This case study (Stake, 2000) used a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) to understand how Reading First influenced instruction in a rural elementary school. Reading First, a component of NCLB, aimed at improving reading instruction in schools serving students in areas of high poverty with low standardized test scores by requiring instructional methods and teaching materials based upon scientifically based reading research. Data were collected through interviews with school personnel and observations of reading instruction over a period of six months and were analyzed using a modification of Erickson’s (1986) qualitative data analysis techniques. The modification allowed for a close examination of the differences between the intentions of Reading First and the actual implementation of the federal reading program. The teachers and administration at Avery Elementary provided important insights into effective professional development led by a knowledgeable Literacy Coach. The local, ongoing professional development offered by the Literacy Coach within the local school setting led to changes in instruction and the teachers’ knowledge of teaching reading. However, the restrictions placed on the teachers by Reading First hindered their ability to display their knowledge during their reading instruction. Other findings discuss how required
assessments (in particular, the DIBELS assessment) and mandated instructional materials influence reading instruction and student reading achievement. Policy issues related to the will and capacity (McLaughlin, 1987) of the teachers were studied, and suggestions for reconceptualizing these concepts were made.

INDEX WORDS: Education, Elementary Reading Instruction, Social Constructionism, Policy, Scientifically Based Reading Research, Elementary School, NCLB, DIBELS, Case Study, Professional Development, Teacher Change, Literacy Coach, Instructional Materials, Core Reading Program, Basal Readers, Reading Assessment
INSIDE THE BLACK BOX: THE INFLUENCE OF READING FIRST ON READING INSTRUCTION

by

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B.A., University of Central Florida, 1996
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DEDICATION

Some say it takes a village to raise a child. Two children and a dissertation required more than any one village could ever have provided. I owe this to my own personal global village that consisted of friends and family in Germany and all across the United States. I sincerely appreciate your support, friendship, inspiration, and insistence upon completion.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As an elementary school teacher, the hour and forty minutes of language arts instruction I offered each morning in my classroom contained both the high and low points of my day. The high points came as I watched the eager faces of my young students listening intently as I read aloud from my collection of excellent children’s literature. The low points overshadowed the high, and weighed heavily on my mind as I watched some of those same eager faces shut down as they struggled to read on their own. The low points left me repeatedly questioning my effectiveness as a reading teacher. Why were some of my students excelling in reading while others were struggling? Was it the instruction I was offering, the materials I was using, or a general lack of knowledge on my part? While the high points of this time left me feeling exhilarated and uplifted, the low points brought frustration and self-doubt. As a young teacher, I was searching for ways to improve my teaching of reading.

Several years later I had the opportunity to observe teachers implementing a reading program in their classrooms designed to help improve their teaching of reading and, ultimately, their students’ reading achievement. Reading First, a component of the No Child Left Behind legislation (2001), was designed to bring instruction based upon scientifically based reading research (SBRR) into classrooms in grades K-3 in schools across the country that have had traditionally low reading test scores and that serve large populations of students from families with low incomes. Teachers in Reading First schools received professional development related
to teaching reading, new material to teach reading with, and had the support of a literacy coach in their school to provide guidance on the teaching of reading. I had the opportunity to observe these teachers implementing Reading First as part of the state’s external evaluation of the program.

For more than three years, I conducted observations of Reading First teachers in grades K-3 in elementary schools across the state, focusing on the content of the instruction offered in the individual classroom. The data collected from these observations was part of a large scale project studying over 100 schools across the state. What I observed and learned from these observations led me to become interested in how the implementation of an externally developed federal reading program such as Reading First could influence local classroom instruction.

From my experience as a classroom teacher, I knew the struggles I faced teaching reading in my own classroom. I knew that I needed assistance in how to provide effective instruction for all of my students, but I was unaware of where to turn to get this assistance. If I were teaching in a Reading First school, the assistance would have been delivered through multiple opportunities to participate in professional development related to Reading First. But what would I have done with that assistance? I know I would have benefited from professional development related to reading instruction, but would I have translated that professional development into practice in my classroom? I also know that I would have appreciated new materials to teach reading with, but would I have used them knowing I didn’t select them? What kind of influence (if any) would Reading First have had on the reading instruction I offered in my classroom or in other classrooms in my school?

Those questions stayed with me as I observed teachers for the external evaluation, and beyond that, as I designed my dissertation project. My dissertation project was a case study of
one elementary school based upon my desire to learn from teachers and school administrators how an externally developed program such as Reading First influenced the reading instruction they offered in their classrooms.

Background of the Problem

The state in which my dissertation project was conducted received close to $200,000,000 for the implementation of Reading First in classrooms in grades K-3. Approximately 120 elementary schools across the state applied for and received this federal assistance to align their reading instruction with Reading First. Given the large amount of money invested in Reading First as well as its presence in so many classrooms across the state, it was imperative to study the teaching that took place during the implementation of the program in order to understand how Reading First influenced instruction.

Research suggests that little evidence exists to support direct relationships between policy and practice (Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Jennings, 1996; McGill-Franzen, 2000; McLaughlin, 1990). Reforms such as Reading First are intended to make systematic changes in schools, which are characteristically nonsystematic sites. As Cohen (1995) wrote, “Coherence in policy is not the same thing as coherence in practice. Systemic reform seems to assume that instruction is a homogenous and unified system that can be driven by a small set of policy instruments” (p. 16). Differences between individual teachers, school administrations, local education agencies and state governments all influence the implementation process of reform in schools and can lead to different translations of policies as they become practice (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Valencia & Wixson, 2000; Spillane, 1998).
Reading First was intended to be a systematic reading program with safeguards in place to ensure all of the information and training being delivered to teachers across the state was virtually identical. All teachers received standardized professional development through the state run Teacher Academies the summer before implementing Reading First, yet some of the instruction I observed as part of the external evaluation varied from school to school. In some instances, there were strong similarities between teachers and the instruction they offered, yet in others, there existed a great difference in the instruction provided. Was the standardized professional development offered through Reading First able to make the intended systematic changes in classroom instruction across the state? Or, as Cohen (1995) suggested, did teacher individuality or external influences have a greater impact than the professional development?

Other researchers have spoken of the difference between policy and practice. Tyack and Cuban (1995) wrote that “Educators have variously welcomed, improved, deflected, co-opted, modified, and sabotaged outside efforts at reform” (p. 7). They suggest policy talk cycles more often than actual policy action, meaning that the diagnosing of problems with our schools and the solutions for fixing them come faster and more frequently than the schools are able to effectively put into practice. This rapid cycle of policy talk puts teachers in a situation similar to one they might experience as a spectator at a tennis match. They no sooner have turned their head to follow the ball to one side of the court when their opponent lobs it to the other side. Teachers are often left bewildered, wondering how much time or personal energy they should invest in something that may cycle through in rapid succession. Tyack and Cuban suggest that working change from within by enlisting the teachers as “key actors” (p. 10) in a reform movement might remove some of the more negative terms from the above list of actions taken against educational reforms.
My observations of Reading First classrooms as part of the external evaluation for the state have led me to believe I may have witnessed some of the actions suggested by Tyack and Cyban (1995). I am left to wonder which actions I may have observed – and why those particular actions may have been taken. Would the teachers in schools across the state welcome Reading First and use it as a tool to improve their reading instruction? Or would they deflect it by making an attempt to look as if they were complying with Reading First and then close their doors and proceed as before? Would they co-opt or modify it to make it suit the needs of their individual classroom? Or would they sabotage their implementation of it to prove it just would not work?

The observations I conducted in the past for the state’s external evaluation of the program left me with a need to talk to and learn from the teachers involved in the implementation of Reading First. The case study I conducted for my dissertation project grew from my interest in understanding how an externally developed reading program influences classroom instruction. By listening to and learning from teachers, it is my intention to learn about reform by working from within (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Problem Statement

A study working from the inside out would have to take into account the multiple factors influencing the instruction teachers offer in their classrooms (Erickson, 1986; Valencia & Wixson, 2004). Instruction can be influenced by the students in the class, the other teachers in the school, the school administration, as well as factors located outside the school building such as the surrounding community and the local education agency in which the school resides. The context in which teaching occurs must be taken into consideration before attempting to analyze how a reading program can influence instruction.
Valencia and Wixson (2004) have written about the need to study policy reform from a perspective that attempts to describe and understand that context. They wrote that researchers must “look at the contexts in which the teaching and learning exist—the policy environments that surround and filter influences on teaching and learning” (p. 77). They use the term policy environment to refer to a more cohesive and thorough understanding of past and present policy issues that work together to influence the policy being studied. In the following chapter, I outline the Reading First program in detail. It is important to understand the program being implemented before trying to make sense of how that program may be influencing instruction. Studying the context surrounding the instruction in Reading First schools will ultimately assist with the analysis of the data collected in my dissertation project.

My dissertation project was an instrumental case study (Stake, 2000) of an elementary school that was completing its third year of implementing Reading First. The school, which served approximately 400 students, was located in a small, rural town in the southeastern United States. Using a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1999), my purpose was to understand how an externally developed program such as Reading First influenced the reading instruction offered in classrooms in grades K-3. Data were collected over a period of six months from interviews and observations of eleven teachers as well as interviews with the school’s literacy coach (LC) and the principal.

Research Questions

From a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1999), the translation of policy into practice is not necessarily a direct one. The school faculty involved in the implementation of Reading First would have created their own meaning of the program based upon their social contexts, histories, culture, environment, and the language they used to describe
and communicate issues related to Reading First. With this in mind, I designed the following research questions to help understand the local meaning ascribed to Reading First and how Reading First influenced the reading instruction in grades K-3.

1. How did teachers construct knowledge about Reading First?
2. How do different stakeholders (administrators, literacy coach and teachers) describe how their knowledge of Reading First influenced the reading instruction offered by teachers?
3. What does the teaching of reading look like in the classrooms implementing Reading First?
4. Who do the stakeholders (administrators, literacy coach and teachers) perceive is benefiting from Reading First? And who do the stakeholders feel are being left out by Reading First?

Theoretical Framework

My dissertation project drew from the social constructionist theory as described by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Gergen (1999). Believing that knowledge is “constructed by, for, and between members of a discursively mediated community” (Hruby, 2001, p. 51) allows me the opportunity to explore the multiple contexts surrounding the implementation of Reading First and study the instruction in light of those contexts.

Social Constructionism and the Making of Meaning

Social constructionism views the construction of knowledge as being created through relationships, and within these relationships, language and other texts gain their meaning by the way they are used by the individuals. For the purpose of my dissertation project, the written Reading First proposal becomes the text that the individual teachers worked together to make sense of. The teachers were provided with multiple professional development opportunities to
learn about Reading First. These opportunities included statewide Teacher Academies, as well as local, ongoing professional development held in their own school. For the teachers I studied, the discursive community within which they worked to create meaning for Reading First included the teachers, LC, and administrators in their school and in neighboring schools, as well as some members of the Reading First office at the state level who participated in providing some of the professional development.

In looking across two quotations from Gergen (1999) one can see how the meaning of Reading First created by the teachers and other members of their discursive community might alter how the program influenced their teaching. Gergen wrote that “for any state of affairs a potentially unlimited number of descriptions and explanations is possible” (p. 47) and also that “meanings are born of coordinations among persons – agreements, negotiations, affirmation” (p. 48). The state of affairs here being the written Reading First proposal and as suggested previously by my brief account of three years worth of external evaluation observations, I saw multiple interpretations of it. The second quote helped me to understand the multiple interpretations in light of the different communities working together to make sense of Reading First. After the initial state wide training occurred at the Teacher Academies, professional development continued in the local schools for the duration of the implementation of Reading First. Viewing meaning from a social constructionist perspective, the teachers in their local discursive communities worked together to create meaning through the language they used to discuss Reading First. Meaning created among different communities implementing the same reading program could look markedly different from each other.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) described the conscious being as consisting of a biological self that should only be considered in light of the social context in which it was raised. They also
suggested that an individual should not be thought of as solely a solitary being, as it is within that being’s relationships with others that they have come to create themselves. From a social constructionist perspective, people use language and other texts to make meaning within the historical, social, and cultural contexts that surround them. With this in mind, I designed my dissertation project to be a case study of a school, as opposed to studying individual teachers. Every teacher, administrator, and LC in a Reading First school has ascribed their own meaning to Reading First and how best to implement it in their own classrooms – and that meaning was created and influenced by the environment, the language used in social contexts, and the policy environments in which they live and work. To study the teachers as isolated individuals would ignore the opportunity to understand the larger social contexts and policy environment within which they live, learn, and work.

As suggested previously, the instruction offered by the teachers I observed for the state’s external evaluation at times appeared very different from classroom to classroom. Though they worked together as members of a discursive community to create their meaning of Reading First, it is possible that upon returning to their classroom they had to tweak that knowledge to suit the routine of her or his classroom. Berger and Luckmann (1966) addressed this concept when they wrote, “As long as the routines of everyday life continue without interruption they are apprehended as unproblematic” (p. 24). They explained that when a problem does arise, “The reality of everyday life seeks to integrate the problematic sector into what is already unproblematic” (p. 24). Teachers and administrators working in a Reading First school had to find ways to integrate something potentially problematic (implementing Reading First) into their routine existence.
Social Constructionism, Objectivation, and Text

I view the program of Reading First as an objectivation, or a product of human activity that is recognized by the person producing it and other beings as an element of a common world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The importance of an objectivation is that it can “serve as more or less enduring indices of the subjective processes of their producers, allowing their availability to extend beyond the face-to-face situation in which they can be directly apprehended” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 34). It is important to understand that Reading First grew out of a written document prepared by a group of scholars in the field of reading education. That written document (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000a), and subsequent summaries of that document, merged into what is now known as Reading First, an objectivation of what some scholars deem to be “what works” in early reading instruction.

Reading First has become a national reading program based on the writing of a few, whose ideas have been made known because the NICHD (2000a, 2000b) chose to publish them. The importance of this is that Reading First represents the beliefs or findings of a select few working together to make sense of reading research. The objectivation of their beliefs was manifested in the program Reading First and is now influencing schools across the country.

As teachers and administrators saw Reading First as an objectivation and were not afforded the opportunity to discuss the intentions of it with the original producers of the document, they were left on their own to work together to assimilate it into the routine practices they know and understand. As Gergen (1999) wrote, “texts only come into meaning through their function within relationships. It is the community that is prior to textual meaning and we must see texts in terms of their function within human relationships” (p. 42). My dissertation study considered the relationships within the school that led to the meaning making and
implementation of Reading First. My study also took into account the fact that Reading First was presented as an objectivation of others’ beliefs. As such, how Reading First was introduced to the school, and the perceptions the teachers have of the program, was examined to see if that played a part in how Reading First influenced the instruction offered in their classrooms.

*Social Constructionism, History, and Institutions*

Institutions are places created and brought into existence by men and women repeating and habitualizing tasks until they have become so commonplace that they become typified and routinely practiced by particular social groups (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Social constructionism takes into consideration the growth of an institution by describing the routine tasks carried out by people as first accompanying the phrase “there we go again” until the task is repeated so often the phrase becomes “this is how these things are done” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 59). These tasks are initially created to ease the burden of work and to limit the amount of choices and decisions a person has to make. Eventually, they become so commonplace that they are taken for granted as things that have always been.

Schools are institutions in the United States, and as such, may have fallen prey to the “this is how it has always been done” mentality. The look and feel of classrooms across America has changed little over the course of time, with the exception of changing technology. During my dissertation project, I have taken into consideration the possibility that the institutional mentality may prevail and teachers may continue to teach as they always have as that is how they believe it has always been done. The introduction of Reading First may interfere with the routinization and typification of the school institution as the teachers have always experienced it.

The expectation of Reading First is that teachers will change their teaching practices based upon the initial training they receive at the Teacher Academy along with local, ongoing
professional development and new teaching materials. This expectation is reinforced by the fact that the teachers are observed by multiple parties and the school has the possibility of losing the funding provided by Reading First if they are found to be noncompliant. With these expectations in place, Reading First attempts to dehabitualize the institution of school and bring in change in the form of improved reading instruction.

Social Constructionism, Language, and the Interpretation of Information

A social constructionist views language as a sign for conveying an individual’s subjectivity. Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe a face-to-face conversation between two people as being an important way to learn of one’s own subjectivities and the subjectivities of the person they are conversing with. They suggest that in a typical conversation, people do not have much time to reflect upon their subjectivities, and that what comes out of their mouth in the course of a conversation may very closely represent “more real” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 38) subjectivities than they may otherwise have revealed.

I chose to interview every participant affiliated with Reading First in the elementary school I studied, as language affords a more intimate glimpse into a person’s subjectivities than watching their actions alone. Interviews were conducted to allow participants to verbally reflect upon and provide an explanation for their actions. I interviewed all teachers after having observed them twice, in hopes of learning why they were teaching the way they were, and asking how they felt Reading First influenced their instruction.

Chapter four contains my linguistic representations of the teachers’, LC’s, and principal’s perceptions. My dissertation study is an interpretive, qualitative case study of an elementary school. As such, I was not attempting to find fact or make assertions of “Truth” (Gergen, 1999) in my findings of how Reading First influences instruction. My goal was to explore, understand
and interpret the school personnel’s perceptions of how Reading First influenced their instruction. Coming from a social constructionist perspective, the meaning I am making is influenced by my culture, social circumstances, history, and the language I use to represent it. I also accept the fact that my own subjectivities will have some influence on my research project.

Subjectivity Statement

Peshkin (1988) described subjectivity as “an amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one’s class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one’s object of investigation” (p. 17). The values, culture, religion, social circumstances, and history I was brought up with work together to influence the research projects I conduct. Peshkin wrote of the importance of researchers not only stating their subjectivities, but constantly monitoring those subjectivities to ensure they don’t overshadow or overly influence any part of the research process, from the conceptualization of the study through the final write up of the results.

I have been consciously aware of the items discussed in this subjectivity statement throughout the research process, and the process of creating the written representation of the research. I am a middle class, heterosexual, white woman who is married with two young children. I am a former elementary classroom teacher and still consider and even describe myself as such even though I currently work in an institute of higher education. I am the youngest of five children, and both of my parents were educators.

I relate to my participants in many ways, the first of which being that I, like most of them, am a working mother. I have taught the same grades many of my participants have taught, read aloud from the same picture books, celebrated the same holidays, decorated the same bulletin boards, and watched the same students struggle with reading.
Because of this, I realize the value in the work Peshkin (1988) did when he studied and monitored his own subjectivities. Peshkin made note of every time he felt his subjectivities becoming aroused. He “looked for the warm and cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings, the experiences he wanted more of or wanted to avoid and when he felt moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfill his research needs” (p. 18). Following Peshkin’s example, I did the same. I made records of these instances in my field note journal if they occurred during an observation and on the interview guide if they came up during an interview. The notations made are part of my data collection and were considered when analyzing the data.

As a researcher working from a social constructionist perspective, I did not ignore my subjectivities, but remained aware of them, and worked with and around them to create the best representation possible of the participants who entrusted me with their stories.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of my study was to see how Reading First influenced the reading instruction in one rural elementary school. The subsequent chapters outline how I conducted my dissertation research project. Specifically, chapter two offers an explanation of the Reading First program and a review of relevant literature. Chapter three describes my research project in detail, highlighting how I used Stake’s (2000) instrumental case study to explore the instruction in a Reading First school. Chapter four provides an analysis of the data collected during the six months I spent visiting the elementary school. Finally, chapter five offers insights into the importance of understanding policy implementation and the ensuing instruction from a more complete perspective, and the implications this should have for future policy makers.
CHAPTER TWO
READING FIRST, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

In two separate works, Valencia and Wixson (2000, 2004) have described the need for literacy research that encompasses an understanding of the policy environment and how it impacts specific subject matter teaching and learning. In their review of policy related research (2004) they found that it mattered whether the research being reviewed was “grounded in policy, measurement or literacy” (p. 71).

Policy research, according to Valencia and Wixson (2004), typically focused on broad topics such as standards and reorganization and was not overly concerned with specific subject matter. Measurement research was most interested in issues related to assessments and validity. Literacy researchers tended to focus on the instruction and learning, yet they typically did not study the policy context. From a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) the meaning the teachers I studied made from the Reading First program was influenced by their own personal beliefs, knowledge, culture, and history, as well as the language used within their discursive community. I would be remiss to study their teaching without considering other factors, including the policy environment surrounding the work they were doing.

To provide context for the policy environment surrounding Reading First teachers, I will begin this chapter by providing a description of the program itself along with historical information to contextualize it, as well as a review of work that is in support of and in opposition to the program. Following this, I will review a body of literature surrounding what we know about policy and instructional change, and how Reading First has addressed concerns raised by
some of this research. I will conclude this chapter by addressing how the present study grew from this literature review in hopes of expanding our knowledge base in terms of how policy influences the teaching of reading.

Reading First

Reading First is a component of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001), signed into law in January 2002 by President George W. Bush. This act is a large scale reform and reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) initially enacted in 1965. An excellent review of legislation beginning with the ESEA in 1965 and leading up to this act was written by McGill-Franzen (2000) for the Handbook of Reading Research: Volume III. It is beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter to include all of the legislative efforts leading up to NCLB, but I will briefly explore the context surrounding the reports that eventually led to the recommendations made by Reading First.

Political Environment Leading Up to the Creation of Reading First

In the 1990s a feeling of discontent with the progress our students were making in reading was brought to the forefront of the political arena. In 1996, President William Clinton made literacy an important issue in his campaign, citing that 40% of American fourth graders scored below the “basic” level on the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). During the 1980’s, the state of California attempted to shift its instruction away from basal reading programs to more literature based programs, or what some have called whole language programs. After students in California scored last in the nation on the reading achievement portion of the NAEP in 1992 and 1994, the state passed legislation requiring that instructional materials be used that included fundamental skills such as systematic phonics and spelling. The state government was making unprecedented moves towards controlling what was
taught in the state’s classrooms in terms of reading instruction. This opened the doors for other states to follow suit (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1999). By 1996, legislation had been introduced in 11 other states that supported phonics instruction in schools. The low NAEP scores and the issues in California brought the teaching of reading into the political and public arena. Several examples of how this occurred happened during the week of October 27, 1997, when Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News and World Report all ran articles related to the reading instruction offered in our schools and made reference to the importance of a “back to the basics” or phonics driven approach.

McGill-Franzen (2000) suggested these events (brought into the everyday lives of the public by the media) led to the government’s willingness to step in and intervene on a topic typically left up to local school agencies – how to best teach reading. She wrote:

For issues to reach the “decision stage” (i.e., when the government takes action on them), several things have to happen. The issue needs to be defined as a problem that government should address and labeled in a way that the public will support….Policy action depends on the convergence of a feasible solution to a pressing problem and the right political climate, creating an open window for an issue whose “time has come.” (p. 903)

The low NAEP test scores in 1994, coupled with the widely publicized legislation in California had brought the issue of how best to teach reading to the attention of the public, as well as the federal government. The federal government felt there was a problem and that they should intervene by helping to put forth a solution (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1999).

The federal government wanted to find the solution for how to best teach reading in our country. They wanted hard and fast answers from the educational research community on proven
methods for teaching reading. The U.S. Department of Education asked The National Academy of Science to establish a committee to determine how to prevent reading difficulties in children. The National Research Council (NRC) published the committee’s report in 1998 entitled *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). To build on the findings of this panel, congress asked the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to convene another panel of reading experts and gave them the task of conducting an analysis of reading research in an attempt to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teaching reading and how to best apply those findings to classroom instruction. (See Appendix A for the congressional charge for the National Reading Panel.)

*The formation of the National Reading Panel.* The members of the National Reading Panel (NRP) (see Appendix B) were given a lofty charge – to study the existing database of reading research to find what worked in teaching beginning reading. Their initial search of public databases resulted in over 100,000 studies that were published on reading since 1966. In an attempt to focus and narrow their review, the members decided on the following criteria to determine which studies to include: (a) the studies must have appeared in a refereed journal, (b) must be directly related to children’s reading development in preschool through Grade 12, (c) must be experimental or quasi-experimental in nature with a sample size large enough to be useful, and (d) must have well defined instructional procedures (http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/faq/faq.htm#2).

