academic standards. While teacher participants from Schools A and D believed that many of their students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers. This pattern was further validated by the literacy coach survey. A split between the two coaches from Schools A and D and Schools B and C was evident in responses to survey questions. For example, the literacy coaches from Schools B and C felt their teachers believed students were

capable of completing grade level work, while the two coaches from Schools A and D did not believe their teachers felt that way.

These low expectations significantly impact not only the successful implementation of reading initiatives, but also the academic achievement of the students. In their research Good (1987) and Cotton (1989) described the process of how teacher expectations affect student outcomes. Early in the school year, teachers form differential expectations for student behavior and achievement. Consistent with these differential expectations, teachers behave differently toward various students (Good, 1987). If the teacher treatment is consistent over time and if students do not actively resist or change it, it will likely affect their self-concepts, achievement motivation, level of aspiration, classroom conduct, and interaction with the teacher (Cotton, 1989). These effects generally will complement and reinforce the teacher's expectations, so that students will come to conform to these expectations more than they might have otherwise, which will ultimately affect student achievement (Cotton, 1989). Therefore, high-expectation students will be led to achieve at or near their potential, but low expectation students will not gain as much as they could have gained if taught differently (Good 1987).

Based on the information gathered from this study and the supporting research the successful implementation of reading initiatives was affected positively by high expectations for students and negatively by low expectations for students.

Research question three. The third research question asked, to what extent does school level leadership impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives? Two major findings resulted from the data collected regarding school level leadership. The teacher survey, literacy coach survey, and principal interview yielded responses that informed the research question.

As was true for teacher expectations of students and teacher self-efficacy major finding six indicated that the school level leader from Schools B and C were more involved with the implementation of reading initiatives than the school level leaders from Schools A and D. Literacy coach and teacher participants were split regarding the involvement of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives. Teacher and coach participants from Schools B and C felt that the leader must understand and be involved in the initiative in order for it to be successful. Teacher and coach participants from Schools A and D did not feel it was necessary for the school leader to be involved in the initiative.

When these reactions were compared with responses from the principal interviews an initial contradiction was noted. All four principals believed they must be trained and have a complete understanding of the reading initiative. However, upon further analysis a clear difference between the responses from the school leaders from Schools B and C and the school leaders from Schools A and D were evident and supported responses from both teachers and literacy coaches. For example, the school leaders from Schools B and C believed the best way they could support reading initiatives was to model instruction, interact with students, and support teachers in regards to materials, training, and time devoted to instruction. In other words, they had to be involved with the implementation of the initiative in order for it to be successful. This could have influenced responses from their teachers since those teachers were accustomed to direct involvement and support from their principals. The leaders from Schools A and D had an opposing view, stating their role in the implementation of reading initiatives focused on monitoring implementation by conducting classroom observations and classroom walk-throughs. These responses indicate a peripheral involvement in the implementation of reading initiatives, and were in line with the responses given by their teachers.

In their book Practicing Servant Leadership Spears and Lawrence (2004) encourage leaders to emphasize an increased service to others, while promoting a sense of community, and the sharing power in decision making. Servant leadership encourages school level leaders to create programs that are characterized by strong personal relationships, culturally relevant instruction, and a school-wide commitment that empowers students and teachers (Rooney, 2008). By engaging in the practice of servant leadership school level leaders foster commitment within their buildings by modeling behavior and encouraging open, honest, and respectful communication. The engagement and dedication of the school leaders from Schools B and C impacted the successful implementation of reading initiatives in their buildings.

Major finding seven indicated that some school level leaders were involved with the implementation of reading initiatives, but might not have a clear understanding of those initiatives. This finding revealed a problem, which was articulated by both teacher and literacy coach participants. All agreed that if the reading initiative was going to be implemented successfully all school leaders needed to fully understand it. However, teacher and literacy coach participants cited lack of administrative support and understanding of the initiative as one of the greatest challenges impeding the success of reading initiatives. Similarly, school leaders who participated in the principal interviews agreed that they must be informed and trained so they could have a complete understanding of the initiative. However, two principal participants felt that their math background inhibited their understanding of the initiatives and made it more difficult to be involved in the implementation of the reading initiative.

This finding was significant as it not only affected the successful implementation of the reading initiative, but also the initiative's fidelity, and the ability of the leader to be an instructional leader. Research has shown that school leaders must do more than manage a school.

Cunningham and Cordeiro (2006) stated that to a great extent, the quality of American education depends on the effectiveness of school leaders. These school leaders cannot just be managers who focus on facilities, equipment, supplies, schedules, discipline, and procedures. These school leaders must possess the characteristics of an instructional leader who focuses on curriculum and instructional development, staff development, students' academic and social achievement, and the continuous improvement of teaching and learning (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006).