After reviewing the findings of the committee established by the NRC and attending several public hearings across the nation, the NRP chose to review the following topics specifically: (a) alphabetic, including phonemic awareness and phonics instruction; (b) fluency; (c) comprehension, including vocabulary instruction, text comprehension instruction and teacher
preparation and strategy instruction; (d) teacher education and reading instruction; and (e) computer technology and reading instruction (NICHD, 2000b). After spending two years reviewing scientific studies related to these topics, the NRP was ready to present its findings and did so in a 480 page report entitled *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implication for Reading Instruction—Reports of the Subgroups* (NICHD, 2000a).

In April 2000, the NICHD presented the findings of the NRP in three ways: (a) a summary report of the NRP’s findings (though no author is credited) entitled *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implication for Reading Instruction—Summary Report of the NRP* (NICHD, 2000b), (b) the actual 480 page report of the NRP panel referenced above (NICHD, 2000a), and (c) a video entitled *Teaching Children to Read*.

These three representations of the NRP’s findings have strongly influenced the reading program I studied for my dissertation project, Reading First. A report authorized by President George W. Bush stated that:

The Administration is committed to ensuring that every child can read by the third grade. To help meet this goal, a new program will be established known as the “Reading First” initiative. The Reading First initiative gives states both the funds and the tools they need to eliminate the reading deficit. The findings of years of scientific research on reading are now available, and application of this research to the classroom is now possible for all schools in America. The National Reading Panel issued a report in April 2000 after reviewing 100,000 studies on how students learn to read. The Reading First initiative builds upon these findings by investing in scientifically-based
reading instruction programs in the early grades.

(http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports/no-child-left-behind.html#3)

The report of the NRP (NICHD, 2000a) and the summary created by the NICHD (2000b) of the report have formed the basis for Reading First. This was the government’s solution to the educational crisis they believed the country was in during the 1990s. As was suggested by McGill Franzen (2000) and Allington and Woodside-Jiron (1999) the government will intervene when they perceive a problem and if they think they can offer a solution to that problem. Reading First was the government’s solution to the perceived reading crisis in our nation.

*From Policy to Practice: How Reading First Reaches Schools*

With the creation of Reading First based upon the findings of the NRP’s review, the federal government has defined good reading instruction as that which has been confirmed by SBRR. As reported by Eisenhart and Towne (2003), NCLB described scientifically based research as “testing hypotheses and using experimental and quasi-experimental designs only, and preferring random assignment” (p. 34). This definition aligns with the review of research done by the NRP, suggesting that Reading First funds would go to schools willing to follow the guidelines of the NRP or other reports that used similar “scientific” research methodologies. In subsequent sections I will review the reactions of the research community to the NRP’s report and Reading First, but for now I would like to explain how Reading First has made its way into classrooms across the country.

The federal government made funds available through Reading First for states to use to incorporate instructional methods and materials that are deemed to be based in SBRR. To receive Reading First funds, states were to submit an application to the Department of Education. The application had to outline how the state was going to allocate the money and how they were
going to ensure the funds were spent on SBRR in their local school systems. In this sense, Garan (2002) described the funding offered through Reading First as a carrot with a big stick attached. The carrot being the money the states needed and the big stick being that schools had to agree to only teach reading using methods and materials grounded in SBRR as determined by the federal government.

Once a state’s application had been approved and the funding was allotted from the federal government, local education agencies (LEAs) could write grant applications to the state asking for Reading First funds for their school system. These applications had to align themselves with the state’s application in that they also had to show how they were going to use the funds to implement SBRR in their methods of teaching reading and materials they taught with. The states then awarded the money to the LEAs, giving priority to those LEAs that served high numbers of students living in poverty and that also had low reading test scores.

Reading First was not a federal mandate in that the federal government did not make this a policy that all schools had to follow with no exception. The states had a choice to apply for the funding, though, without the funding they would have had difficulty serving the students needing the most instructional assistance. The LEAs also had a choice as to whether or not they wanted to apply for the funding. However, school systems desperately needed this funding to serve their struggling student populations (Edmondson & Shannon, 2003). Per NCLB (2001), the federal government cannot mandate what is taught in the local schools, yet with Reading First, it appeared that they were trying to take a roll in the decisions about the teaching of reading typically left up to local LEAs and classroom teachers (Allington, 2002). The federal government used the application process of Reading First grants to extend its arm into local classroom instruction (Edmondson & Shannon, 2003).
The Reading First application process was not without complications or controversy and these issues did not go unnoticed. Several states felt their applications were repeatedly denied until they agreed to align with specific reading programs or assessment tools that seemed to be recommended by the federal government. In an article published by Education Week on September 7, 2005, Kathleen Kennedy Manzo listed several complaints regarding the application process:

- Kentucky officials complained that the director of Reading First (Christopher Doherty) told them they would have to use the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment to get their grant approved.
- Georgia Reading First officials complained that a federal consultant suggested they adopt a list of core programs to improve their chances of getting a grant.
- Illinois officials were told to drop the use of its state literacy assessment for Reading First schools and to use DIBELS. (p. 2)

These complaints (and others like them) led to a federal investigation into the Reading First application process and ultimately to a report published by the Office of the Inspector General (2006) which outlined several problems with the process. Among the findings, the report showed that the application process did interfere with states selections of reading materials and also that the panel reviewing the applications had conflicts of interest in that they were aligned with several publishing companies who were profiting from Reading First (Office of the Inspector General, 2006).

Controversy aside, Reading First had entered schools across the country in the name of improving students’ ability to read by improving the instruction they were offered in kindergarten through third grade. In the southeastern state in which my study was conducted,
close to $200,000,000 was awarded by the federal government to improve the teaching of reading and ultimately the students’ ability to read. More than 100 schools in 38 different local education agencies were awarded grants to implement Reading First in their classrooms. My study aimed at finding out what kind of an influence this externally developed program had on reading instruction in one elementary school.

What Should Reading First Look Like in the School Studied?

According to the state’s proposal, these five essential components of reading would be addressed in all kindergarten through third-grade classrooms: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. No doubt, the state included these components based upon the findings of the NRP (NICHD, 2000a) and the subsequent summary of their findings (NICHD, 2000b). The state also indicated that SBRR would provide the “specificity that will be needed to give teachers a roadmap” for instruction ([State Name] Reading First Initiative, 2003, p. 18). SBRR was highlighted in the state’s proposal often, in particular when they suggested the goal of Reading First would be the “dissemination of knowledge of SBRR as well as providing support in the implementation of reading programs and strategies based on scientific based reading research throughout all reading related activities in [state name] for the next six years” ([State Name] Reading First Initiative, 2003, p. 18).

According to the state’s proposal, the instruction offered in the classroom would be based upon SBRR, focusing on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The teachers would be receiving targeted professional development in these areas beginning the summer before Reading First was to be implemented and continuing for the duration of the implementation process. The initial training received by teachers came from a three day Teacher Academy during which time teachers across the state came together to be
introduced to and trained in SBRR. Professional development was a large component of Reading First in this state, and the training for teachers continued during the implementation process. Most of the remainder of the professional development the teachers received was at a more local level, usually being provided by the LC at each school. Every school in the state was given funds to hire a LC who would serve the Reading First program by helping to select materials for implementing SBRR in the classrooms, modeling and coaching teachers on SBRR, and offering professional development opportunities for teachers on SBRR.

According to the state’s original proposal ([State Name] Reading First Initiative, 2003) reading instruction would be delivered for 135 minutes per day through both whole group instruction and small needs-based groups. During the second year of implementation, the State Department of Education was granted permission to amend the block of reading instruction time, reducing it to 120 minutes. Students identified as needing extra support would receive additional instruction for reading during an intensive intervention program. The materials used for all instruction were to be based in SBRR and would be selected after conferring with “professionals who are recognized by the reading research community in the use of Consumer’s Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program” ([State Name] Reading First Initiative, 2003, p. 20). This guide, written by Simmons and Kame’enui (2003), provided support and guidance for those in the process of selecting reading programs in the state in which my study was set. This guide helped the state and LEAs select texts deemed SBRR, and also helped to identify and remove any additional materials that were not SBRR.

The use of this guide was questioned by Cathy M. Roller, Director of Research and Policy for the International Reading Association. Roller (Bell, 2003) suggested the guide was not completely based on SBRR, and in some instances included criteria that was not supported by
SBRR. As discussed further in my study, the use of SBRR materials played a large role in implementing Reading First. The *Consumer’s Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program* (Simmons & Kame’enui, 2003), recommended by Reading First, led to the selection and removal of texts from classrooms, directly impacting the teaching occurring in the classrooms. The SBRR teaching methods and materials that the states promised to implement in an effort to obtain funds from the federal government were aimed at changing the instruction offered in schools and it is the goal of my dissertation project to see if change in instruction occurred because of this in one rural elementary school.

This brief description of the policy environment surrounding the formation of Reading First, as well as a description of how Reading First made it to local schools and what it should look like in those schools, was provided to situate the study I chose to do for my dissertation project. It shows that although the federal government still cannot directly mandate classroom practices, Reading First was intended to influence the reading instruction provided in kindergarten through third grade. The fact that this program so tightly controlled the methods and materials teacher could teach reading with fostered discussion and disagreement in the field of reading research. Many reading researchers have spoken out against this insertion of the federal government into reading instruction and others have spoken out in defense of Reading First and the NRP. A brief review of this discussion follows.

**Opposition to Reading First**

Two outspoken critics of Reading First and the NRP reports that heavily influenced Reading First (NICHD 2000a; NICHD 2000b) are Elaine Garan and Steven Krashen. Garan and Krashen participated in a dialogue in a special reading section of the Phi Delta Kappan (2005) in which they separately wrote their views of what they consider the flawed NRP report. In the
context of this discussion, Garan (2005) used her understanding of the NRP report to back claims that it is “a biased report characterized by misreported, overgeneralized findings that do not inform but rather mandate education policy—ironically—in the name of science” (p. 438). Krashen’s (2005) discussion centered on the topic of sustained silent reading (SSR), and how the NRP chose not to review this concept or discuss it in their report. Because the NRP did not review or discuss findings of SSR in its report, Reading First schools cannot use this practice during their block of reading instruction time.

Garan (2002) and Krashen (2005) provide evidence to support their arguments against the NRP. Garan (2002) published a book urging teachers to resist reading mandates by using her explanation of how the NRP findings were flawed and providing teachers with discourse from which to argue their position. Garan supported her claims using the words taken directly from the full report produced by the NRP (NICHD, 2000a). Much of Garan’s arguments are based upon the inconsistencies found in the summary of the NRP report (NICHD, 2000b) and the actual report itself (NICHD, 2000a). Garan argued that the summary was given the most attention, though it did not always accurately reflect the research conducted in the review by the NRP. Krashen’s (2005) argument that SSR could be beneficial to students was also grounded in the research he presented, but the research was not reviewed by the NRP for methodological reasons.

Cunningham (2001) debated the methodological decisions made by the NRP. He suggested its review of only experimental and quasi-experimental research likened the teaching of reading to the curing of psychological or physical disease. Cunningham suggested that studying reading research as one might study medical research reduces the reading process to a series of unrelated, low-level isolated skills that can be addressed with noninteracting interventions. He suggested that the NRP’s findings would have been enhanced by the inclusion
of research conducted by more than just experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies. Cunningham also suggested that the inclusion of more research in which the ultimate assessment was actually reading texts would have been beneficial. However, the NRP was given a limited time to complete a massive review of research, and they decided it was necessary to narrow their focus. The federal government values what they deem to be scientific research (experimental and quasi-experimental), and the NRP was acting out the charge they were given in light of this.

Richard Allington (2002) took a different stance when formulating his critique of evidence-based policy. Allington expressed his concern for decision making made only by SBRR in his book *Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum*. Allington wrote that many instructional decisions could not be made with this type of research. He suggested that even the NRP identified substantial gaps in research on the teaching of reading. He questioned what would happen when teachers were faced with a pedagogical decision that SBRR did not have an answer for. Allington (2005) wrote that it is imperative for teachers to make decisions not by “looking over their shoulders to get cues but [by] looking into the eyes of the children in front of them” (p. 462).

Allington referred to a study he and other researchers conducted of exemplary elementary teachers in six states (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, & Morrow, 1998) when he said that excellent teaching does not require the following of a prescribed set of rules. He suggested that excellent teaching requires informed decision making on the part of a knowledgeable teacher who takes her cues from the children in front of her.

Ken Goodman (2004) also took opposition to the findings and subsequent recommendations made by Reading First. Goodman argued that the recommendations made by the summary of the NRP put too strong of an emphasis on phonics and decoding and took
emphasis away from engaging children in reading literature. Goodman suggested that because Reading First targets children in our poorest communities, the isolated skills instruction will force them to remain in the lower rungs of the educational ladder, “condemned to repeat over and over what hasn’t been working for them and denied access to the more meaningful latter stages of the program, including any opportunity to experience real books” (p. 203).

There are others who have written commentaries opposing Reading First and the NRP’s findings. In this space, I am not able to include them all, but the arguments of those represented here identify the majority of themes addressed by those not represented. The themes being the lack of clarity and agreement between the NRP’s findings and the subsequent summary of the findings, the narrow focus on specific topics in reading and the representation of the reading process as isolated skills, the narrow view the NRP took on what constitutes scientific research, and the lack of informed teacher decision making. These are important topics that will be revisited in the analysis of data for my dissertation project, as it is possible they will influence the instruction being offered in the school I studied.

Support for Reading First

Chhabra and McCardle (2004) edited a text called *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research* in which they supported the work of the NRP and its subsequent reports on the teaching of reading. They described the nature of effective research as a study that examines large cross-sections of children, so that the results found may be generalizable to other populations of students. They suggested teachers should not change their teaching practices based on the findings of one study, but based upon the converging evidence of several studies that reflect a “true picture of reading development, reading difficulties, and the effects of different types of reading instruction” (p. 6). The intent of this discussion was to provide merit
for the NRP’s findings, justify its importance to educators, and to show that they believe the findings of the NRP to be “true” and representative of what works in reading instruction.

Chhabra and McCardle (2004) tied generalizability to experimental and quasi-experimental research, suggesting that qualitative research is not likely to be applicable to settings other than the one studied. This explanation was offered to justify why qualitative research was not considered in the NRP’s analysis. Stake (2000) disagreed, suggesting that qualitative research contains its own version of generalizability, a version he called naturalistic generalization. Stake suggested that “enduring meanings come from encounter, and are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter” (p. 442) and that qualitative researchers provide us with the ability to construct knowledge through the experiential and contextual accounts they provide.

Shanahan (2005) also participated in the Phi Delta Kappan dialogue surrounding the NRP’s findings with Garan, Krashen, and Allington. Shanahan wrote in support of the NRP’s findings and in fact called for an end to the debate about the topic. Shanahan felt that the critiques offered against the NRP’s findings were “irrelevant to the question of whether the report should be used by the schools” (p. 453). Shanahan argued that even if he accepted the criticism of the NRP, the findings were still beneficial to improving the reading instruction offered to students. Shanahan suggested that the majority of the critique was based upon the fact that they did not include all aspects of literacy instruction (which he stated was true) but even that argument could not take away from the fact that the findings were still valuable.

Slavin (2002) defended the NRP’s findings and in particular praised the methodological rigor with which the panelists conducted their review. Slavin wrote

it is impossible to overstate the policy impact of the [NRC and NRP] reports, which produced remarkable consensus on the state of the evidence. Consensus panels of this
kind, with deep and talented staff support, should be in continual operation on a broad range of policy-relevant questions so that practitioners and policymakers can cut through all the competing claims and isolated research findings to get to the big picture findings that methodologically sophisticated researchers agree represent the evidence fairly and completely. (p. 19)

Slavin offered a clear stand for the type of educational research he values (experimental and quasi-experimental quantitative research) and suggested that it should be the basis of policy in the future. He also proposed that the federal government should be more involved in funding this type of research, to ensure the research that informs future policy is based on sound methodology.

As represented in the literature, there are conflicting arguments that exist within the literacy research community over federal programs such as Reading First. Yet the voices of the teachers involved in these reforms have not been heard. It is important that we have an understanding from the teachers’ perspectives to see how the policy of Reading First influences the teaching of reading in their classrooms. My dissertation project addresses the need to learn from the teachers’ and school administration’s perspective how the policy influences practice. This study will inform the previous discussion and possibly change the discussion from one being focused on the opinions of academics, to one being grounded in the realities of the everyday teaching and implementation of Reading First.

I now turn my attention to a broader topic – the review of literature surrounding what we know about the influence policy has on teaching practices. Mixed with this review of literature I will discuss how the present program being studied (Reading First) has addressed the topics discussed in the literature.
Policy and Practice

Reading First’s goal of helping every child become a successful reader by improving the instruction they receive in kindergarten through third grade through the use of SBRR methods and materials can only be attained if the teachers in the schools buy into the program and implement it in their classrooms as the program was designed. The federal government was aware of this, and created an application process that ensured schools would have to comply with their views of SBRR reading instruction in order to initially receive and then maintain funding from Reading First. Stipulations in the grant were such that monies could be taken away from states found to be in noncompliance with the program.

Noncompliance of Reading First could mean that states were not adhering to the methods found to be most helpful in the teaching of beginning reading as outlined by the NRP, or that states were not using materials grounded in SBRR. States were also required to monitor the progress being made by their students and report this data each year to the federal government. Students had to be making progress towards proficiency in reading for schools to retain their Reading First funding. The threat of losing funds was made clear to the teachers at the school I studied. The teachers were aware that their school needed this funding, and that they were responsible for delivering Reading First to their students to ensure the continuation of this funding. Yet was this threat of losing funding enough to ensure teachers implemented Reading First fully in their classrooms? Before beginning my dissertation project, I turned to the existing research on policy and practice to get a sense of what the educational research community knows, and what it still needs to know about the implementation of reform.
Valencia and Wixson (2004) described the relationship between teaching and policy as a reciprocal one, in which teachers are “at once the targets and agents of change” (p. 79). It is clear in the policy of Reading First that teachers are the targets of the change (with the continued professional development and support of the LC in place to help train teachers). It is also clear that they are to be the agents of change. The Reading First teachers are supposed to change their teaching to improve the reading (and ultimately the test scores) of their students. This relationship, however, is well documented in the research as being a troubled, complex, and multifaceted one.

In 1987, McLaughlin described two important teacher related factors that influence a policy’s success:

We have learned that policy success depends critically on two broad factors: local capacity and will. Capacity…is something that policy can address. Training can be offered. Dollars can be provided….But will, or the attitudes, motivation, and beliefs that underlie an implementor’s response to a policy’s goals or strategies, is less amenable to policy intervention. (p. 172)

Capacity is being used in this sense to describe the ability of teachers to learn new content and translate that content into instructional practice. McLaughlin suggested that a teacher’s capacity is the more easily controlled variable in terms of policy implementation when compared with a teacher’s will. He explained this by suggesting the will of teachers implementing a reform reflects the value they place on the policy or the appropriateness of it for their classrooms. Once policies enter the school, teachers place their own judgments upon the policy, and that influences
their implementation of it. A teacher’s judgment is influenced by multiple factors – factors a policy will have difficulty addressing (Spillane, 2000; Coburn, 2001).

Although McLaughlin (1987) published these words years ago, they seem to still be paving the way for policy studies continuing today – policy studies that address, at least in some fashion, both the will and the capacity of teachers. I will use his words as an organizational tool for this section: first looking at studies that have described the capacity of teachers in terms of implementing policy, then look at studies that describe the will of teachers in terms of implementing policy, and finally addressing how Reading First has tried to overcome these factors by using what McLaughlin (1987) referred to as “pressure and support” (p. 172).

Capacity. There are few studies that address specific content area learning of teachers and the implementation of reform (or instructional change) of that content (Valencia & Wixson, 2004). However, it is hopeful that this type of research will be on the rise in relation to what McLaughlin (1992) described as the “second wave” of instructional policy that came in during the 1990s. McLaughlin described this second wave as being more related to increasing teachers’ knowledge (capacity) in an effort to enhance instruction. As reforms are shifting towards the improvement of teacher capacity, it becomes understandable that the study of these reforms can no longer be one of an “output” only variety (Timar, 1994; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). The output most easily and frequently studied being students’ standardized test scores. Unfortunately, students’ standardized test scores do not provide insight into how those test scores were achieved.

Cohen and Ball (1990) suggested that what we know about educational reform stops at the classroom door as policy work has seldom attempted to go past it. Cohen and Spillane (1992) suggested that we must go through these doors, as in the past, teachers have found it “relatively
easy to pursue their own preferences once the doors have been closed behind them” (p. 23). Several researchers have called for a look inside the “black box” of instruction that is leading to those student outputs (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Valencia & Wixson, 2004). A few researchers have responded to this need, and an analysis follows.

In a case study conducted by Walpole, Justice, and Invernizzi (2004), the researchers described the literacy reform in an elementary school and the positive changes the school was able to implement in the instruction offered to their students. The authors wrote that the basis for the school’s reform was the implementation of research based practices in the teaching of reading. A large component of this process was the staff development offered in the school. The staff development focused on increasing the teacher’s capacity for implementing the reform by increasing their knowledge of research based strategies and tying those strategies to day to day classroom instruction. The professional development was led by the school’s administration and was provided in a positive, safe, and reflective environment. The results of this school based, content specific professional development were that the teachers were able to develop their expertise in a local environment that supported and was directly tied to the instruction they were offering their students. This case study did not describe any observations of the actual teaching that occurred as a result of this professional development, leading one to wonder if the professional development translated into actual classroom practices.

Several other case studies have been published related to individual teachers implementing a reform that directly addressed capacity. In a 1990 Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis issue, five case studies were presented that described individual teacher’s implementation of a mathematics reform in the state of California (Ball, 1990; Cohen, 1990; Peterson, 1990; Weimers, 1990; Wilson, 1990). The case studies did show that the reform
changed the teaching of all five teachers, but found rather different interpretations of change in each classroom. Upon reading the five cases, it became apparent that although they had each been asked to teach using the state’s new framework, the actual implementation of it was varied from classroom to classroom in terms of instructional change and teacher knowledge.

Across several of the cases, it was noted that the teachers were not that familiar with the mathematics reform framework they were to be implementing. One teacher studied even said that she had not spent any time studying the framework, and just assumed from what she had heard of it that her teaching was aligned with it (Ball, 1990). Another teacher spent time reading the new textbook they adopted to help implement the framework, but he chose to not read or take time to understand certain sections of the text that he felt did not concern his teaching (Wilson, 1990). This teacher had not been exposed at all to the new framework, and based his teaching on the textbook as he had been told it would ensure he was following the framework. The implementation of this new mathematics framework was not accompanied by specific, targeted professional development to help improve the teachers’ capacity to implement it effectively in their classrooms. This lack of cohesive preparation of teachers for the reform they were implementing led to fractured and highly variable mathematics instruction for students.

This series of case studies offered an informative look into the “black box” (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Valencia & Wixson, 2004) of reform based mathematics instruction in real classrooms. The classroom observations and teacher interviews provided insight into how the teachers incorporated their knowledge of the policy and how they translated that knowledge into classroom practice. In a discussion after the presentation of the five case studies, Cohen and Ball (1990) reviewed the important topics that came out of these studies. One important discussion related to teacher capacity that emanated from these studies was that of the “residues of the past”
(Cohen & Ball, 1990, p. 333). By this, the authors were referring to the multilayered reform environment the teachers were teaching in. As Tyack and Cuban (1995) wrote, policies change faster than teachers can effectively implement. Cohen and Ball (1990) suggested that with every policy change another layer of knowledge was added to a teacher’s capacity, and any newly acquired content assimilates with and builds from the previous layers. These previous layers, along with factors of “will” described later alter a teacher’s implementation, often leaving it very different from other teachers in the same school implementing the same reform.

A limitation of the presentation of the five individual case studies and the commentary provided by Cohen and Ball (1990) is that they do not describe in detail the school environment, administrative support, or professional development that might have influenced the teaching in the individual classrooms. This study clearly was aimed at investigating classroom practices, but left out a description of the policy environment (Valencia & Wixson, 2004) surrounding the teaching.

Another set of case studies presented by Jennings (1996) investigated several teachers’ responses to a reading reform they were asked to implement in their elementary school. Jennings stated that through these case studies she was attempting to “ask teachers to reconstruct their own learning that occurred in the past—learning that may in some ways have shaped their current thinking and practice” (p. 4) in an attempt to see how their learning may have shaped their implementation of the policies geared towards changing reading instruction in Michigan. Jennings learned that a teacher’s acquisition of content knowledge required time and professional development geared towards helping teachers learn new content. One teacher studied initially did not see the value in the professional development sessions in which they were offered policy related information and tools to teach reading with. She said the materials offered to her were
stored in a cupboard immediately after the meetings, as the process of change was overwhelming and the new information and ideas were coming too fast to keep up with. After a year of implementing, however, the teacher began reaching into the cupboard for those tools as she learned more and was better able to connect her new learning to the information received. This teacher did have the capacity for making change; however, she needed additional time to make sense of how the policy would apply to her classroom learning environment.

Policy implementation takes time and effort on the part of teachers as they acquire new information and attempt to translate it into practice. That translation process is important, and research is just beginning to look into how teachers make sense of policy. One such effort to understand teachers’ “sensemaking” was produced by Coburn (2001). By analyzing the nature and content of teachers’ conversations, Coburn suggested that the teaching community (or other teachers in the same school) shaped and refined individual teacher’s understanding and implementation of reform. Coburn wrote that the teachers she studied saw policy as being abstract, and searched for ways to make the abstract ideas translate into concrete classroom practices. They turned to the other teachers in their school building to help make sense of the abstract ideas, in an effort to make it apply to their unique teaching situation.

Coburn’s (2001) research on how teachers collaboratively translate policy dovetails with findings from other studies on effective professional development. The work of Joyce and Showers (1980, 1996) showed the importance of peer coaching and collaborative work among teachers and suggested it was an important component of a professional development program that led to classroom change. Joyce and Showers (1996) found that “members of peer coaching groups exhibited greater long-term retention of new strategies and more appropriate use of new teaching models over time” (p. 14). They suggested that schools organize peer coaching teams
and schedule time for teachers to work together to improve student learning. Joyce and Showers showed that school administrations that were able to facilitate this type of professional development produced “greater faculty cohesion and focus and, in turn, [facilitated] more skillful shared decision making” (1996, p. 16).

The findings of Joyce and Showers (1980, 1996) are in agreement with other research on professional development. Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) studied professional communities in schools and found that “providing scheduled time for collaborative planning and giving teachers the responsibility to make key decisions about school policy [made] strong contributions to professional community” (p. 785). Little (1993) further suggested that a traditional “training model of teachers’ professional development” (p. 129) was not adequate. Little argued that professional development should offer meaningful “intellectual, social, and emotional engagement with ideas, with materials, and with colleagues both in and out of teaching” (p. 138). Little also spoke of the importance of the context of teaching when discussing professional development. She wrote that localized study groups and teacher collaboratives could allow teacher learning to take place in “relation to their individual and institutional histories, practices, and circumstances” (p. 138).

More recently, Borko (2004) provided an overview of what past research has shown regarding professional development. Borko’s findings also highlight the importance of professional learning communities as an important tool for improving student learning. Another point she made was that meaningful learning was “a slow and uncertain process for teachers…. [and] that some teachers change more than others through participation in professional development programs” (p. 6). The past research on professional development shows effective ways to improve teachers’ learning and the instruction they offer their students.
Reading First clearly aimed to address teachers’ capacity as it tried to improve the instruction they offered their students.

Studying the capacity teachers have for changing instruction based upon reform is a relevant research agenda in light of the number of policies (including Reading First) that are geared towards making the teachers “targets and agents of change” (Cohen, 1995; Valencia & Wixson, 2004). The methodology of choice, as suggested by this brief review, is the case study. The case study offers an opportunity to explore in depth the teaching and learning inside schools, giving the researcher a glimpse into the black box of instruction that has previously been ignored by closed doors. As researchers begin looking at the instruction inside the classroom doors, it is important to pay attention to and understand the professional development that preceded and possibly influenced the teaching being observed.

Will. Policies aimed towards changing instruction of teachers have a daunting task, as teachers in the past have, at times, appeared to be unwilling to change to meet the expectations of the reform being implemented (Cohen & Spillane, 1992). Researchers have offered many explanations for this, the most compelling and most frequently offered explanation being that how a teacher interprets a reform is based upon their knowledge, values, beliefs, habits, and history. Teachers are historical, rational beings who bring background knowledge to their understanding and implementation of reform.

Cohen (1990) wrote that “to argue that government policy is the only operating force is to portray teachers as utterly passive agents without agency” (p. 335). Cohen found that of the teachers he studied, those that interpreted and implemented policy in their own terms were proud of their independent contributions. Knowledgeable teachers may be working hard to interpret external policies in a way that is beneficial to the students in their classrooms. Cohen (1990) also
wrote that teachers “picked up the pieces of reform, and interpreted and enacted them in light of what they know and can do, as well as what they believe they must do” (p. 336).

Cohen (1990) conducted a case study of a second-grade teacher implementing a new math framework in her classroom. From observations and conversations with the teacher, he became perplexed by what the teacher felt was revolutionary change she had made in her instruction, compared to what he described as minimal change in instruction. From his observer’s perspective, he felt she was at the beginnings of change, and from her perspective she had mastered the teaching of the new framework. Had Cohen only observed her teaching, without speaking to the teacher about her practices, he might have drawn the conclusion that the reform was having a minimal impact on instruction, and that possibly because of traits associated with the will of the teacher, the reform was being resisted. However, having discussed the instruction he observed with her, he learned that she really believed she had made immense progress in her instruction based upon the reform.

Cohen (1990) offered several explanations for this quandary. The first was that it is impossible to understand how much a teacher has changed her instruction without understanding where she first began. A teacher who had been more traditional in mathematics instruction would feel she had made great strides, whereas a teacher who had always been more progressive with her instruction might feel she had made only minimal strides. In this way, what may have appeared to be the will of the teacher resisting a reform is highly related to the capacity of the teacher. The instructional capacity, knowledge, and existing practices of teachers influence their ability to show either great or minimal change in instruction.

In another empirical study, Gitlin and Margonis (1995) discussed the school change efforts being attempted in an elementary school in partnership with a local university. For many
reasons, the authors found some teachers were resistant (or not motivated) to implement the changes the school was developing. Some comments were made by teachers regarding the university faculty involved, calling them “cooperative learning police” (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995, p. 389), and even going so far as to not allow them to monitor the reform process by observing in their classrooms. One particular teacher stood up in a meeting and suggested he had as much knowledge about teaching as the university personnel did, and that he felt he could judge his own instruction. Other teachers more quietly protested the changes by grading papers during staff meetings or even shining bowling shoes for the entirety of a meeting.

The researchers, Gitlin and Margonis (1995), did not dismiss these resisters, but used their actions as an opportunity to explore the reasoning behind the resistance. They suggested that the resistance could “play an important part in reform efforts, even if, in the short run, it works against the implementation of the reform” (p. 391). The reform in question was implementing changes to allow schools to make “site based decisions” in an attempt to give teachers more authority over instructional decisions being made. After discussing the issues with the teachers, it was discovered that their resistance may have been “good sense” (p. 397) in that they knew the policy would not directly give them more authority, and that it would increase their workload. Further analysis suggested that the issues the teachers raised were not merely an attempt to resist a reform, but to share their views on the problems they perceived with the reform.

Another issue that informs the will of a teacher in the context of implementing reform is that of the teacher’s desire, motivation, or willingness to learn. In Jenning’s (1996) case studies, she found that of the three teachers she studied, two teachers had similar ideas about reading and reading practices before the reform was implemented, yet they each took very different
understandings away from the reform process. Jenning’s attributed this difference to their “dispositions towards learning” (p. 101). One teacher, Ms. Price, came to the policy with an eagerness to learn and viewed the policy as something she could learn from. Ms. Stern, on the other hand, viewed the policy as simply restating things she already knew, and so she chose not to learn from it. Jennings found that the will of the teachers did play a part in their implementation of a reform – in that the will of the teachers encompasses who and what they are as learners.

**Pressure and support.** Reading First has attempted to overcome typical policy obstacles such as the capacity and will of teachers through the use of what McLaughlin (1987) referred to as pressure and support. McLaughlin wrote:

> Pressure is required in most settings to focus attention on a reform objective; support is needed to enable implementation. Pressure from policy can be important even in settings that subscribe voluntarily to reform objectives simply because most institutions and individuals are allergic to change. And in settings where there is uneven consensus about the merit of a policy or where policy aims at weak beneficiaries, pressure can provide necessary legitimacy for program officials. (p. 173)

The creators of Reading First have applied both pressure and support to ensure the implementation of the program in classrooms in kindergarten through third grade. The pressure is implied in many ways (and on many levels), the first and foremost being the application process the states went through to obtain the federal funding. The pressure was applied in many regards during this process: pressure on the state to show that they would spend the funds on SBRR; pressure on the states to choose teaching materials that were based in SBRR; and pressure on the states to describe how they would report student test scores back to the federal
government annually to ensure the implementation was bringing student progress. During the implementation process, the state in which I conducted my study also applied its own pressure in several forms, one of them being an external evaluation team who studied the implementation of the program including student test scores, teacher observations, interviews with the LCs, and surveys with teachers, parents, administrators, and LCs.

The state also used what it labeled “support” for the implementation to apply pressure. The “support” consisted of a LC in each school, a Regional Reading First Coach (RRFC) who supported a group or cluster of LCs, professional development architects who developed and helped implement the professional development, and an office staff working on Reading First at the state level. These entities did, in fact, support the implementation of the reform in many ways, including the direct support of classroom teaching through targeted professional development, modeling of instructional concepts, classroom observations, and assessment assistance. However, this support as it was labeled, also added another layer of pressure onto the teachers. Each entity from the local school LC to the RRFC to the professional development architects observed the teachers’ instruction and offered assessments of what they saw and suggestions for what needed improvement. To a teacher, that kind of support often feels like pressure – pressure to implement a reform they may or may not have initially bought into.

This pressure and support was put into place to try to ensure a uniformity of implementation between classrooms and schools in this state. The chain of information began at the top with the program director or the professional development architects, and then was “redelivered” down through the RRFCs to the local school LCs, and then finally passed on to the teachers. The term “redelivery” was common among participants, as that was the phrase the state
used to ensure the delivery of uniform program information to all parties involved in the implementation process.

The pressure and support was put into place by Reading First with the intention of overcoming some of the reform obstacles discussed previously in an effort to offer SBRR in all classrooms across the state as a means of improving the reading instruction. The majority of the support designed to overcome capacity obstacles came through targeted professional development beginning the summer before implementation and continuing with local, ongoing professional development provided by the LC. This professional development was intended to help develop the teachers’ capacity to implement the changes desired by the federal government. The same content specific knowledge on reading instruction would be delivered to all teachers across the state. The assumption was that if all teachers were presented with the exact same instructional guidelines and content knowledge, then the reform should be able to achieve some degree of uniformity upon implementation in classrooms across the state.

The pressure placed on the schools of losing the funding if the reform was not being implemented properly or if students were not achieving acceptable progress was also designed to ensure that the implementation went as planned. This pressure was put into place to overcome the will of the teachers who may not have initially bought into the program, or even value the program, but were being forced to implement it in their classrooms because of external pressure.

Policy and Materials

Teachers’ capacity and will are not the only variables that affect the implementation of reforms in schools. Research has suggested that teaching materials also affect the way the reform looks in classrooms. Reading First, as previously discussed, came under fire in the report from the Office of the Inspector General, suggesting that the federal government intervened with the
state and the LEA’s right to choose their own reading instructional materials without influence. The Reading First website proclaims that there is not now and never has been a list of approved core reading materials; however, many states had difficulty getting applications accepted without naming specific core reading programs that were delineated as being based on SBRR. The textbook publishers whose materials were suggested as being based on SBRR have profited greatly from Reading First and thus have the potential to have a profound influence on the instruction offered to children in Reading First schools.

The Reading First program mandated that the instruction offered to students as well as the materials used to deliver that instruction be based on SBRR. Although the state I conducted my research in wrote in their proposal to the federal government that one packaged reading program cannot be expected to meet the needs of all students, from my observations for the external evaluation, I saw a heavy reliance on what is referred to as the core reading program in each county. Each LEA was able to select a core reading program from those recommended by the state, or by using the guide by Simmons and Kame’enui (2003). For some counties this meant not only the implementation of Reading First, but also the adoption of a new core reading program.

Cohen and Ball (1996) wrote of the three traditional reasons materials do not often produce intended policy effects. The first reason being that curriculum developers don’t take into account the learning necessary on the part of the teacher. The developers have typically not invested properly in the education of teachers on how to use the materials, leaving it up to individual teacher interpretation. Second, teachers’ prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences will influence how they use those materials in classrooms. Third, some teachers have a dislike of
packaged curriculum materials, and will shun them in place of more creative approaches to teaching.

Cohen and Ball (1996) suggested that if curriculum developers placed more emphasis on teacher learning of the content and offered more support for teachers regarding student knowledge, this could lead to an improved relationship between the use of curriculum materials and teaching. They also suggested that these improvements could enhance professional development surrounding the curriculum materials as it would give teachers a common place from which to work together to improve their content knowledge.

A recent study on how new teachers use curriculum materials (Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006), suggested that the use of mandated curriculum materials led to teachers taking a procedural approach to instruction rather than a conceptual one. The authors stated that the three teachers in their study who were mandated to use curriculum materials provided by their separate schools focused their instruction more on the completion of students’ tasks or assignments included in the curriculum materials than on student learning. One of the teachers, Stephanie, was quoted as saying her teaching was “almost a little brainless for me” (Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006, p. 103) and thought she should not question the program as it was a “well researched and proven” program ((Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006, p. 103).

A concern that some reading educators have regarding the Reading First program is that teachers will begin doing exactly as this new teacher has done – mindlessly follow the program as it has been “proven” to be based on research. Some reading educators worry that the overreliance upon prepackaged curriculum materials will not allow the teachers the discretion to
teach according to their students needs (Allington, 2002), and will lead to a mindless following of a curriculum developed far removed from the needs of the students.

An issue was raised by the research of McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic and Zeig (2006) on the differences among core reading programs and the effects these differences have on instruction. If educators are right in assuming that the recommended use of particular reading programs in Reading First schools leads to an overreliance on those texts, then we as educators need to be aware of the differences that exist in the instruction and learning opportunities provided by those texts. McGill-Franzen et al. (2006) found qualitative and quantitative differences in the two research based core reading programs being used in the implementation of Reading First in the state of Florida.

One surprising result of their study was that the comprehension instruction in the two core programs was significantly different, with one program offering considerably more comprehension instruction that included higher level, inferential questions than the other program (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic & Zeig, 2006). Another finding was that fluency was rarely emphasized in the programs, but one did have significantly more fluency segments than the other. The most surprising of all the findings was the difference in the number of words read by students in the different program. In one program, students who read all the texts associated with the program could read 44,332 words as compared to only 25,963 words in the other program.

These findings highlight the differences in the core reading program used by two school systems implementing the same Reading First program. The Reading First program in these two schools might look vastly different based upon the instructional materials. Thus, we can add
materials to the list of potential obstacles policies face as they are implemented in schools across the country.

**Summary**

The goal of my dissertation project is to study how Reading First influenced reading instruction offered in a rural elementary school. This review of the literature was intended to show what research has shown about the obstacles faced as policies become practice and situate my study in light of this knowledge.

This selective review was carried out in a purposeful manner, beginning with the review of two comprehensive literature reviews published in the field of literacy research on the influences of policy and practice (McGill-Franzen, 2000 & Valencia & Wixson, 2000). The references from those chapters provided a starting point for my search of relevant literature, which was also carried out using the University’s library system, including the availability of a search engine for locating relevant full text documents available online and in print. Key words such as “policy”, “reform”, “implementation”, “teacher change,” and “reading instruction” were used to narrow the literature to those most relevant to my topic. Ultimately, I found that the references on the literature I was finding through my searches were leading back to literature I had already reviewed.

This review helped situate my dissertation project in a methodology that suited the exploration of the context in which the reading instruction was taking place. The methodology outlined in the following chapter will allow me to not only consider the teachers’ views of the influence Reading First had on their instruction, but to consider the broader context of the school environment as well when considering that instruction.
CHAPTER THREE

avery elementary school

From the previous review of literature related to policy and practice, two main points stand out: (a) the research has shown that the relation between policy and practice is not necessarily direct (Cohen, 1995; McLaughlin, 1987), and (b) the research does not provide detailed information as to what happens inside the black box of classroom instruction (Cohen & Spillane, 1992). Valencia and Wixson (2004) further suggested that the research is even more limited in terms of studying specific subject matter policy implementation. The purpose of my dissertation study was to begin to fill the gaps in our knowledge of specific subject matter policy implementation by learning how Reading First influenced the reading instruction offered in a rural elementary school.

Even though Reading First was designed to improve the teaching of reading in a systematic and explicit way, the teaching of reading does not occur in a vacuum. As Erickson (1986) wrote:

What the teachers do at the classroom and building level is influenced by what happens in wider spheres of social organization and cultural patterning. These wider spheres of influence must also be taken into account when investigating the narrower circumstances of the local scene. (p. 122)

In the wider spheres Erickson described, teachers work in their discursive communities to create meaning of Reading First through the language used within their group and their shared culture, history, and environment. This created meaning might ultimately influence the implementation of Reading First in the individual classrooms. For this reason, instead of learning solely from
individual teachers isolated in their own classrooms, I chose to conduct a case study of an elementary school in its third year of implementing Reading First. A detailed description of my research process follows.

**Research Design**

In an effort to gain a comprehensive look at the influence Reading First was having on the teaching of reading in one rural elementary school, I chose to use Robert Stake’s (2000) instrumental case study. Stake described this type of case study as one that “provides insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (p. 437). He suggested that an instrumental case study is best suited in instances when the case is situating or creating a backdrop for our understanding of something else. In my dissertation project, I was most interested in how Reading First was influencing classroom instruction, and the case (the elementary school) provided the boundary or context for my research. It is essential to understand teaching in the context that surrounds it (Erickson, 1986; Valencia & Wixson, 2000 & 2004), and by conducting a case study I had the opportunity to do that (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Merriam, 1998).

The idea of an instrumental case study falls in line with the social constructionist theoretical framework outlined previously in that a case study seeks to understand or interpret an issue within its naturally occurring context. By using the school as the boundary for my study, I was able to take into consideration the importance of the teachers working together with the LC and school administration to make sense of Reading First and make it work for them within their local school context. Berger and Luckmann (1966) described how we exist in an intersubjective world with others by saying:

I also know…that the others have a perspective on this common world that is not identical with mine. My “here” is their “there.” My “now” does not fully overlap with
theirs. My projects differ from and may even conflict with theirs. All the same, I know that I live with them in a common world. Most importantly, I know that there is an ongoing correspondence between my meanings and their meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality. The natural attitude is the attitude of commonsense consciousness precisely because it refers to a world that is common to many men. (p. 23)

The teaching that occurs inside this school is influenced by many factors that are a part of the teachers’ common world. The teachers and administration together made sense of the Reading First program as it was presented to them as an objectivation of the findings of a select few literacy researchers. This meaning was created within their school or common world, using language available to them and compatible with formats such as grade level meetings and professional development sessions with the literacy coach (LC). A case study coming from a social constructionist perspective afforded me the opportunity to consider the teaching and how it was shaped by the context surrounding it.

A line of research has begun looking beyond individual interpretations of the implementation of reform and has begun looking at the collective sensemaking that precedes and coincides with the reform process (Little, 1993; Spillane, 1999). Spillane (1999) studied the implementation of a mathematics reform in Michigan and found that teachers who had the opportunity to discuss their teaching and learning with other colleagues were able to understand the complexity of the reform much more. By choosing to employ a case study of an elementary school, I had the opportunity to participate in meetings during which time the teachers were working together to learn more about Reading First. A social constructionist perspective highlights the importance of the interactions between the teachers and their use of language.
(Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1999) to further deepen their understanding of the Reading First program. This information may help in understanding the influence Reading First has on reading instruction in the classrooms studied.

Another rationale for the use of a case study approach for my dissertation project comes from Patton (2002). Patton suggested that the implementation of reform involved a process of adaptation to local conditions, and that to study the implementation, one needed to choose methods that were “open-ended, discovery oriented and capable of describing developmental processes” (p. 162). Stake’s (2000) instrumental case study fits the criteria described by Patton. I entered the school with a set of research questions in mind, but I remained open to learning and discovering within the school context.

Site Selection

To conduct my dissertation project, I needed to find an elementary school willing to participate in the study. Using Patton’s (2002) guidelines for typical case sampling as well as convenience sampling, I selected Avery Elementary School (pseudonym), located in a rural town in a southeastern state, to be the site of the case study. For a school to receive Reading First funding, it had to be located in an area of high poverty and had to have low-test scores in reading. Avery Elementary met those criteria when initially applying for the Reading First grant. Although the demographics of the Reading First schools across the state vary from district to district, what makes Avery Elementary a typical case sample is that the students in attendance are predominantly from families with low incomes, have low reading test scores, and the school is located in a rural area.

I also took into consideration Stake’s (2000) description of a case that affords “opportunity to learn” (p. 446) when selecting the school site for my dissertation project. Stake
described this by saying “my choice would be to examine that case from which we feel we can learn the most. That may mean taking the most accessible, the one we can spend the most time with” (p. 446). I used the concept of opportunity to learn in two ways. First, I used it to help narrow down a list of schools in which I could most easily spend a lot of time. From a list of 97 Reading First elementary schools in the state in which I lived, I narrowed it down to the 26 schools that were within a two-hour drive of my home. I felt it was imperative to be able to drive to and from the school in one day without requiring overnight travel so I could be more available to observe and interview teachers at a time that was convenient for them. I also felt it would provide more opportunities for me to learn if I was close enough to attend Reading First meetings at the school. A longer travel time may have deterred me from participating in these short after-school meetings. From this list of 26 schools, I randomly selected Avery Elementary. I had never been to Avery Elementary School before, even during the three years I observed Reading First schools for the state’s external evaluation. I had no affiliation with any of the school faculty or staff. In fact, I had never met anyone from this school before, nor did I know anyone residing in the surrounding area.

The second way I used Stake’s (2000) concept of opportunity to learn was by asking the principal of Avery Elementary questions about the turnover rate of his teaching staff. I was looking for a school with low rates of teacher turnover to be able to find teachers who had the most experience with implementing Reading First. I thought that teachers most familiar with the program would provide me with the best learning opportunities. When I contacted the principal of Avery Elementary, the school was beginning its third year of implementing Reading First. From the principal, I learned that the majority of teachers (13 out of 16) teaching in kindergarten through third grade had received two full years of professional development and training related
to Reading First and had spent the past two school years implementing Reading First in their classrooms. The population of teachers in this school had remained relatively unchanged since they began implementing Reading First, allowing me the opportunity to observe teachers who would be familiar with the program.

My first contact with the principal of Avery Elementary was via email in August 2006. I found his email address on the school’s website, and sent him an email describing my study and asking if he would be interested in allowing me to conduct my case study within his school. He replied positively, suggesting that he had a number of teachers he believed would enjoy talking about their experiences. I spoke with him further on the phone about the study and requested a written statement from him approving my research in his school. Shortly thereafter, I received written approval from the principal on school letterhead. I submitted this letter to the University of Georgia’s Institutional Review Board along with a proposal to conduct research on human subjects. Table 1 outlines the time frame and steps followed prior to entering the school site.