Additionally, Richard DuFour (2002), a former principal claimed school leaders play an important role in initiating, facilitating, and sustaining the process of shifting the collective focus from teaching to learning (DuFour, 2002). Schools need principal leadership, but from those who understand that the essence of their job is promoting student and teacher learning (DuFour, 2002). If school leaders do not have a clear understanding of the initiatives they cannot provide the level of support that is necessary to ensure that the initiative is implemented with fidelity.

The two major findings regarding the role of the school level leader on the success of reading initiatives yielded a relationship between the knowledge, understanding, and actions of the school leader and the success of the reading initiative. Furthermore, connections were made between the actions of the leader and the perceptions of the staff in the building. It became clear that school leaders must not only become instructional leaders, but engage in the practice of Servant Leadership in order to ensure that initiatives are implemented with fidelity. This is further validated by the work of Sergiovanni (2000) who stated that: "Schools must be run effectively and efficiently if they are to survive. Yet, for the school to transform itself into an institution, a learning community must emerge" (p. 25). In effective learning communities, leadership is shared. Creating learning communities requires establishing relationships among teachers, students, parents, and administrators who work together on shared values, purposes,

and commitments (Sergiovanni, 2000). Consequently, effective learning communities are successful in meeting the needs of students and empowering teachers to be an integral part of the school community (Villani, 2004).

Based on the information gathered from this study and the supporting research the role of the school leader has an effect on the successful implementation of reading initiatives. Furthermore, the perceptions of staff members regarding the role of the school leader were affected by the actions of the school leader in their building.

Research question four. The fourth research question asked, to what extent does the grade configuration of a school impact the successful implementation of district reading initiatives? Two major findings resulted from the data collected regarding grade configuration. The teacher survey, literacy coach focus group, and principal interview yielded responses that informed the research question.

Major finding eight indicated that grade configuration influenced the perceptions of those who worked in the school, and thus affected their perceptions on the implementation of reading initiatives. For example, all four literacy coaches believed that fewer grades to service made it easier to focus attention on initiatives, rather than having various initiatives spread across multiple grades. Furthermore, three of the four coaches agreed that it was more difficult to provide support regarding reading initiatives in K-8 schools as opposed to K-4 schools. Additionally, all principals agreed that the K-8 span made it more difficult to unite the staff under common reading initiatives. As was true in the focus group, it appeared that the perceptions of the principals were influenced by grade configuration. Finally, the teacher survey showed a clear split among the beliefs of the four teachers from the K-8 schools as compared to the five participants who taught in the K-4 schools. For example, five teachers from the K-4

schools agreed that K-4 schools received less support than K-8 schools. Similarly, four teachers from the K-8 schools agreed that it was more difficult to receive support in K-8 schools as opposed to K-4 schools.

Research in the area of grade configuration has been sparse, and its conclusions are often varied. For instance, a study conducted in the Philadelphia school district found few differences in student outcomes by the type of school attended (Weiss & Kipnes, 2006). However, Burkam, Michaels, and Lee (2007) found the opposite to be true in their study about the effects of grade configuration on kindergarten. Their study noted differences in student achievement, the delivery of instruction, and academic growth among students from schools with different grade configurations (Burkam, Michaels, & Lee, 2007). Nevertheless, Epstein's (1991) research supported the beliefs stated by the participants. She investigated the relationship between grade span and found that the priorities assigned to certain school level goals were directly related to grade span (Epstein, 1991). For example, higher level thinking skills may be more emphasized in schools with wider grade spans, and social skills may be more of an emphasis in preprimary schools. This was supported by Love and Marcon's (1991) and Paglin and Fager's, (1997) studies, which have shown that larger grade spans encourage cross grade teacher cooperation and communication, and therefore promoted higher expectations for students and continuity of instruction between grades.

Although major finding eight indicated that grade configuration appeared to influence the perceptions of staff members, participants did not feel it had as great an influence on the success of a reading initiative as other factors. Therefore, major finding nine concluded that the grade configuration of a school did not appear to be as important as other factors that influence the successful implementation of reading initiatives. For example, the literacy coach focus group

clearly supported major finding nine, as all four literacy coaches agreed that other factors had greater precedence over grade configuration. This was further validated by responses made during the principal interviews where three out of four agreed that grade configuration was not what was most important. Furthermore, teacher survey comments did not mention grade configuration as being solely responsible for negatively impacting the success of reading initiatives.

Research supports major finding nine as there is no conclusive evidence that one grade configuration is better than another (Howley, 2002). Moreover, Franklin and Glascock (1998) report that educators have yet to reach consensus regarding which grade configuration options offer the best educational opportunities for students. Regardless of the rationale behind different grade configurations, the basic assumption is that the grade configuration has little or no relationship to student performance (Franklin & Glascock, 1998).