*Avery Elementary School.* The school I selected for my case study, Avery Elementary School, is one of four elementary schools in a rural county located 2 hours outside of a large city in the southeast. The population of the county in which the school is situated is approximately 24,000, and the town in which the school is located has a population of approximately 2,000. Fifty-three percent of the students in the school are eligible for free and reduced lunch, with the median family income in the county below the state’s average. The major industry in this area is poultry and livestock. During the school year that I gathered data (2006-2007), the population of students was made up of 74% White, 12% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% Native American or Alaskan Native, and 3% multicultural students. English Language Learners comprised 7% of the school’s population.
Avery Elementary is a facility that serves just over 400 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school sits on a large piece of flat property, slightly set back from the road. It is surrounded by a residential area consisting of small, single family homes. In front of the school are a small parking lot and a car rider drop off/pick up route. Behind the school is a large field with playground equipment. It is a clean, neat facility that has been a part of the community for many years. Immediately inside the school on the left is the office, housing the school’s administration. Opposite the office on the right side of the entrance hallway is a large media center filled with computers and shelves of books. Straight in front of the office is a wall of windows that showcase a courtyard area with benches and tables.

The three main wings of the school extend from the office and courtyard area, housing the classrooms, cafeteria, and gym. To the left of the office is a long hallway with the kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. The four kindergarten classrooms all have brightly colored awnings over their doors and colorful displays of student work on the bulletin boards lining the hallway. Beyond those four classrooms are a work room and four first grade classrooms with displays of their students’ writing on the bulletin boards. To the right of the office are three hallways that form three sides of a square, housing the classrooms for second through fifth grade, as well as the gifted and special education classrooms. The classrooms have brightly decorated bulletin boards outside their door showcasing student work and awards.

Outside the door of every classroom in kindergarten through third grade is a detailed class schedule outlining their daily instructional routine. After two years of implementing Reading First, Avery Elementary amended the amount of time they taught reading in their school. They changed the block of reading instruction from 135 minutes to 120 minutes. The teachers said the change in schedule meant they could not take a break during their instruction.
time. In each grade level, time was allotted for whole group instruction and small group instruction, as well as time set aside for reading out loud, and reading intervention. The schedules also outline the lunch, specials, math, and science/social studies instructional times.

The classrooms are for the most part large and spacious. The kindergarten classrooms have tables, and the other grade levels have student desks. One classroom in the school, located on a hallway with third-grade classrooms, belongs to the school’s literacy coach. This classroom contains a few student desks, but mainly large rectangular tables for meeting purposes.

Academically, Avery Elementary, along with the three other elementary schools in the county, has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as determined by NCLB. Avery has met AYP for five consecutive school years. However, the county’s one middle school and one high school have not met AYP. The middle school has been labeled “Needs Improvement” by NCLB for not meeting the Academic Criteria for more than two consecutive years. The middle school administration must offer school choice to students, additional services to those who request it, and is restructuring. The high school, though it did not make AYP, has not been labeled “Needs Improvement” as it has not had two consecutive years without making AYP. The graduation rate for high school seniors in this county in the year 2007 was 58.9%. Economically disadvantaged and Black students had lower graduation percentage rates than White students.

Data collection for my dissertation project began upon entering the site, and continued through the end of the school year in May 2007. Table 1 provides a brief explanation of the timeline of my case study. A detailed description of how I conducted my data collection and analysis follows.
Data Collection

Though the data collection process was continuous, I describe it as having taken place in three phases to provide a better understanding of the actions I was taking while in the elementary school. During the three phases of my case study, I used two methods of data collection to inform my research questions: interviews and observations.

*Interviews*

I chose to use a standardized open-ended interview format with all of my participants to ensure I was asking similar questions and collecting similar data from all of the stakeholders in the school (Patton, 2002). Obtaining data from similar interview questions from the different stakeholders within the school helped inform me of how they worked together to create a meaning of Reading First, and then to later to consider how that meaning of Reading First influenced the instruction they offered in their individual classrooms.

The questions for my interview protocol were designed to help inform my research questions and were developed before entering the school site. I initially developed the questions for a pilot study carried out in conjunction with a qualitative research course I was enrolled in at the University one year before my dissertation study began. For this pilot study, I interviewed two teachers in a Reading First school about how the program influenced their teaching. After analyzing the pilot study data, I found that when I used specific Reading First terminology in my questions related to the teaching of reading, the teachers appeared to answer in a way that would show them to be in full compliance with the reading program.

For my dissertation project, I modified the questions from this pilot study to make them general enough to get a sense of the vocabulary the teachers had developed related to the teaching of reading, and how they applied that vocabulary to their instruction. I removed any
mention of the five components of reading instruction as described by SBRR to ensure I wasn’t leading them into discussing things they had not incorporated into their instruction. I also reminded the participants before each interview that I was conducting this for my own research purposes, and not in conjunction with an evaluation of the Reading First program.

I wanted my participants to feel at ease during the interview, and to know that I was there to learn from them. As Glesne (1999) described, I posited myself as a naive learner open to what the participants were telling me, and was willing to probe in depth to get at what they were trying to say instead of inserting my assumptions into their responses.

The LC and principal interviews were carried out in their offices during the school day. The interviews with teachers were usually conducted in their own classrooms during lunch breaks, before or after school, or when their students were in specials. All interviews were tape recorded so I could focus on what the teachers were saying and probe when necessary (Glesne, 1999). During my drive home from the school, I listened to the tape recorded interviews in the car (Glesne, 1999). Replaying the tapes and listening to them right away helped me when it came time to transcribe and analyze the data. It also helped in that I noticed if I had missed something, or if there was a point I wanted further clarification on, I was able to contact the teacher right away to enhance my understanding. It also aided in the generating of assertions (Erickson, 1986) used to guide my analysis, described in detail later.

The interviews were transcribed using a transcription machine as soon as possible. My goal was to obtain a verbatim transcript for each interview. Two-thirds of the interviews were transcribed by myself. However, I was limited by the amount of typing and transcription I could do in a short amount of time, so I hired someone to complete about one-third of the interview transcripts for me. Though some may warn of the difficulties in having transcriptions done for
you (Reissman, 1993) it was necessary in this situation that I do so. I gave explicit directions to
the person who assisted with the transcription, and gave her samples of transcripts I had done
previously to ensure consistency. The transcripts were completed and returned to me promptly,
and I listened to the tapes while reading along with her transcription to ensure the accuracy of
her work. The transcriptions were well done, and by listening to them while reading the
transcription I was able to get an excellent feel for what the participants were saying and how
they said it.

The only difference between the interviews conducted with the LC and the principal
versus the teachers was that during the teacher interviews I asked questions about the
observations I had previously conducted in their classrooms. I waited to schedule the teacher
interviews for at least one day after the second observation was conducted in their classroom.
This was done so that I would have time to go through the field notes taken during the
observation to formulate questions specific to the reading instruction they offered in their
classrooms, and to ensure I had time to do an initial analysis of the field note data.

*Observations*

I completed two observations of each teacher that chose to participate in the study (a
participant description follows in phase three of the study). I was able to observe the complete
reading instruction block for each participant. During these observations I took the role of an
“observer as participant” (Glesne, 1999). In this role, I was able to “remain primarily an
observer but have some interaction with study participants” (Glesne, 1999, p. 44). The teachers
and I worked together (usually via email) to set up a time for me to come observe what I
described as everyday reading instruction. I asked them to carry on as if I were not there, and
teach how they would normally.
The instruction offered during the times I observed appeared to be a continuation of well established routines put in place over the past two years of implementing Reading First. Young students thrive on routines, and if a teacher were to change the routine to put on a show for an observer it generally becomes apparent during the observation. My three years of observing reading instruction for the state’s external evaluation helped me get a good sense of when a teacher was trying something new to impress, or if he or she was carrying on with typical instructional routines.

Although I had initially set out to be an observer in the field, my role morphed into one of an observer as participant (Glesne, 1999). For most observations, the teacher introduced me to the students and said I was a student working on a school project and that I was interested in learning how reading was taught in schools. I typically sat in an out of the way chair so as to not interfere with their transitions to different activities during reading instruction. For each interview, I brought a spiral bound notebook and intended to sit quietly in a corner taking field notes. However, on many occasions, I was invited to be a participant when the students would approach me to ask questions or to show me their work.

Another way I was invited to be more than just an observer was by the classroom teacher. During almost every observation, the teacher would approach me and initiate conversation about implementing Reading First in their classroom. This typically happened when the students were transitioning between activities, or they were working independently on assignments. They never allowed my being in the room to interrupt their instruction, but appeared eager to have another adult present in the room to make comments to when a brief opportunity arose.

One example of this came during an observation of Ms. Wood’s first-grade classroom. In the middle of reading instruction, she was interrupted by the fire alarm. The teacher and students
evacuated the building and waited outside until an all clear was sounded, and then returned to the classroom to resume instruction. Within minutes of returning to the classroom, the teacher had the students settled back down on the rug and interested in the story she was reading when someone from the office knocked on her door, bringing a new student that had just enrolled in the school. The teacher quickly got the new student situated, then returned again to her reading instruction. During a quick moment when the students were working independently, the teacher approached me and said that “somedays 120 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction is just not realistic” (Wood, field notes, March 20, 2007). When this happened, I would respond appropriately to the teacher, and then take notes about the instance in my field journal. As often as possible, I wrote verbatim quotes from these asides offered by the teachers. I believe these exchanges offered me an insider’s view into what it is like to teach Reading First on a day to day basis. During the subsequent interview with that teacher, I always referred back to important happenings that occurred during the observations to seek further understanding and to aid my analysis.

Field notes. The observations of reading instruction were important to my understanding of how Reading First influenced the day to day reading instruction provided in this school. In every classroom, I took copious field notes (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002) in a field journal for the entirety of the 120 minutes I was in the classroom. I did not use an existing observation instrument for this study, as I have not yet found one that would encompass all of the aspects involved in reading instruction that I was interested in learning about. Even without an instrument for observing, I was able to take consistent field notes across classrooms by focusing my notes on three main items: (a) the instruction offered in the classroom, (b) the literacy environment, and (c) the materials used to teach reading.
The most complex part of my note taking involved the first component, the instruction offered in the classroom. For three years I have observed schools for the external evaluation of Reading First, and though I chose not to use the same observation instrument used in that evaluation, the training and experience from that did assist me in taking field notes for my dissertation project. Glesne (1999) offered advice to novice researchers saying that their field note taking would improve over time, and mine was enhanced by the experiences I have had conducting past observations of reading instruction. In my field journal I wrote detailed notes about what the teacher was teaching in the classroom. I made notes of how the students were grouped during the instruction, what materials the teacher was teaching with, and what the teacher was focusing on in her or his lesson. When possible, I included direct quotations from the teacher, but in many circumstances this wasn’t possible, and my notes aimed to summarize the instruction. My field notes were descriptive in nature, aiming to paint a detailed picture of what I saw occurring in the classroom.

To paint a complete picture, I could not only focus on the teacher, but also on the work the students were doing. When the teacher was teaching to the whole group (which accounted for half of the instructional time) I made notes of what the teacher was teaching and also what the students were doing. I made notes of student participation and behavior, and of the activities completed by the students during this time. When the teacher was leading small groups, I made note of the instruction he or she offered within that small group, as well as notes about how he or she organized literacy centers around the classroom. I made notes of the materials the teacher was using and the materials the students were using in their centers. I also took notes related to behavior issues occurring in literacy centers (both good and bad) as well as whether or not the work in the centers was being completed.
The following is an excerpt from field notes I took in a second grade classroom as the students were all seated in their desks with a copy of their basal reader opened to the same story entitled *The Day Jimmy’s Boa Ate the Wash* by Trinka Hakes Noble. The students had previously read this story in its entirety, and were asked by the teacher to look through the story and select their favorite page to share with the class. My notes read: *another S (student) reads their favorite page and they talk about it after S reads. T (teacher) says let’s talk about something important happening on those two pages. What is happening on those two pages? What kind of interaction is happening between these two people? (no response). T has two Ss role play having a conversation. She eventually gets them to think of a dialogue (conversation between two people). Do you see any marks on these two pages that look like these “” (she draws them on board). They talk about what a conversation/dialogue is.*

I was able to take detailed notes about what the teacher was teaching and doing, while at the same time I jotted down notes on a separate piece of paper related to what the students were doing. A sample of what was written related to the students is provided: *all paying attention to T, all have book out, open to correct pg./ raising hands to participate / appear engaged / quiet, look happy, laughing with T / the students are doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing.*

As far as taking notes on the literacy environment, I used a separate piece of paper in my notebook to describe the items in the classroom that were related to the teaching of reading. Patton (2002) wrote of the importance of describing the physical setting in a qualitative study, and I felt it was important to tweak this notion of a physical setting to make it include items directly related to reading instruction. I took careful notes of the amounts and types of literature the children had access to and whether or not it was used, the writing materials available to students, the way the centers were set up and organized in the room, and the instructional
materials on the walls and bulletin boards that were placed there to assist students with skills and strategies used in their reading. This literacy environment was not something I had initially thought I would take notes on, however, during my first observation I felt it was important to write down what I was seeing on the bookshelves and on the walls and bulletin boards, as I felt they were directly related to the Reading First program.

The following are excerpts from my field notes from the same second grade classroom previously discussed: six areas of book shelves (some lge. Wooden, some smaller plastic or metal wire shelves) filled with books (Boxcar Children, Junie B Jones, Magic Tree House, A Country Christmas, biographies). Small brightly colored signs labeling shelves in room “wide reading” in a few places with lots of books on shelves in baskets (leveled?) (also groups of text sets) / labeled “fluency” / posters: Good readers ask! We’re great thinkers! / Literacy Genres / big tree decoration on wall in back of room that has preprinted: Everyone Reads! And then under that she die cut the letters HARCOURT and then had photocopied the 1st page (cover) of the stories from their basal to paste around the tree & had typed & glued the vocab words to each book cover.

The third component I took notes on was the materials used for reading instruction. Reading First required the use of materials based in SBRR, and I intended to ask teachers during the interview how the materials they were using influenced their instruction. The first field note excerpt above provides an account of how a teacher taught her students about dialogue using her basal reading book. For each instructional segment in the classroom, I made note of the materials used by the teacher and students. I also included materials in my field notes related to the literacy environment as shown in the excerpt above.
While I was busy taking detailed field notes in my journal, I was also formulating questions to ask the teacher during our interview. In the margins of my field journal, I quickly wrote down questions about the instruction I was seeing or the materials being used so that I would remember to incorporate them into the interview. Though I still used a structured open-ended interview format with each participant to allow for similarities in data collection, I did add to each teacher’s set of questions things that had come up during the observations to seek clarification or further understanding.

To conceptually organize my time in the field, I describe the continuous data collection process as having three distinct phases. Each phase is described in detail in the following three sections. Although the descriptions appear concise and clean cut, the research conducted for my case study was an iterative process. Data collected during phase one was used to inform data collection in phases two and three. Alternatively, if I found in phase two or three that something collected in phase one needed further explanation, I sought out the appropriate individual and further questioned them to enhance my understanding.

**Phase One**

Phase one can be characterized as being my introduction to the school facility and school administration. During this time, I was introduced to Mr. Parson, the principal, Ms. Stevens the Literacy Coach (LC), Ms. Anderson, the assistant principal, and Ms. Baker the guidance counselor. Of these four school personnel, I chose to focus on only Mr. Parson and Ms. Stevens, as they were most closely tied to the Reading First program in this school.

Every Reading First school in the state in which my study was conducted sent one administrator to Reading First training and subsequent leadership meetings throughout the implementation process. Mr. Parson served as the building level administrative representative for
Avery Elementary School. He was the assistant principal during the first year of implementing Reading First, and became the principal before the second year of implementation. Mr. Parson was very familiar with the school and the teachers as he had grown up in the area and even attended Avery Elementary School as a child. In fact, one of the teachers who was currently teaching second grade at Avery Elementary had taught him when he was an elementary student.

Mr. Parson is a Caucasian male, married with three children, and has a specialist degree in education. I interviewed Mr. Parson in his office during a school day in December, using a standardized open-ended protocol (Patton, 2002) (see Appendix C). The questions I asked Mr. Parson were related to the training he received as part of Reading First, the implementation of Reading First in his school, the influence he believed it had on reading instruction, and any positive or negative aspects of having Reading First in his school.

During phase one of my case study, I was given a tour of the school and was introduced to several faculty and staff members. I also scheduled an interview with the LC to be conducted in January after the winter break.

*Phase Two*

Phase two began in January 2007, when the teachers and staff returned from the winter break. I attended a Reading First leadership team meeting after school during their first full week back at school. During this meeting, I met with the principal, LC, grade level representatives, the media center specialist, and special education teacher. I explained the purpose of my study and said that I would be contacting them via email to ask if they would participate. As the principal and others were present, I did not feel comfortable asking them to participate at that time, as I wanted them to be able to make the choice freely without feeling pressured. After this meeting, I
sent an email out to all teachers (including those I met at the meeting) explaining the purpose of my study and asking for their participation (see Appendix D).

While waiting for email responses back from teachers, I focused the rest of the time in phase two on getting to know the LC at Avery Elementary school. The LC, Ms. Stevens, is a Caucasian woman, married with children, and has a master’s degree. Ms. Stevens was serving in her second year as the LC, prior to that she was a second grade teacher in this same school. The first year that Avery Elementary implemented Reading First, they had a different LC. This first LC had been instrumental in applying for the Reading First grant and getting the school started with implementation. However, that LC left Avery Elementary after the first year for an administrative position in a school nearby. Ms. Stevens was able to step into the role of LC already familiar with Reading First and what it was like to be a teacher teaching the Reading First program, and also familiar with the faculty, staff, and students in the school.

I interviewed Ms. Stevens during the school day in her office, using a standardized open-ended protocol (Patton, 2002) (see Appendix E). This interview with the LC was important to conduct before observing the teachers, as she offered insight into the types of professional development the teachers in the school had been offered over the past three years of implementing Reading First. Shortly after the interview with the LC, I began receiving email responses from teachers willing to participate in the study.

Phase Three

This last phase of my study consisted of observing and interviewing teachers at Avery Elementary, a follow up conversation with the LC, and attending other Reading First related meetings. I began phase three by the end of January, and it continued until the last day of post planning in May. Avery Elementary had 16 teachers in kindergarten through third grade, with
four teachers per grade level. Ten out of those 16 agreed to participate in the study, and one additional special education teacher who served first-grade students at Avery Elementary also agreed to participate. Table 2 lists the participants involved in the study along with information about their education and years of teaching experience. Below, I will briefly describe the participants by grade level.

**Kindergarten.** Only one kindergarten teacher responded to my emails regarding participating in the study. Ms. Miller was in her 18th year of teaching kindergarten at Avery Elementary, and holds a specialist degree in education. Ms. Miller is Caucasian, and is married with children and grandchildren.

**First grade.** Three first-grade teachers agreed to participate in the study. Ms. Argen was in her 26th year of teaching, 23 of those years being in first grade at Avery Elementary. She has a master’s degree in education. Ms. Wood was in her 13th year of teaching in this county and has a bachelor’s degree in education. Ms. Brown was in her seventh year teaching in this school, and was working towards her master’s degree in education. All three first-grade teachers are Caucasian, and are married with children.

**Second grade.** Three second-grade teachers initially agreed to participate in the study, however, one of those teachers had a family emergency which caused her to miss time from school, not making it possible for me to conduct observations in her classroom or interview her. The other two second grade teachers were Ms. Sellers and Ms. Walters. Ms. Sellers was in her 18th year of teaching, the majority of which were in second grade. She is a Caucasian woman who is married with children. Ms. Walters was completing her 32nd year in education, and holds a master’s degree in reading instruction, a specialist degree, and a gifted endorsement. She taught
gifted education at Avery for several years before returning to regular education as a second-grade teacher. Ms. Walters is married and is Caucasian.

*Third grade.* All four third-grade teachers agreed to participate in the study. Ms. Sheldon was completing her 12th year of teaching and has a bachelor’s degree in education. Ms. Matthews was new to Avery Elementary that year, as she had transferred there to be able to teach closer to home. She had four years of teaching experience and a master’s degree in education. Ms. Andrews had been teaching for 29 years, has a master’s degree, and was a National Board Certified teacher. All three women are Caucasian and all are married. The fourth third-grade teacher was the only male teacher in kindergarten through third grade at Avery Elementary. Mr. Parker was completing his first year of teaching. He has a master’s degree in religious education and was working as a minister at a local church before returning to school to get a teaching degree. Mr. Parker completed his student teaching experience in Ms. Andrew’s third-grade class the year before, so he was familiar with Reading First and the school.

*Special education.* During an observation in a first-grade classroom, I watched a special education teacher conduct reading instruction in a small group. After the class, I asked if she would be willing to participate in the study, as I realized she may have a different perspective on Reading First than the regular education teachers did. She agreed, and I was able to observe her instruction two times and interview her about her experiences. Ms. Taylor was completing her 30th year of teaching, and was working on a doctorate degree in education.

All observations and interviews were completed in phase three, along with other data collecting activities. I attended two Reading First related meetings during this time. One of these was a Reading First leadership team meeting, and the other was a session led by the LC with one grade level discussing comprehension. I was fortunate to have these opportunities available, as I
was at the school during a time that is busy preparing for and taking the state curriculum assessment test. During these meetings, I took field notes describing in as much detail as possible the discussions occurring. I did not tape record these sessions, as not all teachers in attendance had agreed to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

Throughout the data collection of my case study, I took field notes and created transcriptions of interviews with the goal of creating the best representation possible of what I was seeing or hearing. Riessman (1993) described all forms of representation as limited portraits. Simply stated, we are interpreting and creating texts at every juncture, letting symbols stand for or take the place of the primary experience, to which we have no direct access. Meaning is ambiguous because it arises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst, and reader….Meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly. (p. 15)

The texts that I created as data from the participants in my case study are context specific texts created by myself as a representation of what I understood them to be saying or doing.

In an interview situation, the fact that the teachers, administrators, and LC were talking to me (a researcher) as opposed to another person (i.e., a teacher in their school) may have altered how they responded to the questions I put forth. The field notes taken in the classrooms were taken of things that I saw related to reading instruction based upon my understanding of Reading First. However, there were possibly things I missed, or things that I misrepresented in my notes. I conducted member checks (Glesne, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) with participants for this reason. After both observations were completed, I asked participants to look through my
field notes to offer suggestions for filling in any gaps they saw or to see if there were any important items I missed. This was done not as a way to ensure I had captured truth by way of a perfect representation, but to ensure they had an opportunity to participate more fully in my construction of data.

This data analysis is my attempt to construct knowledge related to reading instruction in a Reading First elementary school. It is particularly influenced by the language I am using to represent it. As Reissman (1993) cautioned, the words used here are symbols for the experiences of the participants and are selective and imperfect. It was selective in that it was recreated by myself to highlight what I found to be important based upon my theoretical framework and understanding of the issue being studied. It is imperfect in that I cannot truly represent the teaching of reading in this school in this format, yet I believe I was able to make my analysis trustworthy (Glesne, 1999) by documenting what I did and following established practices for qualitative data analysis as outlined by Erickson (1986).

Details of Data Analysis

According to Erickson (1986), initial analysis begins while the researcher is still in the field collecting data, to assist the researcher in narrowing the focus of the data collected. I modified Erickson’s (1986) qualitative data analysis procedures to be able to compare the instruction at Avery Elementary with the original intentions of Reading First. Erickson suggested using the data to generate assertions, and then test those assertions by looking for confirming and disconfirming evidence in the data related to them. As the purpose of my study was to see how Reading First influenced instruction, using my data to generate assertions would not allow me the opportunity to analyze the instruction I observed at Avery Elementary while still focusing on the original intentions of Reading First. I thought I would be able to better highlight the
similarities and/or distinctions between Reading First and the actual implementation of it, if I used the words of the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) to generate assertions to test the data against. This document served as the proposal the state used to apply for funding from the federal government, and it outlined the goals, purposes, and intentions of Reading First in this state, as well as how it was going to translate those goals into classroom practice.

I carefully read and reread the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) to find assertions that supported how the teachers were supposed to learn about Reading First and how it was supposed to be implemented in their classrooms. Towards the beginning of the proposal, I found a list of eight items (including materials, assessment, and professional development) that were going to be used to ensure the teachers implemented Reading First as the document intended. With those eight points designed to control the instruction in the classroom in mind, I searched the document for assertions that should have been evident in classrooms. I found that generating the assertions in this way allowed my analysis to consider the policy environment surrounding the teaching that is so often ignored in policy analysis (Valencia & Wixson, 2004). With a list of assertions directly related to how Reading First should be implemented, I began organizing the data for analysis.

Although the boundary of the case being studied was that of an elementary school, I created case records (Patton, 2002) for the individual participants for several reasons. The first reason was to help organize and manage the amount of data being collected. The second reason was to understand each participant in her or his own right before drawing generalizations among teachers. As Patton (2002) suggested, “initially each case must be represented and understood as an idiosyncratic manifestation of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 450). For the purpose of making analytic notes (Glesne, 1999) in my field journal and on the interview transcripts, it was
more practical to initially keep the participants separate. A third reason was to allow for member checks (Glesne, 1999). I used the case records to analyze the data collected against the assertions generated from the Reading First document.

**Confirming and disconfirming evidence.** Providing evidence to support the assertions became the framework for the rest of my analysis. After generating assertions from the Reading First document, the assertions were tested by studying the data to find all the instances of confirming or disconfirming evidence related to that assertion. New data that were being collected from other participants were collected with those assertions in mind, focusing data collection on finding evidence to support or disconfirm the existing assertions. At this point in data analysis, Erickson (1986) suggested that only those assertions with the most support would warrant further study. However, as the assertions were related to how Reading First was supposed to be implemented, I found I could not dismiss assertions that were not well supported by data. Instead, I needed to understand why that aspect of Reading First was not being implemented as intended. I left one mildly supported assertion in the data to show how it was a component of Reading First that the teachers were not aware of.

Erickson (1986) suggested that a deliberate search for disconfirming evidence was important, in that this evidence would help illuminate subtle differences in the assertions. As the assertions were taken directly from Reading First, I did not change or modify the assertion to make it representative of the disconfirming evidence. Instead, I chose to use an *aside* (St. Pierre, 1995), described in detail in the analysis, as a space to present data that contradicted the assertion.

**Key linkages.** To help assess the strength of the assertions, I looked for *key linkages* (Erickson, 1986) among items of data. According to Erickson (1986), key linkages inform and
link together data that inform assertions. “The task of pattern analysis is to discover and test those linkages that make the largest possible number of connections to items of data in the corpus” (Erickson, 1986, p. 148). This pattern analysis was done by searching the corpus of data to find supporting or disconfirming evidence for each assertion. I sorted the data that could be linked together through the analytic construct of a key linkage into separate boxes for each assertion. The purpose for organizing my data in this method was to create a visual representation of the assertions and find those that had the most key linkages from the data. Disconfirming evidence related to an assertion was also placed in the box, to help flesh out how the data contradicted the assertions.

The generation of assertions from the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), and then the testing of those assertions by looking for key linkages as well as confirming and disconfirming evidence related to those assertions left me with important insight into the influence Reading First had on the teaching of reading in Avery Elementary School. My analysis continued using further processes described by Erickson (1986).

Narrative vignettes. A further step I took in the analysis of the data was to write narrative vignettes about the assertions most strongly represented by the data. The purpose of the vignettes (Erickson, 1986) was to provide readers with the sense that they were present in the school and to portray an event (or events) that took place surrounding an assertion. The vignettes included quotes from the data sources as well as description surrounding the event during which the data were collected. The narrative vignette allowed space for the rich description of the event surrounding the assertion accompanied by confirming evidence (quotes, field note excerpts) directly taken from the data. This process of writing aided my analysis as I was able to further think through the assertion and the data that supported and/or disconfirmed it as I worked to
create the vignette. The writing of these vignettes was not intended to present the original event itself, for as Erickson (1986) suggested that would be impossible. He suggested that they are abstractions or caricatures of events.

Reissman (1993) has further suggested that narratives are “telling about complex and troubling events” (p. 64) and they “should vary because the past is a selective reconstruction” (p. 64). These vignettes were one step I took towards creating the written research report, which as discussed previously, is my representation of the topic I chose to study.

Moving from the narrative vignettes to the writing of the research report involved the ability to “probe analytically the significance of the concrete details reported, and the various layers of meaning contained in the narrative” (Erickson, 1986, p. 152). At that point, I was able to make interpretive comments related to what the data showed about how Reading First influenced instruction in one rural elementary school. Though the narrative vignettes are not present in their entirety in this analysis, portions of them are woven into the data analysis for each assertion. The analysis of the data stemmed directly from the data and from the document that portrayed how Reading First should be implemented, and followed a modified version of the process outlined by Erickson (1986) in an effort to portray my representation of the findings in a reliable manner.

Trustworthiness

Glesne (1999) used the term trustworthiness to address the qualitative counterparts to quantitative terms such as external validity, reliability, and generalizability. Multiple measures have been taken into consideration in regards to the trustworthiness of my dissertation project. The following three topics were addressed while conducting my research: authenticity, dependability, and triangulation.
Authenticity or the “appreciation for the perspective of others and fairness in depicting constructions in the values that undergird them” (Patton, 2002, p. 546) is important to this study as it attempts to understand the influence Reading First has had on the instruction being studied from the perspective of those actually implementing the program. Although I realize that my written representation is just that – a representation, I did strive to include the voices of those participating in the study to ensure they were represented in a fair manner. I interviewed the teachers after observing them to be able to ask them questions related to their teaching and seek clarification for things I was uncertain of. This form of member checks allowed the teacher to provide input into what I saw in the classroom. I did not, however, conduct further member checks with the participants after the analysis of the data had occurred, because as Reissman (1993) suggested, it is difficult for the “theorizing across a number of narratives [to] be evaluated by individual narrators” (p. 66). As Reissman described, the ultimate analysis belongs to the researcher, and the researcher should be responsible for the final representation.

Dependability or the “systematic process systematically followed” (Patton, 2002) was shown throughout the study as I adhered to the intended research design and methods of analysis described. An audit trail is included in Table 3, which documents the data collection process, including the date, items of data collected, and how they were collected.

Triangulation was built into the design of the study through the collection of multiple sources of data using different methods. These methods included teacher observations of complete reading instruction periods and interviews. Another way that triangulation has been built into this study is through the gathering of multiple perspectives of school personnel. Teachers, an administrator, and the LC provided different views of how Reading First influenced the reading instruction offered at Avery Elementary School.
CHAPTER FOUR
LOOKING INSIDE THE BLACK BOX

The [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) stated that “It is the goal of this initiative to establish consistent and pervasive use of SBRR principles and practices in all [state name] K-3 classrooms, so that all students will be proficient readers by the end of third grade” (p. 2). The language used in this goal equates student reading proficiency with SBRR teaching practices. The goal suggests that if the teachers in a school all use SBRR in their classrooms then all of their students will read proficiently by the end of third grade. Reading First described SBRR as instruction that was aligned with the findings of the NRP (2000a, 2000b) and the NRC (1998). Although these reports provide a research base for SBRR, they do not provide specific information on how to best implement SBRR in classrooms. Reading First (and SBRR) developed from the work of these two national committees and then was filtered through multiple interpretations as it made its way into elementary classrooms.

It was the goal of my study to look inside the black box of instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Valencia & Wixson, 2004) at Avery Elementary School to see how Reading First influenced the reading instruction the teachers offered. As Reading First is an objectivation of the findings of these committees, it was up to the states, LEAs, local school leaders, and teachers to interpret Reading First and SBRR and implement it in their classrooms. To understand how it influenced the reading instruction at Avery Elementary School, I had to understand how Reading First was supposed to be implemented according to the [State Name]
Reading First Initiative (2003) and then analyze the data collected while considering the language and intentions of that document.

The Language of Reading First

Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested that “language provides the fundamental superimposition of logic on the objectivated social world” (p. 64). The language used by the participants represents their logic or interpretation of Reading First that was necessary to be able to implement it in their local classrooms. The written field notes collected during this study, combined with the interview data, represent the knowledge that the participants and I have about how Reading First influenced their instruction. Berger and Luckmann discussed the analysis of such knowledge when they said

If the integration of an institutional order can be understood only in terms of the ‘knowledge’ that its members have of it, it follows that the analysis of such ‘knowledge’ will be essential for an analysis of the institutional order in question. (p. 65)

To understand how Reading First influenced reading instruction in Avery Elementary School, it was first necessary to understand Reading First (or the institutional order) and then examine the knowledge of the participants in light of that written document. The inseparability of language and knowledge allowed for asking participants to reflect on their subjective experiences (Alvermann, et al., 1996) and use their words as a basis for their understanding of the institutional order in question.

Just as the participants’ language represents their knowledge of Reading First, the language used in the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) represents the State Department of Education’s understanding of SBRR and how to ensure teachers offer instruction based upon it. The language used in the document addressed two major issues of
implementation: capacity and will (McLaughlin, 1987). The document addressed the capacity of the teachers when discussing professional development opportunities, discussed in a subsequent section. The document addressed the will of the teachers with the following assertion taken directly from the document.

**Assertion Related to the Will of the Teachers**

“The key question is: How will [state name] get Reading First teachers to use SBRR?” ([State Name] Reading First Initiative, 2003, p. 24). The will of the teachers is often overlooked in reform initiatives (McLaughlin, 1987), and this document shows that the State Department of Education had a plan in place to overcome that will. This statement was used in the document to show that they realized they would have to work to achieve teacher buy in of the concept of SBRR. By suggesting that they have to “get” the teachers to do something implies they knew this could be a difficult battle. It also implies a level of control they want to have over the teachers, and places the teachers in a position in which they must do as they are told.

Reading First’s goal of having every student reading proficiently by the end of third grade through the use of SBRR teaching practices can only be realized if all teachers buy into SBRR and implement it in their classrooms. By suggesting to teachers and school leaders that this goal can be achieved through SBRR added an incentive for teachers and school leaders to buy in. Besides the initial incentive of achieving this goal, the state also outlined eight bulleted points (see Appendix G) that they suggested would “get” the teachers to use SBRR.

The first three bulleted points outline the required use of instructional programs based on SBRR for teaching reading, the fourth bullet describes the assessments the teachers must use, and the final four bullets describe the professional development the teachers would receive to ensure compliance with SBRR. As this list of eight points was used by the state to control the
will of the teachers and ensure compliance with SBRR, it became the focal point I used when searching the document for assertions to use in the analysis of the data collected at Avery Elementary. For example, as professional development was going to be used by the state as a tool for ensuring compliance with SBRR, I read and reread the document to find assertions that described the types of professional development that should have been present at Avery Elementary. I then searched the data to find confirming or disconfirming evidence of that assertion. By analyzing the data this way, I had the ability to look directly at the intentions of Reading First and analyze the data to see if the intended efforts of Reading First influenced the instruction at Avery Elementary School.

The following section describes the professional development opportunities at Avery Elementary. As professional development was provided to the teachers with the objective of “getting” the teachers to align their instruction with SBRR, I felt it was imperative to understand how the teachers used this professional development to construct knowledge related to Reading First throughout the implementation process. By studying the professional development, I could begin to understand how the LC and RRFC interpreted Reading First, and how that interpretation was presented to the teachers.

Professional Development

From reading the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), I found there were multiple opportunities for different types of professional development that should have been offered to the teachers at Avery Elementary. In reading this document, I compiled a list of assertions taken directly from it that described all of these professional development opportunities (see Appendix H). As data were collected, they were read through to find evidence (both confirming and disconfirming) of each of these assertions. Looking at the data from a
social constructionist perspective, I studied each assertion and its accompanying data to try to understand how that professional development influenced their knowledge of Reading First and their subsequent reading instruction (see Appendix H for an example of the analysis process).

From reading the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) and interviewing the teachers at Avery Elementary, I learned that the first professional development the teachers participated in related to Reading First was a three day Teacher Academy held the summer before implementation began. The Teacher Academies were held in multiple locations across the state to provide an opportunity for every teacher in the approximately 100 Reading First schools to come together to learn about Reading First and SBRR. The following assertions were taken directly from the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003). I chose these assertions as they addressed how the content would be presented at the Teacher Academy, and also stated the purpose and goal of the Teacher Academy. Following Erickson’s (1986) guidelines, after each assertion I provide the analysis of the relevant data from the participants at Avery Elementary to understand how this professional development opportunity influenced the instruction offered at this particular elementary school.

Assertions Related to Teacher Academies

“Access to information about effective, research-based practices in reading instruction can be provided on a large scale through systematic and interactive professional development” (State Department of Education, 2003, pp. 66-67). The Teacher Academies were designed to provide systematic information about SBRR to all teachers across the state. To ensure the content was delivered in a systematic way, the presenters at the Teacher Academy were told to read the materials to the teachers. I asked all eleven teachers and the LC (who also attended a Teacher Academy as she was a classroom teacher the first year of implementation) about their
experience at the Teacher Academy. Ten out of the eleven teachers, as well as the LC and principal, suggested that the systematic nature of the professional development sessions at the Teacher Academy were not conducive to learning about effective, research-based practices in reading instruction.

Ms. Andrews, a third-grade Nationally Board Certified teacher with a master’s degree, did not benefit from the systematic delivery of information during the Teacher Academy. She said it was

hilarious, we had a notebook that was every bit four or five inches thick just crammed full of papers. And this lady, god forgive me, this lady with this twangy country voice picks it up and reads it to us, word for word, and I’m sitting here going surely she’s not, you know, we’re all mouthing it to each other at the table, surely she’s not gonna read to us. So she kept doing her little schpeel [sic] and then the second woman gets up and says, “It is a regulation that at every training session we have to read this manual to you.” You know, we sat there while they read it to us. See, I think that it would’ve made a lot more sense to be able to share ideas with each other. (Andrews, interview, February 16, 2007)

Other teachers who attended Teacher Academies where the notebook was read to them expressed similar views. Ms. Matthews, another third-grade teacher, suggested that the systematic delivery of information used was not effective when she said, “Let’s just say they basically read what was in the notebook, so it wasn’t to me really like a training, or any type of certain way to approach Reading First” (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007). The teachers suggested they were simply receiving information they could have read on their own.

Ms. Miller summed up her learning experience at the Teacher Academy by saying, “Three trainers or redeliverers or reconstructors or whatever you call them. The redelivery
people [sic]. They were delivering it to me” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007). Ms. Miller was referring to the fact that the presenters in her session delivered the content of the notebook to her. Ms. Sheldon said that because the notebook was read to her, she “learned less at the training than anything else that we did. It, it [sic] did not prepare me or help me in any way, you know, as far as Reading First was concerned or becoming a better reading teacher” (Sheldon, interview, April 27, 2007).

The LC at Avery Elementary attended a Teacher Academy before the first year of implementation as a classroom teacher (she became the LC the second year) and expressed similar views on her experience at the Academy. Ms. Stevens said, “Coaches taught the Academies for the most part, and they were told to read the book, from the book. And my experience in a Teacher Academy was horrible. I learned absolutely nothing from the Academy” (Stevens, interview, January 16, 2007). The principal, Mr. Parson, also weighed in on the systematic nature of the Teacher Academy when he said, “And the training came from the binders, saying Reading First is it, anything else is wrong” (Parson, interview, December 8, 2006). Mr. Parson attended the Teacher Academy as the assistant principal at that time, and felt the training did not provide administrators with what they needed to be able to assist the LC or teachers, or to incorporate Reading First into their busy school day.

The views of these teachers, LC, and principal suggest that the systematic delivery of content did not allow them the opportunity to learn about SBRR. These Teacher Academies lasted three days, and the teachers at Avery Elementary did comply with the requirement of attending a Teacher Academy, but they did not benefit from it because of the method of content delivery utilized. There was one teacher whose views of the Teacher Academy were different from those previously discussed. Ms. Walters, a second-grade teacher with 32 years of teaching
experience and a master’s degree in reading education, attended the same Teacher Academy as the previous teachers but was in a room with different presenters. She described her experience at the Teacher Academy as a good one. She said her leaders were cooperative and had experience in teaching, which helped them be more understanding to what they were going through. Ms. Walters said the leaders in her Academy:

went by the manual, they read some, but then they opened up the floor for discussion and we could bounce things back and forth. And we had people all over the state that were there so it was interesting to see what was going on in the counties that were about our same size who were also receiving Reading First grants and how it came to them…It was nice to see if we were similar or if we were completely different….The leaders that were in, in the academy in my session were open to questions, and if they didn’t know they were willing to try to find out…they really helped us and worked with us a lot. (Walters, interview, February, 8, 2007)

The difference between the two Academy experiences described above was the ability of the teachers to discuss what they were learning and to ask questions related to what they were learning. The majority of teachers described the Teacher Academy using passive words, suggesting they were expected to sit there and accept the information they were receiving without question. They were not active learners, but were treated as blank slates that more knowledgeable others had to instruct. The second academy description falls more in line with a social constructionist perspective of learning, one in which people construct their knowledge through discussions with members of their discursive community. Ms. Walters was treated as an informed participant and was invited into the conversation related to Reading First. The teachers in her session were allowed to discuss their particular school settings and work through issues
relevant to how to implement it in their local environment. Berger and Luckmann (1966) have explained how people deal with potential problems, suggesting that they “seek to integrate the problematic sector into what is already unproblematic” (p. 24). Reading First was problematic to the teachers in the initial phases of implementation, as they were asked to change how they had been teaching. The teachers in Ms. Walters’ session were invited to take what they were learning and relate it to their existing, or unproblematic, teaching knowledge.

The above assertion suggested that the Teacher Academies would provide instruction through “systematic and interactive professional development” (State Department of Education, 2003). According to the teachers at Avery Elementary, most of them encountered systematic professional development in which content was delivered (or read) to them, which was not beneficial. One teacher, Ms. Walters, experienced systematic and interactive professional development and did benefit from it. The key distinction being the interactive component experienced by Ms. Walters. The data from the teachers at Avery Elementary suggest that learning from professional development was enhanced when the teachers were allowed to be active participants and when their thoughts and concerns were valued.

Unfortunately, Ms. Walters was one of the few teachers from Avery Elementary School who expressed positive remarks about the learning experience provided at the Teacher Academy. Her positive remarks were related to procedural elements of the academy, (method of presentation and opportunities to discuss procedural aspects of Reading First) and not necessarily the content of what was being taught. The second assertion, discussed below, addressed the content of the Teacher Academy.

The primary goal of the [State Name] Teacher Reading Academies is to promote the widespread use of effective, research-based practices in reading instruction. 

Consensus
documents including the reports from the National Reading Panel and the National Research Council will serve as the cornerstones for the content of the Georgia Teacher Reading Academies. (State Department of Education, 2003, pp. 66-67) This second assertion related to the Teacher Academies suggested that the presenters would provide content from the reports of the NRP (2000a, 2000b) and NRC (1998) to help promote SBRR in Reading First schools. The materials focused on the five components of reading instruction outlined by the NRP (2000a, 2000b): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. I asked each teacher about the content they were taught at the Teacher Academy, and 10 out of the 11 teachers reported that it was nothing new. The teachers spent three days at the Teacher Academy having materials systematically delivered to them, and they almost all felt the content of the materials was not new.

The three teachers with the most teaching experience (32 years, 30 years, and 29 years) all said that the information they received related to the five components of reading described at the Teacher Academy was just “reinventing the wheel” but that it was good to hear the “new terminology” (Walters, interview, February 8, 2007). Ms. Taylor, the special education teacher working towards her doctorate with 30 years of teaching experience, said the information presented to the special education teachers was nothing new. It was “stuff that special education already had” and was not “anything really new for us” (Taylor, interview, May 31, 2007). The teachers all stated that the information provided was good information related to reading instruction and in fact validated some of what they had previously done in their classrooms, but that it was not new information to them.

Five teachers with less teaching experience (13 years, 12 years, 7 years, 4 years, and 1 year) also expressed that they did not learn any new content from the Teacher Academy. Ms.
Wood, a first-grade teacher with 13 years of experience, suggested that the majority of the information presented at the Teacher Academy she had already learned from her undergraduate teaching experiences at a local university. She said “the information might have been presented in a different way, but it was not new” (Wood, interview, April 26, 2007).

Ms. Matthews was new to Avery Elementary and Reading First the year I conducted my case study. She had four years of teaching experience in another county and a master’s degree with a focus in reading, and attended the Teacher Academy the summer before teaching at Avery Elementary. Mr. Parker, a first year teacher, also attended the same Teacher Academy as Ms. Matthews. Both teachers expressed that what they were presented was nothing new. Ms. Matthews described it as “very mundane. A lot of the things that were presented at this academy were similar to some things that were in my master’s degree for my classes. I actually was bored” (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007). Mr. Parker said that “I don’t want to say that any of the information was new to me. We had to have the whole notebook read to us” (Parker, interview, April 27, 2007).

The only teacher who provided different insights into this assertion was Ms. Argen, a first-grade teacher with 25 years of teaching experience. Ms. Argen stated she learned a lot at the Academy. Ms. Argen was the only teacher I interviewed at Avery Elementary that attended a session where her own LC was the presenter. She said “I learned a lot, but I was confused of what, what is it I’m supposed to do, you’ve given me all this information and how do I put it together?” (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007). Ms. Argen felt the information provided in the notebook and discussion was new information, but left the Academy not knowing precisely how to implement it in her classroom.
All of the teachers left the Teacher Academy with a large notebook (approximately 3 inches thick) that some of the teachers referred to as The Reading First Bible. This notebook contained the content covered in the Teacher Academy from the NRP (2000a, 2000b) and NRC (1998) reports. More than half of the teachers commented on the fact that there was too much information presented during the three day Teacher Academy, and not enough time to digest it all. Ms. Matthews suggested that the presenters
didn’t really have a lot of time to go in depth with every component. The notebook was so large that I guess that’s why they felt like they had to read everything and rush through it. I mean they were just you know running through it very quickly, so you know I guess that’s why they felt like they couldn’t really go in depth and teach us about it. (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007)

Ms. Brown also commented on the amount of information presented when she said, “They threw a lot of things at us….it would have been better to have given us the material before, and then gone over it a little more” (Brown, interview, May 7, 2007). Ms. Sellers stated that the information presented was “a lot to digest” (Sellers, interview, May 9, 2007).

The seeming contradiction presented here between not learning anything new and then suggesting the material was too much to cover in three days, suggests that the surface level introduction to the five components of reading instruction did not go any deeper than what the teachers were already familiar with. However, the remainder of the content in the notebook that may have been beneficial for understanding how to best implement those five components in their classrooms was too much to cover in that type of professional development setting.
Mr. Parson, the principal, commented on the content taught at the Teacher Academy and why he thought it didn’t have an influence on the teachers. When discussing the changes he saw in the teachers, Mr. Parson said

It [change in teachers] came from Reading First. The professional development solidified what they were told to do or how it was in the beginning. Because the Teacher Academy was really, this is what you do, this is how it is, this is what you can use, this is what you can’t use. And the background to those things wasn’t explained. And then, as you go to professional development and they do the book study, or they do this, they see that, see why we do it that way now. So it was kind of a little bit backwards, but a lot of it was verified for them later on. (Parson, interview, December 8, 2006)

Mr. Parson spoke of the Teacher Academy as something separate from professional development. His description of the Academy aligns with the teachers who said they did not learn anything new there. He suggested that it was because the leaders of the Teacher Academies did nothing more than go over what the teachers could or could not do, but did not have the time (or take the time) to explain why.

From a social constructionist perspective, the notebook and content presented to the teachers at the Teacher Academy was an objectivation of what a group of literacy researchers believed to be SBRR and what Reading First instruction should entail. However, as the notebook was presented to most of the teachers in a way that did not help them connect that information to their everyday teaching environment, and according to most of the teachers did not contain any new content, it was of little use to them in their classrooms. Most of the teachers had not been allowed the opportunity to participate in the construction of knowledge related to Reading First during the Teacher Academy and the initial introduction to the notebook. Reading First remained
a separate entity from them. There was the notebook containing content they were mostly familiar with but unsure of how to implement in their own classroom, and then there was their own experience with teaching the students in their school. The teachers needed to find a way to participate in the construction of knowledge related to Reading First and find ways to make it work in their own particular teaching environment.

From a policy perspective, it appears that the Teacher Academies were intended to increase the teachers’ capacity (McLaughlin, 1987) (or knowledge) specific to the teaching of reading. According the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), they were also being used to ensure the teachers utilized SBRR in their classrooms. Using the Teacher Academies to ensure compliance with a required behavior implies they were using this form of professional development not just to improve capacity, but also to control the will (McLaughlin, 1987) of the teachers. The teachers left the Teacher Academy with a notebook containing the type of reading instruction they were allowed to do, but without a clear understanding of why they should do it or how to make it work in their local classrooms. However, the teachers and administration worked hard over the next three school years to learn about SBRR because the message they received at the Teacher Academies was clear: SBRR works, SBRR will lead to all readers reading proficiently, and SBRR must be followed.