To conclude, the two major findings regarding the effects of grade configuration on the successful implementation of reading initiatives are supported by research. Although grade configuration impacts the perceptions of the participants in this research study, it was not the factor they considered to have the greatest impact on the successful implementation of reading initiatives. It is clear that this district must look seriously at the various grade configurations that exist and their impact on the staff who implements reading initiatives. Since their perceptions are influenced by the grade configuration of their buildings, their efforts to implement reading initiatives may be varied. Additionally, it is important to remember that participants did not place great emphasis on grade configuration being responsible for the successful or unsuccessful implementation of reading initiatives. This is encouraging since much regarding the effects of

grade configuration is unclear. What is certain is that this district must consider grade configuration as contributing to the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

Based on the information gathered from this study and the supporting research the grade configuration of a school does not have as great an effect on the successful implementation of reading initiatives as other factors. However, the perceptions of staff members are affected by the grade configuration of that building.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study emphasized that when investigating the factors that impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives one must look below what appears at the surface to what might be the true causes. Peter Senge's theory (2000) encourages educators to use systems thinking to see an event, such as poor student achievement, as the tip of an iceberg. Reading initiatives often result from poor student achievement. What if poor student achievement was the tip of the iceberg, leaving the most threatening causes below the surface? This study employed the practice of systems thinking to look beyond the tip of the iceberg and investigate the potential causes for unsuccessful implementation of reading initiatives, which might be lurking beneath. These potential causes included teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, the role of school level leadership, and grade configuration. The results from this study indicated that connections exist between these potential causes and the successful implementation of reading initiatives. Future studies that employ systems thinking might find this theory helpful in determining root causes.

The considerable relationships among teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership, and grade configuration were evident, not only in the successful implementation of reading initiatives but also when analyzing student achievement data.

Supported by results from this study and external research, low teacher self-efficacy and low teacher expectations of students negatively impact student achievement and the implementation of a reading initiative. Conversely, high teacher expectations for students and high teacher self-efficacy are positively correlated with higher student achievement and the successful implementation of a reading initiative.

Albert Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Harry Wong's theory on teacher expectations of students support the findings from this study. Additional research in the areas of teacher self-efficacy and teacher expectations of students should take these theories into account as they might find that teacher expectations of students and teacher self-efficacy influence more factors affecting schools than initially thought.

It was further determined that the role of the school leader as an instructional leader or servant leader might impact the implementation of the reading initiative with fidelity. Michael Fullen's (2001) leadership theory notes that: "leadership that welcomes differences, communicates the urgency of the challenge, and talks about broad possibilities in an inviting way creates mechanisms that motivate people to reach beyond themselves" (p. 47). Therefore, school districts must employ leaders who are knowledgeable and supportive regarding reading instruction in order to impact teachers' motivation to implement reading initiatives with fidelity. Finally, grade configuration influences the perceptions of staff members and could impact how they implement reading initiatives. Franklin and Glasscock (1998) concluded that grade configuration is important because it establishes the basic context for the learning environment. Therefore it is imperative that school districts keep abreast of research regarding grade configurations, as this may have an effect on the implementation of reading initiatives.

It is clear that employing systems thinking to look beyond the problems that appear at the surface will allow school districts to investigate what might be the root cause of the problem. When investigating the factors that impact the successful implementation of reading initiatives for this district it was necessary to look beyond student achievement at teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations, grade configuration, and school level leadership. Once these factors were investigated it was discovered that relationships existed between these factors and the level of success of the reading initiative as well as student achievement. These relationships were supported by research, thus encouraging the use of systems thinking as well as further research into the areas of teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, school level leadership, and grade configuration and their effects on the successful implementation of reading initiatives.

Recommendations

This study yielded results that have direct implications for the district. This school district serves students from an urban city that faces the effects of poverty, crime, and drugs everyday. For this district to improve student achievement they must understand what is impacting it. This study encourages the district to look beyond the issues at the surface and determine the true factors that might be causing a specific problem within the district.

The results regarding the effects of teacher self-efficacy on the successful implementation of reading initiatives showed a correlation between low teacher self-efficacy, student achievement, and the success of a reading initiative. This school district must consider the importance of teacher self-efficacy in moving forward as it may directly impact not only the success of reading initiatives, but any district-wide implementation. To begin, the district must focus professional development around building self-efficacy among teachers and literacy coaches. By providing quality professional development and follow-up the district would be expanding the repertoire of

skills and strategies for its staff members. With increased knowledge and support staff members would feel more confident in their teaching and coaching abilities. This district must also encourage self-reflection among its teaching and coaching staff. Teachers and coaches who are self-reflective are aware of their reality, and the external factors that impact their reality. However, self-reflection would encourage them to look beyond those external factors to determine how they can positively impact the situation.

Furthermore, data gathered regarding the effects of teacher expectations for students on the successful implementation of reading initiatives revealed similar results. It appeared that teacher expectations for students were connected to student achievement and the success of the reading initiative. Examining teacher expectations for students may be particularly effective in aiding the district in creating an environment where all students feel empowered to succeed. High expectations begin at the district level. Therefore, it is important for this district to set high expectations for its students and all staff members. This can be done through revision of district policies, curriculum, and resources. Additionally, establishing high expectations for students must become a school-wide norm. School leaders must work with staff to share this message with parents, students, and all staff members. If this expectation is set at the school and district level it would become a norm at the classroom level.