The data related to the Teacher Academy assertions suggest that this professional development did not lead to a better understanding of how to teach using SBRR or how to implement Reading First in their classrooms. The Teacher Academies were effective in controlling (or setting the tone) for the will of the teachers, yet it failed to enhance the capacity of the teachers. Had the professional development ended after the Teacher Academy, it is likely that Reading First might not have influenced the instruction offered at Avery Elementary School.
However, Reading First provided a structure for local, ongoing professional development based in the individual elementary schools that did have an influence over the instruction offered in this school.

**Assertions Related to Local, Ongoing Professional Development**

When interviewed, 10 out of 11 teachers at Avery Elementary School stated that the learning they experienced during the 3 years of implementing Reading First came mostly from the ongoing school and county based professional development provided by their LC or the LCs from neighboring schools. The principal at Avery Elementary also suggested that the local, ongoing professional development was the key to the changes made in the teachers as well. These local professional development sessions took place in several different ways. There were book studies, grade level planning times, professional development classes on specific topics, and professional development days in which entire grade levels of teachers from elementary schools across the county were released from classroom duties to come together to learn and share ideas. All of this local, ongoing professional development was planned and supported by the LC at each individual Reading First school. The following assertions allow me to compare the data from the participants at Avery Elementary to what Reading First suggested was the professional development role for the LC at a Reading First school.

*Literacy Coaches will be on-site to provide ongoing training and support to teachers within classrooms. The provision of a full-time Literacy Coach for RF schools is done in recognition of research that has found that effective professional development “takes place in the school as part of the workday” and that teachers need “expertise from colleagues, mentors and outside experts [that] is accessible and engaged as often as necessary...” (Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide, 2000, p. 6).* (State Department of Education, 2003,
This assertion speaks of the importance of on-site professional development that can be easily accessed by teachers when it is convenient for them. The data show that the teachers did utilize the LC as a resource when they needed assistance. The teachers stated that they did not wait until a professional development session or grade level meeting to ask the LC a question. They said that they would seek out the LC to ask questions or get advice, and they appreciated having her as a resource.

Gavalek and Raphael (1996) suggested that “social constructionists place individuals such as the teacher, other adults, and more knowledgeable peers in the crucial role of mediating the learning of the individual” (p. 184). Throughout the implementation of Reading First, the LC’s role was to be that of the more knowledgeable other who created opportunities to mediate learning for the individual teachers. The LC at Avery Elementary took this responsibility seriously, and the teachers benefited from the effort she put forth.

The two teachers who were new to Avery Elementary that year specifically mentioned they would not have been able to successfully implement Reading First in their classrooms without the guidance of the LC. Ms. Matthews and Mr. Parker both sought out advice from the LC after attending the initial Teacher Academy to help them gain further knowledge about how Reading First was to look in their classrooms. Ms. Matthews said that “what helped me more was when I came back to the school and I talked with my LC, because she could be more detailed” (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007). Mr. Parker stated that the LC had been “a lot of help. Especially being new, she’s been giving me ideas and helping me organize some things. She gets more hands on…and that helps” (Parker, interview, April 27, 2007).

Other teachers with more experience implementing Reading First also sought out the LC as a resource for their instruction. Ms. Brown stated that “If you need anything you can go to...
them [sic]. You know, she’s there as a resource. If you need her, she’s there” (Brown, interview, May 7, 2007). Ms. Miller utilized the LC as a resource the first year of implementing Reading First. She was uncertain how to implement centers in her kindergarten classroom, and asked the LC for further assistance. The LC then came into her room and modeled instruction for a class period so Ms. Miller and the other kindergarten teachers could observe how the LC thought centers should function.

Ms. Andrews also utilized the LC as a resource when she was having difficulty planning small group instruction. Ms. Andrews met with the LC informally and looked over data for the students in one particular group. The LC then provided Ms. Andrews with some suggestions for instructional activities to use during small groups. I observed Ms. Andrews utilizing the ideas from the LC, and Ms. Andrews made a point of telling me how she really liked the small group activity she had just done, and that the LC provided her with the idea for it (field notes, January 29, 2007).

The LC realized she was a resource for the teachers and felt she had offered assistance to the teachers. The LC said

A lot of times, they’ll [teachers] come to me and they’ll say ‘This is something I’m having trouble with, do you have anything on this?’ And normally I have a book or I have a magazine article or I know where something is and I can dig something up and I can give it to them. So a lot of time, I’m a resource for them. (Stevens, interview, January 16, 2007)

The principal also spoke of the benefits of having an LC as a resource at his school, but suggested it took time for the teachers to accept the role of the LC. When speaking of the LC, Mr. Parson said, “You know, teachers want help, and they appreciate most any help. And having
somebody here to provide that help has been useful. Now, of course, it took three fourths of a year maybe before they became real comfortable with the idea of someone giving ideas, or giving the points that need to be improved upon” (Parson, interview, December 8, 2006). The principal further mentioned the benefit of having a LC who had previously taught at Avery Elementary. The LC was someone the teachers knew and they trusted that she was familiar with their teaching circumstances, as well as their students. As Mr. Parson stated, it took some time for the teachers to accept her in this new role, and feel comfortable with someone judging their instruction, but in time, they grew to appreciate it.

The LC at Avery Elementary was an important instructional resource for the teachers who was easily accessible and had the information to help them when they needed it. The teachers stated that they also learned from the LC during more formal professional development sessions she organized for them. The vast majority of teachers at Avery Elementary (10 out of 11) stated that they learned more from the professional development offered by the LC than the Teacher Academy because the content was locally controlled.

The LC provided professional development for the teachers on topics they were interested in, as well as topics she felt were necessary based upon her classroom observations. One example of this occurred when I was in the field collecting data. The LC had received requests from teachers who wanted to learn more about comprehension. The LC had also completed observations in classrooms and confirmed this was a topic that needed to be discussed. The principal also wanted to see this addressed, as the statewide curriculum assessment was approaching. The LC announced at a Reading First Leadership Team meeting I attended that she would be discussing comprehension with each of the grade levels during the next monthly planning meeting. The LC asked each grade level representative to tell the other
teachers to email the LC specific questions about comprehension before the meeting, and to bring examples of how they taught comprehension with them to the meeting.

The professional development session the LC discussed at the Reading First Leadership Team meeting occurred during the next month. Each grade level met individually with the LC during their common planning time. I attended the meeting with the first-grade teachers. As the LC requested, she received an email before the meeting from the first-grade team leader with a question about how to best address main idea for first grade students, as it was a topic the students would be assessed on during the statewide curriculum test in the spring. The method of communication the LC had created over the past two years was serving to be an effective way to plan for and prepare professional development sessions for the teachers on topics they wanted addressed.

During the meeting, three of the first-grade teachers (one was not at school that day) met with the LC. The meeting occurred during their planning time, which was forty minutes. Because the teachers had to drop their students off at their special area class, as well as check their mail boxes, take a short break, and then return to pick their students up on time, there was approximately 25 minutes for the meeting. The LC began the meeting by thanking them for sending the question to her about main idea, and asking for any other questions before she began. The teachers did not offer any other questions, but one teacher did discuss why she wanted more information on main idea. Ms. Argen told the LC that main idea was not covered well in the core reading program they used. She said there were very few opportunities presented in the teacher’s manual to discuss this, and she was concerned as it was an important part of the statewide curriculum assessment. Another teacher concurred with this, stating the one story they were currently reading did not address main idea. The teachers were required to follow their core
reading program and teach the strategies the teacher’s manual said to teach. One of the teachers had brought the teacher’s manual, and the LC looked through it to find the story they were currently working on.

The LC concurred that this story did not focus on the comprehension strategy of identifying the main idea, and suggested that they might be able to address it anyway if the teachers felt the students needed it. She asked the teachers if they had covered the comprehension strategy that was required with this story. The first-grade teachers said they had addressed it. The LC suggested that if they knew their students needed practice with main idea, then they could use the story in the core reading program to address main idea, as long as they also spent some time on the other strategy they were working on with this story. The LC also suggested that it was appropriate to model how to identify a main idea during their read aloud time. She turned the teacher’s attention to a handmade poster she had hanging on her wall that showed the steps a teacher should take in teaching a comprehension strategy. The first step was for the teacher to model the strategy to the students.

The LC suggested that whatever story they were reading during their read aloud time could provide an opportunity for the teachers to “think aloud” on how to identify main idea. She held up a picture book and briefly demonstrated how she might do this. The LC looked again at the poster on her wall and said the next step would be to provide time for the students and teacher to practice the strategy together. She said they could also do this during the think aloud. She said that after the teacher modeled main idea, the teacher could continue to read and offer an opportunity later in the story for the students to help identify the main idea. The LC then said the teachers also needed to allow time for the students to practice this when they read. The LC said this practice was something they could do during their small group instruction. The LC said that
students who needed additional practice could work with the teacher in a small group on identifying main idea, and those who were more confident in this strategy could practice it independently.

While the LC was talking, the teachers were sitting around the table, listening to what she was saying. They were looking at the LC while she talked, and appeared to be taking in what she said. The tone of the meeting was informal. Though the LC was teaching them, it was not done in a formal or impersonal way. The LC talked to the three teachers, making eye contact with them. The teachers listened as she talked, and appeared happy with the solution they were given to their problem. When the LC finished speaking, one teacher said, “So it is OK with you if we do main idea with this story?” (Argen, field notes, February 13, 2008). It appeared Ms. Argen wanted to be very certain that the LC felt it was all right if they enhanced their core reading program to cover the material she thought the students needed. The LC said that she approved of that. When the LC asked if there were any other questions, no teacher responded. As it was almost time for the teachers to pick up their students, the meeting was dismissed.

This professional development session was brief, but did offer insight into how the meetings were run at this school. The LC provided valuable information to the teachers, in a comfortable, personal atmosphere where the teachers were free to express their concerns. This meeting was brief, but the teachers left there with useful information targeted to their student population and teaching situation. The meeting provided grade level specific, content specific information that pertained to what the teachers needed at that moment.

Part of why this appeared to be a successful meeting was that it was locally controlled. As the assertion suggests, teachers need access during the work day to a more knowledgeable other. The data collected from this meeting confirm this, and suggests that it is important to have
a local expert available to teachers to enhance the instruction they offer. The teachers at Avery Elementary would agree with that statement. Two of the teachers I interviewed commented on the excellent information they received during the comprehension professional development they had requested. Ms. Argen said “we have had excellent comprehension classes, which is something we haven’t had before. I’ve never had comprehension classes like this before and they have been very good” (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007). The teachers appreciated receiving information that was relevant to their classroom instruction and was on topics they wanted to learn more about.

Ms. Wood was pleased with the learning opportunities provided by her LC, stating that because the LC was local she was able to

Know more of what we need than somebody who comes in and says, OK, I’m gonna tell you about this. They don’t know my population, they don’t know what my scores are, they’re not in and out of my classroom, and they don’t, they’re not as familiar with our school program…So I think you really have to know what this school’s program is before you can address what they need information about and professional development on.

(Wood, interview, April 26, 2007)

Because the LC was in and out of the classrooms on a regular basis, and met with the grade levels monthly, she was better able to meet the teachers’ needs than the presenters at a statewide Teacher Academy.

Several teachers referred to the LC as being able to provide specific information. They felt she could provide information related to specific issues they were having with their instruction because she was there to observe it. Ms. Sheldon appreciated the local control of content when she said, “Well, basically, it meets our needs better than it does, you know, trying
to look at everybody in the whole state. It was just more personalized” (Sheldon, interview, April 27, 2007).

The assertion related to the importance of continuous professional development offered by an on-site person was well supported by the data from Avery Elementary School. Having the LC on-site led to changes in instruction based upon the support and suggestions she offered the teachers. A second assertion related to local, ongoing professional development was also well supported by the data.

Additionally, literacy coaches will be trained to provide support to classroom teachers to identify and implement grouping strategies, positive behavior management, daily routines, procedures and schedules, progress monitoring, and the spatial organization of the room. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 64). The teachers at Avery Elementary utilized the LC when they needed specific help with implementing small groups and assisting individual students. As the LC was providing the professional development for teachers in her own school, and the teachers were working with students the LC was familiar with, she was able to better help the teachers target their instruction to those children needing it the most. The LC at this school was responsible for administering the DIBELS three times per year. DIBELS was the assessment used at Avery Elementary to determine small group instruction and placement in intervention, so the LC had first-hand knowledge of what the students needed according to the DIBELS scores. Ms. Wood suggested that she had “received more training locally on addressing individual student needs” and that she felt she had been able to “hone her skills” when teaching small groups.

Ms. Matthews also addressed the importance of having a LC in the school with knowledge of the students. Ms. Matthews said, “The literacy coach knows the children in the
school, so if you have specific questions that may apply to a child in your classroom, the LC can help. Like with strategies or different ideas to help that particular child” (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007). Ms. Sellers also stated that the LC had helped her with instruction for individual children. Ms. Sellers said “She [LC] looks at our data all the time, and if there’s a child that’s not doing well, she’ll stop by and she’ll talk about what’s going on, and [asks] can she help them with something” (Sellers, interview, May 9, 2007). The teachers appreciated having another person in the school who knew their students, and knew how their students were doing on the DIBELS assessment. The teachers used the suggestions from the LC to provide targeted instruction to the students who needed it the most.

According to this assertion, the small group instruction (described in a later section) should have been addressed by the LC in a Reading First school. As the data presented here show, the LC at Avery Elementary did influence the knowledge the teachers constructed about Reading First and the instruction the teachers offered. I learned from the LC that her influence was directly related to the careful and compliant implementation of Reading First at Avery Elementary School.

The LC represents one of the filters that Reading First and SBRR go through on their way to the classroom. At Avery Elementary, the LC worked with her RRFC to try to ensure her interpretation of SBRR was as closely aligned to the state’s interpretation as possible. Ms. Stephens, the LC at Avery Elementary, was well aware that the RRFC and External Evaluators would be monitoring her school to ensure compliance with Reading First. Because Ms. Stephens knew her job was directly tied to Reading First, she worked hard to ensure she adhered to its guidelines as strictly as possible. At times, this was a source of conflict for the LC. Ms Stephens stated that
when people are defensive about Reading First or they have these arguments about it, I feel almost as if it’s a personal attack on me, you know. And just, just to be able to separate this [sic]. This position is so tied to Reading First. You feel like you’re not a literacy coach sometimes. You feel like you’re a Reading First coach. I just would like to become a reading coach, not a Reading First coach. You know, to feel like, to feel like I have the ability to separate myself from a program that’s being implemented. (Stephens, interview, January 16, 2007)

Ms. Stephens continued by saying that she wanted the ability to “listen to what the teachers are saying and to honestly consider whether those options might be something that are best fit for our program and I could make those decisions” (Stephens, interview, January 16, 2007). Ms. Stephens knew she had to be the person in the school to work towards full compliance with Reading First. However, at times she wanted to veer from that compliance, but ultimately chose not to. She said

these teachers come to me, they do come to me sometimes and they do say, “look, I want to try this today and I know I’m not supposed to but”…And you know I have to say “uh-uh, don’t tell me, don’t”. But I would like to be able to listen to them and consider what they have to say. (Stephens, interview, January 16, 2007)

Ms. Stephens worked hard to ensure the professional development she offered the teachers at her school was in line with her understanding of how to implement SBRR. The LC continued her role as the professional development coordinator at her school by organizing another form of professional development outlined by the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003). The following assertion is related to the formation of study groups as another tool for helping the teachers understand and implement Reading First and SBRR.
The formation of study groups in which professionals come together as a learning community to study, implement what they are learning, and share the results is another critical component of [State Name] Professional Development plan. These study groups, facilitated by the literacy coach, will meet regularly. (State Department of Education, p. 63) This assertion describes the professional development opportunities that the teachers at Avery Elementary stated they learned the most from. The local professional development sessions that the teachers spoke most highly of and repeatedly asked for more of, were days in which they could meet with other teachers teaching the same grade level in their own school or in neighboring schools. Several teachers said that the sharing of ideas with peers was the most beneficial thing that came out of Reading First. The funding the schools received from Reading First was used to hire substitutes for the teachers so they could attend the sessions and it also paid the LCs who were leading the sessions. These sessions introduced the teachers to a new role in professional development. This role was one in which they were active participants, whose knowledge was valued and shared. In this role, the teachers had the opportunity to mediate the learning of other individuals (Gavalek & Raphael, 1996), just as the LC had done for them.

Ms. Argen, who admitted to leaving the Teacher Academy confused as to how to implement Reading First, said she gained a lot from sharing with her peers. She said they pulled all the teachers together and

Then we got ideas from each other too, plus from all the coaches. And they’ve worked really well together, to come up with the training and it’s been really good training. You talk about what you are doing in your centers and we’re not competing so much against each other and really, you know, helping each other out. (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007).
Mr. Parker, a first year teacher, said “that’s the best thing, sharing ideas and hearing what is working for others. And they had some good ideas. Beneficial” (Parker, interview, April 27, 2007). Teachers with varying levels of experience and educational backgrounds benefited from the opportunity to hear from other teachers working in similar settings about what was working for them and sharing their own ideas. The teachers expressed an interest in continuing these professional development sessions even after Reading First ended, though they were doubtful that the local school district would have enough funds to hire substitutes for them to attend these sessions.

The teachers benefited from professional development sessions in which they came together as a community to share what they learned. They did this with teachers from other schools, as well as in study groups that were comprised solely of teachers at Avery Elementary. Ms. Walters offered both positive and negative feedback related to the local, ongoing professional development. She said that she did pick up some good professional literature during the book studies, but that she had to “sit through a lot of training that was review. For someone who didn’t have a degree in reading, for someone who never taught reading, then it was probably more beneficial” (Walters, interview, February 8, 2007). Ms. Walters was the only teacher who referred to the ongoing professional development as review. The other teachers stated that because the content of the professional development was based upon things they were interested in learning about or things focused on helping their students, it was beneficial. An important consideration about Ms. Walters is that she is the only teacher at Avery Elementary with a master’s degree specifically in reading education. Ms. Walters’ comments suggest that even though she had a lot of content specific knowledge in regards to teaching reading, she still
benefited from the opportunity to read professional literature and discuss it in a learning community.

The teachers learned more from the local, ongoing professional development than they did the Teacher Academy. The systematic nature of the Teacher Academy did not allow the teachers the opportunity to connect the content to what they knew about their students and their school. In the locally offered professional development sessions, the teachers were able to move beyond Reading First as being an abstract concept written about in a notebook and read aloud to them, to making it something they were able to identify with and implement with the students in their school. In a local setting, with members of their own discursive community who were a part of their common world (Berger & Luckman, 1966), they were able to work together with the LC to make meaning of Reading First. These teachers needed the opportunity to talk about what they were experiencing with Reading First with others who knew what they were going through, and make sense of it together in a way that worked for them. Ultimately, it was not the Reading First notebook that came to represent what Reading First meant to them and their subsequent implementation of it, it was the conversations they had with peers, their LC, and their administration that led to the meaning they made of it, and how it looked upon implementing it in their classrooms.

Assertions Related to Additional Professional Development

Reading First allowed schools to use funding to send school personnel to additional professional development if it met the criteria outlined in the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003). The following assertion and subsequent data analysis shows how the teachers benefited from attending these additional professional development sessions.
All professional development training for teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals responsible for reading instruction will be based in scientifically based reading research (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 68). Each LEA was to submit a multi-phased professional development plan that outlined how they would use their funds to ensure the teachers were receiving professional development that aligned with SBRR. These funds provided opportunities for teachers to travel to professional conferences and workshops they might not have had the opportunity to attend previously.

Three teachers that I interviewed mentioned that the opportunity to travel to professional conferences was a beneficial learning opportunity for them. Though only 3 out of 11 teachers commenting on this did not provide me with a significant amount of data on this assertion, I felt it was an important learning opportunity teachers had that was only possible because of the funds provided by Reading First. I also found it to be important as the teachers were allowed to take the position as the mediator (Gavalek & Raphael, 1996) after attending a professional conference, and share what they learned with their peers.

Ms. Miller, a kindergarten teacher, spoke of how she was able to travel to another state to attend the National Reading First conference. She was able to “get a lot of good information there” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007) that she in turn shared with her peers when she returned to school. She felt it was most beneficial to “hear a lot of teachers bringing up what they do in their classrooms…A lot of them have different time frames…And I wondered why ours was a little different – but I think it was the grant itself” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007). Ms. Miller was describing how she and other teachers from across the country discussed how they were implementing Reading First. She was also grappling with the fact that though Reading First was intended to be a systematic program, there were differences that existed among states and
school systems. A third-grade teacher attended that same National Reading First conference, and said that even if a teacher did not attend that national meeting, they would still benefit from attending what professional development they had been offered at the county and school level.

Ms. Brown mentioned that she had attended a conference on administering DIBELS and learned information on how to use the data from that assessment to inform her instruction. She felt the training was useful, and wished she had it earlier. She then was responsible for sharing that information with the other teachers in her school, and said “we have worked with what she [the presenter] taught us there, so that was really helpful” (Brown, interview, May 7, 2007). Because of the funding provided through Reading First, these teachers had the opportunity to travel to national and local professional conferences to learn from others, become experts in a topic, and then share that knowledge with others.

The teachers who attended these conferences were given a professional responsibility to work with other teachers in their school to translate their newly acquired knowledge into relevant professional learning for the teachers in their schools. As Ms. Brown said, they worked with the information they were taught to make it helpful and relevant for them. The opportunity to be viewed as a knowledgeable professional was important to these teachers and provided them another opportunity to learn about Reading First.

All of the learning opportunities discussed thus far resulted from planned professional development offered through Reading First. However, as Sarason (1990) suggested, schools themselves are not systematic sights, nor is the construction of knowledge that occurs inside of them. After analyzing the data related to the previous assertions, I was left with a small amount of data that was significant in that it spoke of a different type of learning opportunity that existed within Avery Elementary. The data suggested that multiple opportunities existed for incidental
learning to occur related to Reading First. This data is presented in an aside (St. Pierre, 1995), which I am using as a “strategy of sensemaking” (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 6).

St. Pierre (1995) suggested that the aside may be used to “employ alternative writing spaces that enhance the description, analysis, and interpretation of the research process” (p. 6). The asides used in this dissertation are spaces in which I present data that does not fit into assertions taken straight from Reading First or SBRR. The data may conflict or show tensions between the actions taken by the participants and the intentions of Reading First. It is important data, and represents actions taken by participants that influence their instruction. To present it any other way would require a “violent coercion of manipulation, narration, and interpretation” (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 8) to make it align with Reading First’s intentions.

***I have read the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) multiple times and have not yet found an assertion from this document that matches the final component of how teachers constructed knowledge of Reading First at Avery Elementary. Multiple instances in the data suggest that teachers not only learned about Reading First through professional development – but they learned about Reading First through incidental learning from each other. Though I have data to support this as an assertion, it was never taken into consideration by the State Department of Education as they described professional development related to Reading First. It was never taken into consideration that teachers in a Reading First school would discuss Reading First, and rely upon each other to make sense of how to best interpret it in their classrooms.

I observed an informal conversation during my time in the field that led me to see the importance of incidental learning. The conversation occurred after school as I interviewed Ms. Andrews in her third-grade classroom. During the interview, another
third-grade teacher entered the room and the two began discussing the upcoming state writing assessment for third grade. I was unable to hear them talking, but afterwards, Ms. Andrews told me about the conversation. Ms. Andrews said that she and Ms. Sheldon had been discussing the upcoming writing assessment. Ms. Andrews asked Ms. Sheldon if the group Ms. Sheldon worked with during acceleration time had been working on writing. Ms. Andrews thought that acceleration time was when writing instruction was occurring, since it could not occur during the Reading First block of instructional time. Ms. Sheldon informed her that they were doing very little writing during that time, and that “you’re supposed to be writing in your centers” (Andrews, interview, February 16, 2007).