Moreover, the role of the school leader had a significant impact on the successful implementation of reading initiatives as evidenced by data results from this study and research. These connections especially impacted the staff in the building, as those staffs who felt their leaders were instructional leaders appeared to have more capacity than those staffs who felt their leaders were not knowledgeable regarding instruction or district reading initiatives. This district must encourage principals and teachers to collaborate in order to create a learning community

where all participants feel they have a stake in the organization. Professional development for school leaders would assist them with moving beyond the role of “manager,” and expand their role as “instructional leader.” School leaders must realize that in order to ensure that initiatives are implemented with fidelity they must practice Servant Leadership, which will lead to a flat organization where responsibility is shared by all stakeholders.

Finally, although grade configuration does not appear to impact the success of reading initiatives quite as much as the other three factors, it was shown to have a significant effect on the perceptions of those working in each building. Therefore, gaining an understanding of grade configuration is important in determining if grade configuration at all impacts the successful implementation of reading initiatives. With this understanding the district can make educated decisions regarding reorganization and how decisions regarding grade configuration might affect the success of reading initiatives.

This study suggests that reciprocal relationships may exist between teachers self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, the role of the school leader, and grade configuration on the successful implementation of reading initiatives. By looking beyond the problems at the surface, this study has identified these four areas as potential root causes for why reading initiatives are implemented with various degrees of success and additionally why student achievement varies across the schools that are all implementing these initiatives. If the district were to investigate these factors and explore the implications they would bring about significant change in both student achievement and the implementation of district reading initiatives with fidelity.

Further Research

This study suggests researchers examine the effects teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, school level leadership, and grade configuration have on the successful implementation of district initiatives. The context of this study was a large urban school district. Repeating this study in different contexts would make the findings more powerful. For example, it would be interesting to see if the extent to which the four focus areas affected the successful implementation of reading initiatives was as great in a high performing suburban district.

Furthermore, grade configuration was examined without consideration of size. However, the two K-8 schools that were profiled had many more students and did not perform as well. Therefore, size may have something to do with how grade configuration influences the successful implementation of reading initiatives, and therefore should be investigated in future studies. Moreover, this study did not elicit responses or opinions from students. Future research which includes focus group, interview, or survey responses from students would help determine whether student beliefs support or negate the findings of this study.

In addition, it is important that researchers continue to examine the success of reading initiatives in urban high poverty districts, as well as the impact these four factors have on student achievement. So many urban school districts struggle to implement initiatives with fidelity and improve student achievement. Further research would help identify common characteristics or factors that will improve the education of urban youth. Furthermore, context is incredibly important when considering these four causes and therefore all school districts should conduct their own action research projects to determine how these factors impact their unique environments.

This district should conduct further research to examine the relationships between student achievement and the successful implementation of reading initiatives. This will give teachers and administrators the opportunity to learn if the implementation of the reading initiative with fidelity truly impacts student achievement. Additionally, there were noteworthy differences in teacher and literacy coach perceptions, principal comments, and grade configuration between the higher performing and lower performing schools. Therefore, this district should conduct further research comparing the perceptions of the staff and the level of instruction between high performing and low performing schools in the same large urban center.

Conclusion

This study supported previous research, which illustrated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations of students, the role of the school level leader, and grade configuration on student achievement. This study then built on that initial conclusion to determine if a relationship existed between these four factors and the successful implementation of reading initiatives. The study supported previous data results, which demonstrated how low teacher self-efficacy and low expectations for students correlated to lower student achievement and weaker instruction. Additionally, this study yielded results which supported research studies claiming that leaders who are instructional leaders are more able to motivate staff and students, and follow through regarding implementation of initiatives with fidelity. Although research in the area of grade configuration was mixed, this study supported previous research by revealing that grade configuration impacted staff perceptions, but might not be the most important factor influencing the success of reading initiatives.

Guided by systems thinking this study sought to look beyond the problems at the surface in an effort to determine the root causes impacting poor student achievement and the inconsistent

implementation of reading initiatives that may be hiding below. The results of this study indicated that teacher self-efficacy, teacher expectations for students, the role of the school level leader, and grade configuration are related to the successful implementation of reading initiatives. It is now up to the district to further investigate the impact of these factors across the district, which could allow for system-wide improvements that would not only impact student achievement, but allow for the successful implementation of reading initiatives with fidelity across all schools and classrooms. For a district whose motto is, “Our Children, Our Future’ the time is now and the urgency is strong.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY

A number of statements about teaching, reading initiatives, and schools are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the opinions and beliefs of educators as they relate to each statement. There are no correct or incorrect answers. I am only interested in your honest opinions. All information will be kept confidential.