During this brief, informal, after school encounter, Ms. Andrews learned that writing instruction was not happening during the acceleration block as she had thought it was. Ms. Andrews also discovered through a casual comment from another teacher that she should have been doing writing during her literacy centers all along. This was February of the third year of implementing Reading First, and the teachers were still working out important details such as writing instruction. The lack of writing instruction is a topic that will be discussed in a subsequent section, for now the importance of this exchange is the informal conversation that led to a teacher constructing her knowledge of how writing instruction now fits into Reading First. Ms. Andrews will now have to use this information to alter how she conducted her literacy centers to include this new component.

Incidental learning about Reading First happened during informal conversations, and also through mentoring. Mr. Parker had been a student teacher at Avery Elementary in Ms. Andrews’ third-grade classroom the year before I conducted my case study. Mr.
Parker’s knowledge of Reading First was greatly influenced by the mentoring he received from Ms. Andrews the year before he was to teach third grade on his own. Mr. Parker had the opportunity to see Reading First being implemented before even attending the Teacher Academy. His understanding of Reading First and his implementation of it in his classroom were influenced by what he learned from Ms. Andrews and the other teachers during his student teaching experience at Avery Elementary.

Mr. Parker and Ms. Matthews, both third-grade teachers and both new to Avery Elementary and Reading First the year I conducted my case study, relied upon the other teachers to inform them of information related to Reading First that they had missed the first two years. Both teachers attended the Teacher Academy the summer before teaching at Avery Elementary, and both felt it had not been informative. Ms. Matthews and Mr. Parker received informal mentoring from the other teachers on their grade level that influenced how they implemented Reading First in their classrooms.

Gavalek and Raphael (1996) suggested that “what we accept as knowledge is based on conventions that we, as a community, have constructed and agreed on” (p. 183). Though Reading First did not take into account these incidental learning opportunities in which the teachers constructed knowledge about how to implement Reading First, they did occur, and they did influence the instruction.***

The *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (as cited in St. Pierre, 1995) provided the following definition of an aside, “a part of an actor’s lines supposedly not heard by others on the stage and intended only for the audience” (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 6). The data presented in this aside and others are things I learned by *being there* and by being knowledgeable enough to know what was supposed to be occurring, and open enough to try to understand why things were occurring
that had not been intended. The conversation discussed in this aside would not have occurred in front of the LC, or even in front of an entire grade level. However, the conversation did occur, and the teachers felt comfortable enough sharing it with me. This conversation, along with informal mentoring, showed that the systematic process of professional development did not address everything that needed to be addressed (i.e., writing instruction) and that these topics were worked out informally among teachers.

These incidental learning opportunities point out the importance of viewing knowledge as a social construction. Reading First was a text that was open to multiple interpretations. Gavalek and Raphael (1996) point out that “textual meaning is not ‘out there’ to be acquired; it is something that is constructed by individuals through their interactions with each other and the world” (p. 183). The Teacher Academy and the local, ongoing professional development provided the teachers formal learning opportunities about SBRR and Reading First, but they did not encompass the entirety of the learning that occurred during the implementation process. Incidental learning occurred through interactions among professionals, and it influenced the instruction at Avery Elementary.

Organization of Reading Instruction

Over the course of six months, I conducted two observations of eleven different teachers’ reading instruction. I quickly learned that there was a uniform schedule for teaching reading across the four grade levels. In each grade level, forty minutes were spent using the core reading program (Harcourt) for whole group instruction, twenty minutes were spent reading aloud to the whole group, and one hour of instruction was needs-based small group reading instruction using leveled texts and other materials (see Appendix I for a sample schedule). Through the observations and interviews, I learned that the teacher’s knowledge that he or she had
constructed about Reading First played out quite differently depending upon which hour of instruction I was observing.

I separated the data related to instruction into two categories: needs-based small group instruction, and whole group instruction using the core reading program. These distinctions follow the recommendations made by the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) when it stated, “Using a combination of whole class instruction and instruction delivered to smaller groups that are flexibly organized by instructional needs, teachers will provide systematic and explicit instruction in these essential reading components” (p. 19).

The following are assertions taken from Reading First that describe needs-based small group instruction, followed by assertions that describe whole group instruction, along with an analysis of the data that is related to those assertions.

Needs-Based Small Group Instruction

During the observations of needs-based small group instruction and the interview responses related to it, I learned that this one hour of instruction entailed both small group instruction provided by the teacher and students working independently at literacy centers. According to almost all of the teachers, the principal, and the LC, the most difficult part about implementing Reading First was the literacy centers. Upon reviewing the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), I found no specific reference to literacy centers. There was no explanation for what literacy centers were, or how they were supposed to be implemented. However, at Avery Elementary, literacy centers were one of the largest obstacles teachers faced when initially implementing Reading First.

Ms. Sellers, a second-grade teacher stated that she did not learn a lot at the Teacher Academy related to small group instruction. She said that mostly they received help in setting up
literacy centers. Though there is no mention of literacy centers in the document created by the State Department of Education, they were introduced at the Teacher Academies. The teachers also learned about literacy centers from their LC. The LC at Avery Elementary together with the RRFC interpreted the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) and felt strongly that to implement small group instruction, the remainder of the students needed to be working in literacy centers. According to the teachers, the LC presented a detailed description of literacy centers at the beginning of implementation, and centers were run in a similar manner in every classroom I observed. The following assertion describes a type of instruction that was supposed to occur in a Reading First school, and may have led to the creation of literacy centers in these classrooms.

**Assertion Related to Literacy Centers**

*Active student engagement in a variety of reading-based activities, which are connected to the essential components of reading and to clearly articulated academic goals. Children may be reading orally to partners and recording the number of errors and rate for fluency, engaging in word study activities with white boards and word sorts, practicing comprehension strategies using expository and narrative text, or participating in small group instruction. Multiple activities are going on simultaneously. Teacher talk is reduced. Children are actively engaged.*

(State Department of Education, 2003, p. 137) Though this assertion does not specifically mention literacy centers, the activities I observed occurring during literacy centers align with this description. The implementation of literacy centers at Avery Elementary was based upon an interpretation of Reading First by the LC and the RRFC. Ms. Stephens, the LC, stated that the LCs received training on literacy centers from their RRFC, and then redelivered that information
to the teachers in their school. This interpretation led to an interesting (and possibly unintended) influence that Reading First had on instruction.

As is evident in a quote from the principal, the teachers felt like Reading First mandated the use of literacy centers. When commenting on small group instruction, the principal said

Some of the teachers thought centers would never work. “I won’t be able to do that with my class” and so forth. And I think the centers being more or less forced on them and now some teachers realize that that’s where they can really get those small groups, needs-based groups, and address their [students’] weaknesses. (Parson, interview, December 8, 2006)

For some teachers who previously taught using whole group instruction, having students working independently at literacy centers was a major change in classroom management and instructional organization. Other teachers at Avery Elementary who had previously taught using centers were also implementing changes to be in compliance with their LC’s understanding of how literacy centers were to be managed according to Reading First. According to the teachers’ and LC’s understanding of Reading First, the teachers were to dismiss their entire class to work in heterogeneous groups at literacy centers, and then pull small groups of students out of centers to provide them with targeted instruction.

Both categories of teachers (those that had previously used centers and those that had not previously used centers) found this system of literacy centers to be difficult to manage. Ms. Wood, who had used centers previously in her first-grade classroom, felt it was difficult to manage the behavior of her students at literacy centers for the amount of time they were spending there. The needs-based small group instruction time was scheduled to last one hour. The teachers spent approximately 20 minutes with each small group they called to their table,
leaving the students to work independently at a literacy center for 40 minutes. Often, the teachers did not meet with every student every day, leaving some students to work in literacy centers for the full hour of needs-based small group instruction. Ms. Wood said that next year, when they were no longer a Reading First school, she would manage her centers differently. She suggested she would like to have the students be responsible for completing review activities at their seat before dismissing them to centers. Ms. Wood felt this would limit the interruptions her small group instruction received when she had to redirect the behavior of students who had been at centers for too long.

Other teachers agreed with the difficulty of managing literacy centers organized like this. Ms. Miller, a kindergarten teacher, was not clear from the LC’s description of centers on how to make it work in her classroom. The LC came into her room and modeled how literacy centers should be implemented. Ms. Miller said “it worked for her [LC] because she had two helpers to help her running things [Ms. Miller and parapro]. But when she [LC] left and I had to try it myself, it didn’t turn out that well. Some parts of centers worked, some didn’t” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007). Ms. Miller adapted the LC’s suggestions to make centers more manageable for her kindergarten students.

Other teachers discussed the use of literacy centers during interviews. Ms. Sellers expressed the benefits and challenges of using literacy centers in her classroom when she said, “I’ve learned a lot about centers, I’ve learned a lot of good stuff, it’s just trying to keep it simple. It is hard to manage” (Sellers, interview, May 9, 2007). Several teachers expressed that they were glad they worked hard to implement centers in their classrooms because they felt the children enjoyed and benefitted from them. Many of those same teachers expressed pride in how
they had mastered the art of having centers in their classroom – but were looking forward to next year when they could manage them differently.

During my observations of classroom instruction, I saw that management of literacy centers organized according to how the LC suggested was difficult. Teachers who did not appear to have classroom management issues at any other time during the instructional periods I observed, had to work hard to maintain the focus of the students who were at literacy centers. Students occasionally needed redirection from the teachers for factors related to noise, being off task, and working cooperatively with peers. In all four grade levels, it was common for the teachers’ small group instruction to be interrupted once or sometimes twice by questions or concerns from students who were in centers. While observing Ms. Seller’s second-grade class, she was repeatedly interrupted by students who were having difficulty with their assignment. The students were supposed to be rereading a story from their core reading program answering comprehension and vocabulary questions on a reading guide the teacher had prepared for them (field notes, April 25, 2008). However, this task appeared to be too difficult for some students to complete on their own, causing them to interrupt the teacher’s small group instruction to ask for assistance.

During all of the instruction I observed, these management issues did not appear to have a large impact on the small group instruction offered by the teacher. However, my observations took place toward the end of their third year implementing centers this way, and many of the teachers said they had worked out their literacy center management systems gradually over time. The literacy centers appeared to be functioning smoothly due to planning, preparation, and organization put in place by the classroom teachers, and assisted by the LC.
The centers also appeared to run smoothly because the teachers had adequate amounts of activities at each center that the students could complete independently. The teachers all discussed the initial difficulty they had in finding enough appropriate activities that met the criteria of SBRR to put in centers that would keep the students occupied. Ms. Argen, a first grade teacher who had not used centers in her classroom before Reading First, reflected on the challenges she faced upon implementing them in her classroom. Her biggest concern about Reading First initially was:

Doing centers because I’d never done centers before, plus it had to all be reading related, could not be anything else, but, to come up with so many new ones at the beginning of what I had never done before that was hard and I spent a lot of time down here…The centers had to be heterogeneously grouped and so that you could pull out and you would leave some there to help each other and it had to be review, couldn’t be anything new, which is fine, but you had to come up with all this material to do it with. (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007)

Initially, the teachers were concerned about what type of content could be included in centers that complied with the SBRR component of Reading First. As the assertion suggested, the students needed to be engaged in activities that were related to the essential components of reading instruction, which the LC and teachers interpreted to mean the five components outlined by the NRP (2000a, 2000b). The LC provided several professional development experiences for the teachers targeted towards giving them information on how to adequately utilize centers in their classrooms. The LC said

And I think centers have been the one thing that have stressed everybody out more than anything else and I think finally we’re beginning year three, now to relax a little bit about
that and realize it’s just review….We’re beginning to realize that it’s just practice, it’s just an extension of what we’re doing with those kids in small groups. (Stevens, interview, January 16, 2007)

The LC worked with the teachers to help them understand that the content of the centers was review of the components of reading instruction they were working on with their students. Ms. Andrews, who had not used centers in this way before, was pleased with the result of her work on her literacy centers. She said that she has worked hard to “have more really productive educational centers. The centers now, you know, hit on each one [of the five components]…And I think that’s better. That’s the one thing I really like best, is the way I’ve done centers” (Andrews, interview, February 16, 2007). Ms. Andrews was proud that her centers provided extension on the five components of reading instruction emphasized by Reading First, and felt they provided good review activities for her students to use when they were at literacy centers.

The topics addressed and activities used in literacy centers appeared to be consistent in classrooms in the same grade level. In Mr. Parker’s third-grade classroom, he had five centers that the children rotated through each week. They were: computer, word work, listening, reading, and writing response (field notes, February 26, 2008). The teachers had been told that the centers should be a review of the five components of reading instruction as described by SBRR. The activities I observed for each center were intended to all be related to the basal story of the week from the core reading program. The students I observed working at the computer center began working on a website that had activities related to their story of the week from their basal. However, after a few minutes, the students moved to www.pbskids.org and spent the remainder of their center time playing on that website. The word work students were looking at premade word cards prepared by the core reading program that were related to the story of the week. The
students at the listening center were listening to a taped reading of their story of the week while they read along with the story in their basal. The students at the writing center were writing a response to a comprehension question based on the story of the week that was provided on a preprinted card from the core reading program. The students at the reading center were partner reading from their basal reader. The literacy centers in Ms. Andrews, Ms. Sheldon’s, and Ms. Matthews were very similar. However, two of the teachers did not have a writing center, instead they had a vocabulary center. These teachers also referred to their reading center as a fluency center (field notes, February 16, 2007).

In the second-grade classrooms that I observed in, the centers had similar content and materials, with one exception. Ms. Sellers and Ms. Walters both had one center where students were working in a literature circle. The students in that center in Ms. Sellers’ class were reading from a book in the Magic Tree House series (Tripp, 2001). Each student had an assigned role and they were taking turns reading and discussing the text with each other. Ms. Sellers informed me that these were her independent readers, and that she did not meet with them as a small group on a daily basis to allow her more time to focus on her struggling students. The other students in the class were engaged in other centers working on activities from the basal reader. The listening center students were listening to the story on an audio tape while reading along in their basals. The writing center was creating a comic strip summary of the story from their basal readers. The group at the word work center was working on spelling words and vocabulary words from the basal.

The kindergarten and first grade classrooms also had very similar literacy centers. The reading (or fluency, depending on the teacher) center was composed of books of leveled texts. The students were to read from a box of books on their level. Word work centers typically
involved spelling words from the basal or sight words. The listening centers almost all had a copy of the story of the week, and the students listened to the story while following along with their text.

During the first year of implementing Reading First, the teachers spent a lot of time developing materials to put in the literacy centers that were based on SBRR. To assist the teachers with this, the LC purchased many new materials (books on tape, additional materials from the core reading program) for the teachers to use during center time that met the stringent requirements of Reading First. The teachers appreciated the materials, and some said they were useful for implementing centers (particularly the boxes of writing prompts, comprehension questions, and vocabulary activities from the core reading program). Other teachers suggested it might have been more helpful had they been able to choose the materials themselves. Ms. Walters suggested that the materials would have been more beneficial to her students had she been able to order things she knew would interest them. She said, “We’re all different [teachers] and we know that children are different and they learn differently, but I think Reading First, by ordering all the same things and by doing all the same things said there’s one kind of learner” (Walters, interview, February 8, 2008).

Finding adequate materials to cover the content that could be included in literacy centers based upon SBRR was a challenge for the teachers, but they all felt they had learned from the experience and found ways to provide beneficial learning opportunities for their students. The knowledge the teachers had constructed regarding the five components of Reading First was evident by watching the literacy centers being utilized in the classrooms. During the observations I conducted, the students were working in literacy centers on activities related to vocabulary
enrichment, word work (including structural analysis and phonics), spelling, comprehension, and fluency.

In comparing the data to the assertion, it is apparent that the teachers and LC used literacy centers as a means for providing opportunities for students to be actively engaged in reading related activities. It is interesting to note that even though literacy centers were not specifically addressed in the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), they became a prominent feature of every classroom. As literacy centers were addressed during the Teacher Academy, it did appear that the Teacher Academy had an impact on the reading instruction. However, it was from further professional development and discussions with the LC that the teachers became more comfortable in implementing them in their classrooms. The Teacher Academy again provided the control of the will of the teachers in this instance, but did not assist in developing their capacity for using literacy centers. The LC and RRFC served as mediators (Glavelek & Raphael, 1996) who interpreted Reading First and guided the teachers towards their understanding of how it should be implemented in classrooms, which ultimately led to the use of literacy centers.

The professional development instructing teachers on using literacy centers happened during the first year of implementing Reading First. Unfortunately, I was not in the school until the third year, after the discussions of literacy centers had ended. The data does suggest that the LC and RRFC believed the concept of literacy centers originated with Reading First, and they interpreted Reading First in a way that served the purposes of the particular individuals involved. This is in line with Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) suggestion that people take what is potentially problematic and integrate it with what is unproblematic. As the LC attempted to introduce the concept of actively engaged reading related opportunities, she related it to
something she knew that aligned with that idea – and that was literacy centers. As the teachers, principal, and LC all acknowledged, literacy centers were utilized as a tool to provide learning opportunities to the students while the teachers taught small groups. The idea of small group instruction was something that was directly aligned with the goals of Reading First, as shown in the following assertion.

Assertions Related to Small Group Instruction

Small group instruction as appropriate to meet student needs, with placement based on ongoing assessment. The groups are based on instructional needs and therefore they will change over time. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 137). All of the 11 teachers who participated in the study implemented needs-based small group instruction in their classrooms on a daily basis. I observed a total of 42 small group lessons for regular education students in grades K-3, plus two additional small group lessons conducted by the special education teacher. Of the 44 total lessons, 30 of them directly addressed fluency as assessed by DIBELS. The following assertion taken directly from the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) sheds light onto why the DIBELS assessment had such a large impact on the small group instruction.

Only when assessment for learning is routinely used to inform instruction at an individual level will true success be realized. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 32)

Improved capacity among teachers to analyze, interpret and utilize data to drive instruction can be developed through this model and is critical to the success of the Reading First schools. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 37). Reading First placed a premium on creating teachers who were knowledgeable in analyzing data from assessments to inform classroom instruction. The instruction in 30 out of the 44 small group lessons was directly tied to the DIBELS assessment that was required in Reading First schools. The language present in this assertion points to the
importance ascribed to assessment: “true success” and “critical to the success” suggest to anyone reading this document that assessment is key to implementation. As discussed previously, one of the eight bulleted points describing how the state would ensure teachers implemented Reading First and SBRR properly was that they would insist upon instruction based on assessment. Assessment driven instruction was not prioritized solely because the members of the State Department of Education believed it would lead to student achievement, it was also used to control the will of the teachers to ensure they were addressing SBRR.

Reading First dictated the assessments administered in Reading First schools (see Appendix J). The DIBELS subtests were to begin being administered in the fall of kindergarten, and continue through the end of third grade. The DIBELS assessment was crucial to the students’ placement in small groups, and was the only assessment used to place students in reading intervention. The lessons I observed that were directly tied to DIBELS included content solely based upon helping the students pass the subtests of the DIBELS. Data related to how DIBELS influenced small group instruction in the classrooms follows.

During an interview with the LC, I noticed a long power strip on the floor with many hand held devices plugged into it. Uncertain as to what they were used for, I asked what they were. From the discussion that ensued, I learned that they were hand held devices the teachers and LC used to administer the DIBELS assessment. The LC informed me that the data derived from the DIBELS assessment were used by the teachers to plan needs-based small group instruction. The LC informed me that the data had been particularly useful for the kindergarten and first-grade teachers. The DIBELS subtests covered in those grades included initial sound fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, and by the middle of first grade, oral reading fluency. In second grade, the DIBELS subtests included
nonsense word fluency and oral reading fluency, and in third grade the only subtest covered was
the oral reading fluency subtest. The LC said that “in second and third grade when it gets to a
point where they’re only doing oral reading fluency, I could see the teachers just checking that
list, but at the lower grades it’s been very valuable” (Stephens, interview, January 16, 2007).

During my observations in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, I found the needs-
based small group instruction to be closely aligned with the DIBELS subtests. During the eight
observations I conducted with teachers from kindergarten and first grade, all eight periods of
needs-based small group instruction included DIBELS fluency related content for some of the
students. In fact, 22 out of the 30 small group lessons I observed that were based on the DIBELS
assessment occurred in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. For example, when observing
Ms. Miller’s kindergarten class, I watched her teach four different small groups. During each
group, she addressed the different components of the DIBELS that those students would be
assessed on by the LC during the next benchmark period. Two of her groups were shown high
frequency words on flash cards. She later told me that those groups had reached the benchmark
for the letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and initial sounds fluency subtests
of the DIBELS. Ms. Miller said that she had begun working with these students on high
frequency words to help them with the oral reading fluency portion of the DIBELS they would
take in first grade. Another group of students came to her and worked on saying the letter names
as quickly as possible when she held up a flashcard. Ms. Miller later informed me that those
students had not benchmarked on letter naming fluency yet, and were still working on passing
that subtest of the DIBELS. A fourth group came to her and she began their instruction by having
them sing the ABC song while pointing to a paper that had the letter names on it in order. The
students then tried to identify the letter their name began with on the letter strip. Ms. Miller said
those students were still having difficulty with the initial sound fluency subtest of the DIBELS as well as the letter naming fluency subtest.

During an interview with Ms. Miller, I asked her if DIBELS had influenced her instruction in any way. She replied, “Yes, and you have to really, really go away from your Harcourt [core reading program] and pull out other things that will go along with DIBELS” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007). When I asked how often she devoted instructional time to preparing her students for the DIBELS she stated “maybe once a week I do something on DIBELS with them, takes maybe two or three minutes to do it as a whole group” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007). Ms. Miller was concerned with ensuring her students benchmarked on the DIBELS subtests, as that was the measure the school used to place students in reading intervention. During the interview Ms. Miller stated that she only spent a few minutes once a week working on DIBELS components, however, my observations suggested that she devoted most of her small group instruction over two days to items that were assessed on the DIBELS.

In a first-grade classroom, I observed Ms. Argen spend a lot of time with a group of students who appeared to be struggling with the nonsense word subtest of the DIBELS. Ms. Argen told the students they would be “working on their vowel sounds so they get really, really good, so that when [LC] checks them at the end of the month they’ll get them” (Argen, field notes, April 11, 2007). She passed out a sheet of paper with the letters typed on it in random order and had the students quickly tell her the letter sounds. She then wrote three letter CVC words on a small white board for the students to blend together. Ms. Argen told the students she would begin with real words, then switch to silly words. When I questioned her about this during the interview, she informed me that the students were tested on nonsense words for the DIBELS. She believed that she needed to give them time to practice reading “silly words” or nonsense
words during small group instruction to help them be able to pass this portion of the DIBELS. After working with the students on silly words, she said “we’ll have to get our scores up on how many we can do in a minute” (Argen, field notes, April 11, 2007).

After working on the letter sounds and CVC nonsense words, Ms. Argen then passed out a passage typed on a piece of paper to the students in her group. She read the passage out loud once, then had the students read it out loud with her. She then had them read it alone while she timed them. When the timer went off, they marked how far they had gotten. They repeated this two more times to see how far they could get in the passage. The students were pleased when they showed her that they passed their original mark. Ms. Argen said, “See! What does this show you?” and the students replied “the more you read the better you can read” (field notes, April 11, 2007). The students then left the small group table and returned to their center work.

I watched one student who had been working with Ms. Argen as he went to a table and began reading a leveled text. He had a timer set next to him, and as he began reading silently, I observed him starting to turn the page of the text before he had even finished reading the words on that page. He kept turning the page slowly, leaning his head to the left to continue reading the words, almost falling out of his chair in an effort to not waste any time with page turning. This student had learned during his small group instruction that in order to pass the DIBELS he had to be able to read fast. So he created a way to be a faster reader by making page turning more efficient and less time consuming. The small group instruction Ms. Argen provided this group of students was focused on helping them benchmark on the DIBELS so they would not be placed into intervention. During the interview, Ms. Argen told me that this time of year was particularly geared towards working with students on preparation for the DIBELS:
We work on fluency, but at this point in the year we’re working to get those words in no matter how fast you read them because in two weeks, less than two weeks we’re going to be tested for the final time on how many words they have read. And that’s the big push right now….For these two weeks, don’t even stop for a period! I mean, just keep on going! (Arge, interview, April 26, 2007)

Ms. Argen said that the data she received from the DIBELS were very helpful. She said “the DIBELS has really helped us stay on target of where we, what we should be targeting [with our small group instruction] and that’s been a really great thing” (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007).