Today's survey is going to consist of 25 questions regarding the impact of grade configuration, as well as the role of the teacher and the school level leader in the implementation of reading initiatives. For the purposes of today's survey the school level leader is defined as the principal. Additionally, grade configuration is defined as the specific grades serviced by a particular school. Neither the size of school nor the number of students serviced by the schools is relevant in considering the benefits or challenges of grade configuration. Possible grade configurations currently in place in the district are as follows: Kindergarten, Kindergarten-Second Grade, Kindergarten-Fourth Grade, Kindergarten-Fifth Grade, Kindergarten-Eighth Grade, First-Fifth Grade, First-Eighth Grade, and Fifth-Eighth Grade. For today's purposes we will be speaking about only two of these possible grade configurations, kindergarten through fourth grade and kindergarten through eighth grade.

Directions: Please respond with your honest opinion by circling the number at the right of each statement.

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Agree

4: Strongly Agree

1. I work hard to implement district reading initiatives successfully.	1	2	3	4
2. Most of my students come to my class prepared for a learning experience.	1	2	3	4
3. It is not necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
4. The amount of grades serviced in a school impacts the success of a reading initiative.	1	2	3	4
5. External factors (such as a student's home environment) have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.	1	2	3	4
6. Most of my students have the potential to meet or exceed academic standards.	1	2	3	4
7. The school level leader in my building has an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
8. It is more difficult to receive support regarding reading initiatives in K-8 schools than in K-4 schools.	1	2	3	4
9. I can usually reach even the most difficult or unmotivated student.	1	2	3	4
10. Most of my students come to school motivated to learn.	1	2	3	4
11. I am comfortable speaking about the implementation of reading initiatives with the school level leader.	1	2	3	4
12. Departmentalization supports the implementation of reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
13. As a teacher I have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.	1	2	3	4
14. If the parents would do more with the student I could do more to help them.	1	2	3	4
15. Most of my students come to class unprepared for grade level work.	1	2	3	4
16. K-4 schools receive less support than K-8 schools.	1	2	3	4
17. I often spend time modifying grade level class work because it is too difficult for my students.	1	2	3	4
18. If students do not understand something I have taught I usually know how to re-teach that concept to increase the students' understanding.	1	2	3	4
19. Many of my students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers.	1	2	3	4

20. Departmentalization makes it more difficult to implement reading initiatives successfully.	1	2	3	4
21. I believe that there are some students who regardless of what I do may not achieve academic success.	1	2	3	4
22. Most of my students are capable of completing grade level work independently or with minimal supports.	1	2	3	4
23. The school level leader has a clear understanding of district reading initiatives and conveys that understanding to teachers.	1	2	3	4
24. Grade configuration has no effect on the success of reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
25. Many of my students are unmotivated and do not want to learn.	1	2	3	4

How many total years have you been teaching? _____

How many years have you been teaching in this school? _____

What is your highest level of education? _____

Please give your opinion regarding the greatest strength contributing to the success of reading initiatives and the greatest challenge that impedes the success of reading initiatives in the box below. You may use the back of this page if you need to.

APPENDIX B

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST/ANECDOTAL NOTES

Rating Scale:

1. No evidence of implementation
2. Some evidence of implementation
3. Evidence of consistent implementation
4. Model implementation

Area of Focus	Rating Scale	Notes
Lesson Objective		
Level of Questioning		
Differentiation		
Classroom Management		
Classroom Instruction and Activities		
Student Engagement		
Classroom Environment		
Teacher's Feedback		
Student Feedback		

APPENDIX C

LITERACY COACH SURVEY

A number of statements about teaching, reading initiatives, and schools are presented below.

The purpose is to gather information regarding the opinions and beliefs of educators as they relate to each statement. There are no correct or incorrect answers. I am only interested in your honest opinions. All information will be kept confidential.

Today's survey is going to consist of 21 questions regarding the role of the teacher and the school level leader in the implementation of reading initiatives. For the purposes of today's survey the school level leader is defined as the principal.

Directions: Please respond with your honest opinion by circling the number at the right of each statement.

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Agree

4: Strongly Agree

1. Teachers in my building work hard to implement district reading initiatives successfully.	1	2	3	4
2. The school level leader is not knowledgeable regarding district reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
3. External factors (such as a student's home environment) have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.	1	2	3	4
4. I am comfortable discussing reading initiatives with the school level leader.	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers in my building believe they can usually reach even the most difficult or unmotivated student.	1	2	3	4
6. Teachers in my building believe that their students have the potential to meet or exceed academic standards.	1	2	3	4
7. The school level leader in my building has an integral role in the implementation of reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
8. Teachers have a great deal of influence over the success of a reading initiative.	1	2	3	4

9. Teachers in my building often spend time modifying grade level class work because it is too difficult for the students.	1	2	3	4
10. Teachers in my building believe if the parents would do more with the student they could do more to help them.	1	2	3	4
11. The teachers in my building believe that most of their students will be successful in their school careers.	1	2	3	4
12. It is not necessary for the school level leader to be involved with the implementation of reading initiatives.	1	2	3	4
13. Teachers in my building believe that most of their students are capable of completing grade level work independently or with minimal supports.	1	2	3	4
14. If students do not understand something that was taught most teachers in my building would know how to re-teach that concept to increase the students' understanding.	1	2	3	4
15. Teachers believe that many of the students in their class are ill prepared for the work that is expected of them.	1	2	3	4
16. Teachers in my building believe that there are some students who regardless of what the teacher does, will not achieve academic success.	1	2	3	4
17. The teachers in my building are confident in their abilities to teach every student.	1	2	3	4
18. The teachers in my building have high expectations for all of their students.	1	2	3	4
19. Teachers in my building believe that many of their students currently struggle in school and may continue to struggle throughout their school careers.	1	2	3	4
20. Teachers in my building believe that many of their students do not want to learn.	1	2	3	4
21. The school level leader is able to convey their understanding of literacy initiatives to teachers.	1	2	3	4

How many total years have you been a literacy coach? _____

How many years have you been a literacy coach in this school? _____

What is your highest level of education? _____

Please give your opinion regarding the greatest strength contributing to the success of reading initiatives and the greatest challenge that impedes the success of reading initiatives. You may use the back of this page if you need to.

APPENDIX D

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

Question	Response
<p>1.</p> <p>What is the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives?</p> <p>How do you support the implementation of reading initiatives as a school level leader?</p>	
<p>2.</p> <p>In your opinion what is the single most important thing a principal can do to support the implementation of reading initiatives?</p> <p>What is the greatest challenge facing a principal in regard to the implementation of reading initiatives?</p>	
<p>3.</p> <p>How is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school?</p>	

<p>4.</p> <p>What are the greatest benefits and challenges of a K-4 school in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives?</p> <p>or</p> <p>What are the greatest benefits and challenges of a K-8 school in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives?</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>Agree or disagree with the following statement and explain your answer.</p> <p>Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.</p>	

How many years have you been a principal? _____

APPENDIX E

LITERACY COACH FOCUS GROUP

Question	Response
<p>1. Is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school? How?</p>	
<p>2. Agree or disagree with the following statement and explain your answer.</p> <p><i>It is more difficult to provide support regarding the implementation of reading initiatives in a K-8 school, as opposed to a K-4 school.</i></p>	
<p>3. Agree or disagree with the following statement and explain your answer.</p> <p><i>Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.</i></p>	

APPENDIX F

LITERACY COACH FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Today's focus group is going to consist of 3 questions regarding the topic of grade configuration. For the purposes of our conversation today grade configuration is defined as the specific grades serviced by a particular school. Neither the size of school nor the number of students serviced by the schools is relevant in considering the benefits or challenges of grade configuration. Possible grade configurations currently in place in the district are as follows: Kindergarten, Kindergarten-Second Grade, Kindergarten-Fourth Grade, Kindergarten-Fifth Grade, Kindergarten-Eighth Grade, First-Fifth Grade, First-Eighth Grade, and Fifth-Eighth Grade. For today's purposes we will be speaking about only two of these possible grade configurations, kindergarten through fourth grade and kindergarten through eighth grade.

We will now begin the discussion:

The three questions you will be asked focus on the topic of grade configuration.

1. Is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school? How?
2. Agree or disagree with the following statement and explain your answer.
It is more difficult to provide support regarding the implementation of reading initiatives in a K-8 school, as opposed to a K-4 school.
3. Agree or disagree with the following statement and explain your answer?
Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.

This concludes our focus group, thank you for giving up your time to participate in this study.

APPENDIX G

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Today's interview is going to consist of 5 questions regarding two topics. The first topic is the role of the school leader in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives. The school leader is defined as the principal for the purposes of this conversation. The second topic is grade configuration. For the purposes of our conversation today grade configuration is defined as the specific grades serviced by a particular school. Neither the size of school nor the number of students serviced by the schools is relevant in considering the benefits or challenges of grade configuration.

Possible grade configurations currently in place in the district are as follows: Kindergarten, Kindergarten-Second Grade, Kindergarten-Fourth Grade, Kindergarten-Fifth Grade, Kindergarten-Eighth Grade, First-Fifth Grade, First-Eighth Grade, and Fifth-Eighth Grade. For today's purposes we will be speaking about only two of these possible grade configurations, kindergarten through fourth grade and kindergarten through eighth grade.

We will now begin the interview questions:

The first two questions focus on the role of the school leader.

1. What is the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives? How do you support the implementation of reading initiatives as a school level leader?
2. In your opinion what is the single most important thing a principal can do to support the implementation of reading initiatives? What is the greatest challenge facing a principal in regard to the implementation of reading initiatives?

The next three questions focus on grade configuration.

3. How is the success of the reading initiative impacted by the grade configuration of your school? For Example: K-4 vs. K-8

4. What are the greatest benefits and challenges of a K-4 school in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives?

or

What are the greatest benefits and challenges of a K-8 school in regards to the implementation of reading initiatives?

5. Agree or disagree with the following statement and explain your answer.

Departmentalization impedes the success of reading initiatives.

Finally:

How many total years have you been a principal? _____

This concludes our interview, thank you for giving up your time to participate in this study.



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APPENDIX H

CONSENT FORM

A Study of Reading Instruction in an Urban School District

Lauren Kazmark

College of Saint Elizabeth, Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study of reading instruction. This topic is being investigated in order to further understand the factors that both impede and nurture the success of reading initiatives in the Paterson Public Schools. Subjects were selected to participate based on their involvement with the implementation of reading initiatives. As a teacher your role in the implementation of reading initiatives is vital. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Before agreeing to be part of this study, please read and/or listen to the following information carefully. Feel free to ask questions if you do not understand something.

Participation:

Your participation in this study will not require any additional time beyond the scheduled school day. If you participate in this study, as a teacher, you will be consenting to observations of your class by me to take note of how reading initiatives are implemented at a particular grade level. These observations would last no more than thirty minutes and would be completed by December, 2009. These observations would not be evaluative or shared with anyone. They would serve as a data source for this research study, and all information will be kept confidential. If you participate in this study, as a teacher you will be consenting to take an anonymous survey in the fall (September-December) of 2009. You would be responding to questions regarding the role of the school leader and the teacher in the implementation of reading initiatives and the impact grade configurations have on schools. If you participate in this study, as a teacher, you will be consenting to share test data from the 2008 NJASK 3-4 (LAL component only) with me. Students' names will be omitted and all information will be confidential.

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The requirements for participation in this study are consistent with the confines of your job description. If a survey

question makes you feel uncomfortable you can choose not to answer it. All classroom observations and survey administrations will be announced and scheduled around your convenience and during the school day. You can request to review any notes taken during the observations and discuss with me how those notes will be used. You may review your individual survey responses if you choose.

Benefits:

This study was not designed to benefit you directly, however, there is a possibility that you may learn about the successful implementation of reading initiatives through your participation. In addition, what we learn from the study may help the district to smoothly introduce and implement reading initiatives successfully and with fidelity. All significant or new findings that are developed during this research may be shared with you at your convenience.

Confidentiality:

Any and all information obtained from you during the study will be confidential, unless law requires disclosure. Your privacy will be protected at all times. You will not be identified individually in any way as a result of your participation in this research. All information collected as part of this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Consent forms will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet, to safeguard confidentiality. I am the only person with a key to this filing cabinet, and the information obtained through this study will not be shared with anyone. The data collected may be used as part of this dissertation relating to reading instruction and urban schools; however school and personal names will be changed or omitted.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data that has already been collected will be destroyed immediately. Additionally, I can terminate your participation in the study without your consent if the circumstances no longer warrant your participation (i.e. you are transferred to a different grade or school, you leave your position, or your participation is not positively contributing to the study). We do not expect that your participation in this study will result in any harm or inconvenience to you and, as a consequence, there are no plans to reimburse you for any costs that you might incur as a result of participating in this study. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Please feel free to ask any questions about anything that seems unclear to you and to consider this research and consent form carefully before you sign. If you have any questions, concerns, or

incidents that must be addressed please contact me at (973) 321-0876 or via email at lkazmark@paterson.k12.nj.us. You may also contact the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board for the College of Saint Elizabeth, Dr. Louise Murray, at (973) 290-4430 or via email at lmurray@cse.edu if you need additional information regarding your rights as a subject.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you.

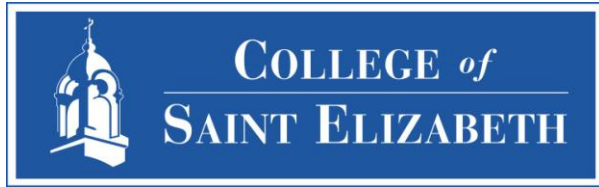
Sincerely,

Lauren Kazmark

I have read the above consent form (or it has been read to me) and I fully understand the contents of this document and voluntarily consent to participate. I am aware that my participation is anonymous, and all data collected will be confidential. If at anytime I choose to discontinue my participation I can do so without any negative consequences.

Signature of Participant

Date



APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM

A Study of Reading Instruction in an Urban School District

Lauren Kazmark

College of Saint Elizabeth, Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study of reading instruction. This topic is being investigated in order to further understand the factors that both impede and nurture the success of reading initiatives in the Paterson Public Schools. Subjects were selected to participate based on their involvement with the implementation of reading initiatives. As a literacy coach your role in the implementation of reading initiatives is vital. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Before agreeing to be part of this study, please read and/or listen to the following information carefully. Feel free to ask questions if you do not understand something.

Participation:

Your participation in this study will not require any additional time beyond the scheduled school day. If you participate in this study, as a literacy coach you will be consenting to participate in a focus group made up of four building-based literacy coaches. The focus group would take place in the spring or fall (May-November) of 2009, and would last approximately one hour. You may be asked questions pertaining to the impact grade configurations have on schools. If you participate in this study, as a literacy coach you will be consenting to take an anonymous survey in the spring or fall (May-November) of 2009 and respond to questions regarding the role of the school leader and the teacher in the implementation of reading initiatives.

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The requirements for participation in this study are consistent with the confines of your job description. If a survey or

focus group question makes you feel uncomfortable you can choose not to answer it. All focus groups and survey administrations will be announced and scheduled around your convenience and during the school day. You may review your individual survey responses or those given during a focus group if you choose.

Benefits:

This study was not designed to benefit you directly, however, there is a possibility that you may learn about the successful implementation of reading initiatives through your participation. In addition, what we learn from the study may help the district to smoothly introduce and implement reading initiatives successfully and with fidelity. All significant or new findings that are developed during this research may be shared with you at your convenience.

Confidentiality:

Any and all information obtained from you during the study will be confidential, unless law requires disclosure. Your privacy will be protected at all times. You will not be identified individually in any way as a result of your participation in this research. All information collected as part of this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Consent forms will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet, to safeguard confidentiality. I am the only person with a key to this filing cabinet, and the information obtained through this study will not be shared with anyone. The data collected may be used as part of this dissertation relating to reading instruction and urban schools; however school and personal names will be changed or omitted.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data that has already been collected will be destroyed immediately. Additionally, I can terminate your participation in the study without your consent if the circumstances no longer warrant your participation (i.e. you are transferred to a different grade or school, you leave your position, or your participation is not positively contributing to the study). We do not expect that your participation in this study will result in any harm or inconvenience to you and, as a consequence, there are no plans to reimburse you for any costs that you might incur as a result of participating in this study. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Please feel free to ask any questions about anything that seems unclear to you and to consider this research and consent form carefully before you sign. If you have any questions, concerns, or incidents that must be addressed please contact me at (973) 321-0876 or via email at lkazmark@paterson.k12.nj.us. You may also contact the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board for the College of Saint Elizabeth, Dr. Louise Murray, at (973) 290-4430 or via email at lmurray@cse.edu if you need additional information regarding your rights as a subject.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you.

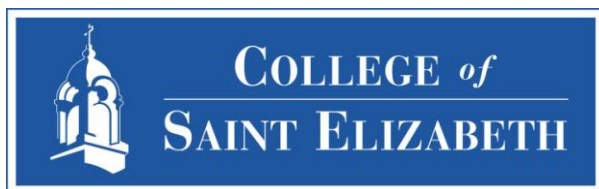
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Signature of Participant

Date



APPENDIX J

CONSENT FORM

A Study of Reading Instruction in an Urban School District

Lauren Kazmark

College of Saint Elizabeth, Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study of reading instruction. This topic is being investigated in order to further understand the factors that both impede and nurture the success of reading initiatives in the Paterson Public Schools. Subjects were selected to participate based on their involvement with the implementation of reading initiatives. As a principal your role in the implementation of reading initiatives is vital. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Before agreeing to be part of this study, please read and/or listen to the following information carefully. Feel free to ask questions if you do not understand something.

Participation:

Your participation in this study will not require any additional time beyond the scheduled school day. If you participate in this study, as a principal you will be consenting to participate in an interview. This interview would be scheduled at your convenience and can take place anywhere from July to December, 2009. This interview would last approximately thirty minutes. You would be asked questions pertaining to the impact grade configurations have on schools and the role of the school leader in the implementation of reading initiatives. If you participate in this study, as a principal you will be consenting to share test data from the 2008 NJASK 3-4 (LAL component only) with me. Students' names will be omitted and all information will be confidential.

Risks:

There are no risks to you as a participant in this study. The requirements for participation in this study are consistent with the confines of your job description. If an interview question makes you

feel uncomfortable you can choose not to answer it. All interviews will be announced and scheduled around your convenience and during the school day. You can request to review any notes taken during the interviews and discuss with me how those notes will be used. You may review your interview responses if you choose.

Benefits:

This study was not designed to benefit you directly, however, there is a possibility that you may learn about the successful implementation of reading initiatives through your participation. In addition, what we learn from the study may help the district to smoothly introduce and implement reading initiatives successfully and with fidelity. All significant or new findings that are developed during this research may be shared with you at your convenience.

Confidentiality:

Any and all information obtained from you during the study will be confidential, unless law requires disclosure. Your privacy will be protected at all times. You will not be identified individually in any way as a result of your participation in this research. All information collected, as part of this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Consent forms will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet, to safeguard confidentiality. I am the only person with a key to this filing cabinet, and the information obtained through this study will not be shared with anyone. The data collected may be used as part of this dissertation relating to reading instruction and urban schools; however school and personal names will be changed or omitted.

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Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kazmark

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Signature of Participant

Date

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