Ms. Argen used the data to differentiate the instruction she offered in her classroom.

Ms. Argen focused on the nonsense word fluency and the oral reading fluency subtests with the first group of students she met with, and then the oral reading fluency subtest with a second group. This second group was shown phrases on sentence strips that contained high frequency words in them. The teacher used these sentence strips as flash cards, and showed them briefly to the students and asked them to read them aloud. After they practiced reading the phrases, Ms. Argen then gave this group a leveled text to read independently.

In Ms. Brown’s first-grade classroom, I observed her offer instruction to four small groups of students. All four groups worked on various aspects of the DIBELS subtests according to their needs. The first group of students worked with Ms. Brown reading phrases on sentence strip flashcards orally, before she dismissed them to read a leveled text on their own. Ms. Brown informed me that this group was reading on the highest level of text in her class and they had benchmarked on the oral reading fluency. Ms. Brown told the second group of students that met with her that the LC would be “DIBELing” them the next day and they would need to know the words she was going to show them on flash cards. Ms. Brown then showed the students words
on flash cards and had all of the students in the group read the word. This group then was given a
leveled text to read out loud and the teacher offered assistance when needed. The third group
also worked on phrase sentence strip flash cards, and then Ms. Brown timed them as they read
from a leveled text. The fourth and final group Ms. Brown met with was shown words on flash
cards, and then read from a leveled text while Ms. Brown timed them.

When I interviewed Ms. Brown, I asked her if DIBELS influenced her small group
instruction. She said that she grouped her children based upon “what I feel their performance is
and what I feel they need. Some information I get from DIBELS” (Brown, interview, May 7,
2007). Ms. Miller’s and Ms. Brown’s interview responses both indicated that they did not spend
too much time, or base all of their instruction, on DIBELS, though my observations suggested
otherwise.

Ms. Wood’s first-grade instruction also included components of DIBELS, though not to
the extent that I observed it in the previously described classrooms. Ms. Wood called a group of
three students to her desk and showed them flashcards with high frequency words on them. The
students read the words, and then were sent to look for the words in the classroom until their
special education teacher came in to the classroom to provide them further small group
instruction. The third group of students Ms. Wood called read aloud from a leveled text, and then
read aloud phrases from sentence strip flashcards. These students were working on being able to
benchmark on the oral reading fluency subtest of DIBELS.

During an interview with Ms. Wood, I asked her about what training she would have
liked to have received before implementing Reading First. She stated

Small group instruction using the data [from DIBELS]. This past year we did a lot of, I
say a lot, more than in the past. We’ve taken the DIBELS data, breaking it down, looking
at individual progress monitoring and just seeing ok, this child doesn’t know how to recode or this child is leaving out important sight words or they have a phonics deficiency. I think it was much more helpful and I wish we had that training to begin with. (Wood, interview, April 26, 2007)

The training Ms. Wood received on how to use the DIBELS data influenced her needs-based small group instruction. She believed she was better able to know specifically what to address with each student.

The LC suggested that the kindergarten and first-grade teachers found the DIBELS data more valuable than the second and third-grade teachers. The data I collected from observations of second and third-grade teachers supported this, though DIBELS was still a factor in the instruction. In Ms. Sellers’ second-grade class, I observed her work with one small group on reading and rereading a leveled text to improve their fluency. Ms. Sellers told the group they would be “DIBELed for the last time soon, and they wanted it to be a good one” (Sellers, field notes, April 25, 2007). When the group of students finished rereading passages from the story, they worked on reading sight words from flash cards.

During an interview with Ms. Sellers, she said the biggest change in her teaching was the incorporation of fluency. She said because of Reading First she had really stressed fluency in second grade. So that’s been different. I’ve always done comprehension and along with that, I’ve always taught fluency, but I guess I’ve never really thought about it. Making sure they can read so many words a minute. That’s been a big, that’s been a change for me. (Sellers, interview, May 9, 2007)

The only other second grade teacher that I observed, Ms. Walters, had the least amount of small group instruction devoted to DIBELS fluency. During one observation, Ms. Walters sat
with two different students and listened to them read aloud from a Quick Reads book, though she did not time them or make any direct reference to DIBELS.

The four third-grade teachers that I observed had incorporated DIBELS into their small group instruction, though the emphasis placed on DIBELS varied by teacher and was less apparent than in kindergarten and first grade. On one of the two days that I observed Mr. Parker’s third-grade classroom, the instruction was based upon the information he received from DIBELS. For each group that came to him, he passed out a different leveled text and had the students read aloud from the text while he timed them. When the third group of the day came to him, he informed them that “when you do the DIBELS you aren’t trying to beat the clock, you still need to read it correctly” (Parker, field notes, February 26, 2007). When the fourth group came to be timed at his table, he said “you’re not reading to rush or beat the clock, just read the best you can so people can understand you” (Parker, field notes, February 26, 2007). Each group read aloud one time from a leveled text while he timed them for one minute. They counted the words they read, and then moved on to their literacy center work. This particular day of small group instruction was aligned with the oral reading fluency assessment students in third grade would be required to take on the DIBELS.

In Ms. Andrews’ third-grade class, one day of small group instruction for two of her groups consisted of a timed reading of a passage from a Quick Reads book. Ms. Andrew had the students mark the spot they were able to read to with a small piece of low-adhesive tape, so they could see if they could read past that mark on the second try. In Ms. Sheldon’s third-grade class, one small group of students choral read from a leveled text along with the teacher’s voice, and she reminded them to read with expression. The teachers were assisting these groups of students with passing the oral reading fluency subtest of the DIBELS.
This assertion specifically related to instruction focused on assessment during needs-based small group instruction was supported by the most data from observations and interviews. During the observations I conducted, the teachers, particularly in kindergarten and first grade, appeared to align their instruction closely with the data they received from administering the DIBELS assessment for specific groups of students. Most of the teachers felt the information they received from the DIBELS data was helpful, and used it to guide their instruction. However, several teachers commented specifically on the fact that the DIBELS assessment wasn’t always a good tool to use to inform instruction. The following aside describes how these teachers grappled with using the DIBELS to inform their instruction, though according to the assertion it was required (even critical) for the success of their students.

***Sitting in Ms. Miller’s kindergarten classroom observing her instruction, it was easy to identify the group of students who were receiving the most instruction focused on passing the subtest of DIBELS that required them to say the letter names quickly. I watched a very small, red-headed boy in this group struggle to sing the ABC song and point to the letter names as quickly as his peers. When Ms. Miller later asked him to say a letter name that she pointed to, he was able to do it, it just took him a moment to be able to produce the letter name. I asked Ms. Miller about this boy during an interview, and learned that he had turned five years old the day before the cut off to enter kindergarten. Ms. Miller suggested that she “still had a hard time with having to ‘time’ kindergartners” (Miller, interview, April 26, 2007) as she felt it was not developmentally appropriate, particularly for a child who was almost twelve months younger than several of his peers. She said some of her students knew their letter names and sounds, but simply could not produce it as fast as DIBELS wanted it.
Ms. Brown cautioned that DIBELS didn’t always get it right. “Sometimes some children don’t score well on DIBELS even though they can read. One of my most fluent readers, she is a beautiful reader, but her nonsense words, she barely got” (Brown, interview, May 7, 2007). Ms. Walters also questioned the usefulness of DIBELS when she said,

It’s like everything else, once they’re monitored so many times on that they tend to get better. They’re seeing basically the same things week after week. So, they tend to get better. But, that’s one benchmark. That’s not taking that out into the real world and applying that, but that’s handing back exactly what they had been spoon fed….So, I mean it’s wonderful for us if they come to second grade knowing their letters and their sounds, and, you know, the nonsense words and vowel patterns, that’s wonderful. But I do think they need to learn how to apply all of that too. (Walters, interview, February 8, 2007)

The third grade teachers saw all too well what happened with students who had spent the previous two years receiving instruction based on the DIBELS subtests. Ms. Matthews said that the students who entered her class thought reading was speed reading….That’s where I have a problem because by the time they get to third grade they want to try to see how many words they can get in a minute. And it gets to be where it’s speed reading. And they’ll fumble over words and you can count that word wrong, and that counts on their accuracy, but DIBELS is strictly words per minute. And that gets to be a problem because by third grade they know what it [DIBELS] is for and they know what’s going on with it. (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007)
These teachers realized that to be in compliance with Reading First, they were tied to using an assessment they had serious concerns about. Mr. Parker, a third-grade teacher, offered a suggestion to improving the DIBELS to make it a more reasonable assessment of a child’s reading:

I said we’re trying for fluency here, not speed reading. So, the only thing that’s bad about DIBELS is the fact that so many of them come in and just read it. And unless we talk about it afterwards then its nothing. It’s just a bunch of words they read. So, to me, I think the DIBELS should have a testing system after to see how much they comprehend of the actual thing they read. I wish it would. To just come in and read, any child could do that if they knew the words. I’ve got one [student] over there, he knows all his sight words. He could read em perfectly. He could read sentences fine, but comprehension…NO! (Parker, interview, April 27, 2007)

Several of the teachers at Avery Elementary felt as if their hands were tied in regards to the DIBELS assessment. The students’ DIBELS scores were reported to the LC, RRFC, and state, and could be broken down by classroom, putting pressure on the teachers to ensure their students performed well on this assessment. These teachers spent a large amount of time during small group instruction teaching their students the skills they needed to pass the DIBELS subtests, even though they believed it was not appropriate for their students. To be in compliance with Reading First, some teachers had to go against their professional judgment.***

The assertion related to assessment driven instruction had a direct impact on the instruction offered during needs-based small group instruction at Avery Elementary. Perhaps because
teachers were told that this component was critical to the success of their students and that true success could only be realized in doing this, they allowed this assessment to override their judgment. According to the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), assessments were being used to “get” teachers to comply with SBRR. This appeared to have its intended effect, as the teachers were willing to widely incorporate this into their instruction. The use of this assessment had some control over the will of the teachers, in that they wanted to see their students succeed on the assessment, so they devoted classroom time to the content being tested. The next assertion is related to the remainder of small group instruction that was provided on topics that were not directly related to the DIBELS assessment.

While continuing to utilize read-aloud strategies, students begin assuming responsibility for their reading competencies by practicing explicitly taught strategies in small groups under the guidance of the teacher. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 134). This assertion was found in the last few pages of the 141 page [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), in a section that describes key characteristics of a Reading First classroom. This final section is overshadowed, and even difficult to envision, given the restrictions described in the previous sections. In this section, teachers are referred to as being important decision makers in the classroom who know their students’ needs and adjust their instruction to meet those needs. However, given the strict adherence to the five essential components of reading instruction, the required assessments, and the mandated materials, the teachers felt they had limited opportunities to be the decision maker in their own classroom.

This particular assertion was drawn from the content of a paragraph in the document that describes how teachers transition their instruction to allow more opportunities for students to practice what they have already learned. It follows this sentence in the document, “Decoding
skills give way to an emphasis on developing fluency explicitly through repeated readings” (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 134). This assertion is suggesting that students work through decoding skills, then move on to fluency, and then finally the teacher begins to release control during small group instruction to allow the students to practice the strategies they have learned while receiving assistance from the teacher.

The data from Avery Elementary confirms this progression in instruction. The previous section described instruction that showed teachers following the subtests of the DIBELS until the students mastered the oral reading fluency subtest. Once students had mastered the subtests of the DIBELS, they began to receive instruction that was more closely aligned with this assertion, which suggested that students practice strategies with the assistance of the teacher. The data from the remaining 14 small group instruction sessions I observed that align with this assertion follow.

In kindergarten and first grade, the only small group instruction I observed that aligned with this assertion was offered to one group of students in Ms. Wood’s first-grade classroom. During this small group, Ms. Wood passed out leveled texts to the students and said she was going to preview some difficult words with them that they would read in the text. She wrote several words on the white board and explained how to pronounce the words and the meaning of the words. The students in the group then read the text quietly to themselves. After they finished reading, Ms. Wood asked comprehension questions related to the text.

During an interview, Ms. Wood stated that the instruction she offered in her small groups came from listening to the children read and making note of things they struggled with. Ms. Wood also told me that she preferred teaching small groups with guided reading, which she said she learned about during her undergraduate education. The instruction she offered to one group of students in her class did loosely follow a guided reading format (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), but
the remaining groups that received instruction were focused on DIBELS fluency. Ms. Wood said during an interview that the students who received the guided reading were her students who had achieved success in the DIBELS oral reading fluency.

In Miss Seller’s second-grade class, I noticed a similar pattern in instruction in which some groups received instruction based upon the data from DIBELS, and other groups received different content in their instruction. During one observation, Ms. Sellers met with a group of students and gave each one a leveled text. She had the students preview the text by taking a picture walk and asking them questions to predict what they thought might happen in the story. The students then read the story quietly to themselves, and Ms. Sellers stopped them frequently to ask comprehension questions about the story.

This pattern of offering some groups instruction focused on DIBELS and other groups instruction focused on something different continued in three of the four third-grade classes that I observed. In Ms. Matthews’ and Ms. Sheldon’s third-grade classrooms, DIBELS focused instruction was offered to one group, and the remaining groups received different content. One very small group of students in each class received phonics instruction through either a making words activity or direct instruction on vowel patterns. Those small groups then read a leveled text to the teacher. The remaining groups of students in both classrooms were reading chapter books on an appropriate level for that group. The teachers began the groups by reviewing the story content from the previous day, and previewing the upcoming content by looking at pictures and asking for predictions. The students then read the text to themselves or with a partner, stopping to answer comprehension questions asked by the teacher. When the students came to an unknown word, the teacher would provide the word and its meaning to the students.
In Ms. Andrews’ third-grade class, she provided instruction on phonics and structural analysis to two different small groups of students. One group was focusing on the sound made by /aw/ and /al/. They practiced these sounds by reading from a leveled text and slapping the table when they read a word containing those sounds. Ms. Andrews’ other groups were reading chapter books in a similar manner described in Ms. Sheldon’s and Ms. Matthew’s classrooms. Ms. Andrews would review material previously read, preview the upcoming text by asking for predictions, explain any vocabulary the students might not be familiar with, have them read the text, and then ask them comprehension questions.

In Mr. Parker’s third-grade classroom, his reading instruction was quite different during the two days I observed. The first day was focused on DIBELS fluency, and the second day was focused on content other than DIBELS fluency. During my second observation, Mr. Parker led each group through a lesson similar to the small group instruction described for the previous third-grade teachers. He began by previewing vocabulary words from the text as well as having the students do a picture walk. They made predictions, read silently from the text, and then discussed the text afterwards. Mr. Parker’s focus, as well as the other third-grade teachers who taught some of their small groups this way, was on comprehending the text being read.

The small group instruction offered during this time was decidedly different depending on whether the students in the group had mastered all of the subtests of the DIBELS. Students who were still working on the DIBELS continued to receive specific instruction to assist them in passing the DIBELS. Students who had already passed the DIBELS subtests began to receive instruction that included comprehension of the texts being read. The teachers allowed the pressure of increasing student achievement on the DIBELS to override what they were learning about reading instruction during their professional development with the LC.
As Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested, “every institution has a body of transmitted recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge that supplies the institutionally appropriate rules of conduct” (p. 65). Part of the recipe knowledge of teachers in public schools recently has been that standardized assessment scores matter. This is particularly true for teachers in Avery Elementary, as their students have traditionally struggled on these assessments, and the local middle school and high school have been labeled Needs Improvement by NCLB (2001) because of these assessments. Increasing student achievement on assessment has become a rule of conduct that is ingrained in the school institution. Even as teachers at Avery Elementary School were learning about teaching reading from local, ongoing professional development, they were allowing the pressure of increasing student test scores on the DIBELS to override their instructional decision making during small group instruction. Even though some teachers believed DIBELS was not always the best indicator of reading ability, they still let it dictate their instruction until the students reached the benchmark on all of the subtests. The social construction of knowledge the teachers and LC had created about reading instruction was overridden during small group instruction by the “recipe knowledge” on “rules of conduct” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 65) that suggest the importance of improving student test scores.

Whole Group Instruction

Small group instruction accounted for one hour of the reading instruction block, and the remaining hour was spent on whole group instruction. Twenty minutes of this whole group instruction was spent with the teacher reading aloud to the students, most often from a trade book, but occasionally from a book associated with their core reading program. The purpose for the read aloud appeared to be enjoyment of texts, exposure to vocabulary, and listening comprehension. The teachers that I observed did not teach any specific comprehension strategy
along with the read aloud. They did ask comprehension questions before, during, and after reading, and allowed students to discuss and make personal connections to the text during reading.

One example of a read aloud that was typical of other teachers occurred in Ms. Matthews’ third-grade classroom (field notes, February 13, 2007). Ms. Matthews began by holding up the trade book *Judy Moody, MD: The Doctor Is In* (McDonald, 2006) and reminded the students that they had read the first chapter the previous day. Ms. Matthews told them they had previously discussed some new vocabulary words associated with the story. Ms. Matthews then stated each word (mumps, measles, chicken pox, thermometer, temperature) and asked if a student could explain what the word meant or provide an example of the word used in a sentence. After reviewing the vocabulary words, Ms. Matthews then asked, “Can anyone revisit chapter one and tell us what happened?” (field notes, February 13, 2007). Ms. Matthews led the students in an informal discussion to review the first chapter. She then read the second chapter aloud to the students, stopping occasionally to ask comprehension questions or to explain a word’s meaning. At the end of the chapter, she asked for a prediction of what they thought would happen in the emergency room in the next chapter.

In most classrooms, the read aloud appeared to be a time when the teachers read literature to the students that was not part of the core reading program. Through Reading First funds, each teacher had received a crate of books with a sign on it reading, “Read Alouds”. The teachers felt they were not necessarily the books they would have ordered had they been able to choose the books, but they did use them. The read aloud time exposed the students to literature outside of the core reading program, and offered them a time to listen to a story for enjoyment.
The remainder of the forty minutes of whole group instruction was spent using the core reading program, which was Harcourt. Harcourt is a literature based reading series that includes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry selections for the students to read. Because a review of this core reading program found it to be comprehensive in regards to the five essential components of reading instruction, the teachers were not allowed to pull in any supplemental materials. The LC helped each grade level create a schedule for their forty minutes of whole group instruction to ensure they addressed each of the five components of reading. A typical day of instruction using Harcourt consisted of the teacher and students reviewing the vocabulary words taken from the story they were focusing on that week, reading or rereading the story, discussing the story, and then working on a comprehension strategy associated with the story. This strategy instruction was done either as a whole group or independently using a workbook page that accompanied the core reading program. The teachers also addressed spelling and phonics during this block of time.

What I found to be most interesting during my time in the field was the juxtaposition of the control of instructional decision making during the two distinct blocks of reading instruction time offered at Avery Elementary. The decisions made regarding needs-based small group instruction were driven mainly by data from assessments. A different statement can be made about what was driving the whole group instruction. The block of whole group instruction was driven solely by the core reading program adopted by the LEA.

I learned from Ms. Matthews that the teachers in each grade level were required to all be teaching the same pages of the Harcourt program on the same day. Ms. Matthews told me that Well, you know with it being Reading First we’re required to, everybody be doing the same thing. Every third grade-teacher should be on the same story every week. We have
to have the same vocabulary words, the same spelling words, all that has to be the same.
(Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007).

For that block of instructional time, everyone in the grade level had to teach the same thing using
the same stories from the same core reading program. They were not allowed to “venture off to
different kinds of genres of children’s literature, it was strictly the basal stories” (Matthews,
interview, February 21, 2007). Ms. Matthews’ comments were validated during my observations
when I noticed every teacher had a bulletin board in her or his classroom that listed the current
week’s vocabulary words, comprehension strategy, phonics focus, and spelling words. The
teachers on each grade level always had the same words listed for each category. These bulletin
boards were put in place because of Reading First, and were kept up to date during the time I was
in the field. They showed that each teacher was focusing on the correct story from the basal at
the correct time. During vocabulary instruction time, I could follow along with the words they
were defining by looking at the bulletin board. I never observed a classroom that had an incorrect
or blank bulletin board. The similarity in instruction was based solely on the core reading
program and their mandated adherence to it, and the bulletin boards were there to help any
observer understand what they should have been teaching.

The knowledge of the teacher to plan differentiated instruction based upon assessment
data was completely absent during the 40 minutes of core reading instruction offered daily.
Teacher knowledge was replaced by the teacher’s manual. During my observations, I watched
teachers with 32, 30, and 25 years of teaching experience walk around with a teacher’s manual
opened and in their hands for forty minutes, letting it guide the instruction they were offering
their students. Ms. Argen, the teacher with 25 years of experience, said her teaching had come
full circle. She said “the first ten years of [my] teaching it was just strictly whatever the book said that’s what I did, and that’s just what we’re back to now” (Argen, interview, 4/26/2007).

The teachers at Avery Elementary had concerns about how they were to strictly adhere to the core reading program, but for the most part they did, because of the fear of losing Reading First funding. An exchange between me and Ms. Argen highlights just how ingrained the threat of losing Reading First was in these teachers:

Researcher: Were these changes made in your teaching because --

Ms. Argen: definitely Reading First

Researcher: Because of Reading First?

Ms. Argen: Mm hmmm

Researcher: And did you feel like you had to make the changes because

Ms. Argen: We had to make the changes

Researcher: You had to make the changes?

Ms. Argen: We had to make the changes, mm hmm.

Researcher: And it

Ms. Argen: We would, we would lose the money if we were not doing what we were supposed to be doing when they came to check. (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007)

The teachers at Avery Elementary were aware that their school would lose funding that was much needed and appreciated, and they did not want to do anything to jeopardize losing that funding.

At times, the teachers would confront the LC about these restrictions and complain that they should not be forced to adhere so stringently to the core reading program. The LC told me that some of their claims were justified, however, they knew that to keep the funding they had to
comply with all of the Reading First guidelines. The LC told me during an interview that her response to the teachers became: “Okay, fine, if you don’t want to do what they’re asking you to do, box up your millions of dollars worth of materials that they’ve given you, [and] give them back to me. I’ll send it back and tell them you don’t want it” (Stevens, interview, January 16, 2007). She said the teachers generally had no response to that, and they agreed that “some things we just have to do because we said we were gonna do it and they’ve paid us well to do it” (Stevens, interview, January 16, 2007). The assertions representing the influence the core reading program had on the instruction offered during whole group instruction are discussed below.

Because this whole group instruction was so tied to the core reading program, the assertion was taken from a paragraph describing instructional materials. The paragraph has been broken down into three separate assertions in order to show how each portion of that paragraph influenced instruction.

*Teachers use a core reading program. Though core reading programs often have many components, the most important are the teacher’s manual and the children’s texts.* (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 138). The teachers were required to adhere to the stories in the core reading program, and they felt that limited the quantity and type of literature they could use with the students. They also felt it prevented them from being able to integrate the content areas into their reading instruction. Though the teachers had these concerns, they did adhere to the core program. Every observation I conducted at Avery Elementary included whole group instruction drawn straight from the basal. Several teachers commented on how difficult it was to not be able to use the class sets of children’s literature they had accumulated in their classrooms over the years. Ms. Walters said that if she needed to teach her students how to make inferences,
she would rather teach it using Charlotte’s Web, or other classic children’s literature the students were familiar with rather than the story they use in the core reading program.

Ms. Matthews said that she was used to teaching literature focus units where she could bring in class sets of books for the children to read and learn from. She described a unit she taught the previous year in another school that she called Chocolate Touch, in which she “designed the unit myself. I could bring in writing, I could bring in spelling, vocabulary, reading, all those components Reading First talks about. It’s just that they’re presented through children’s literature in a different way than through the basal” (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007).

Four third-grade teachers, one first-grade teacher, and one second-grade teacher all agreed that they wished they could integrate science and social studies into their reading instruction. Mr. Parker, a first year teacher, said that during his education course work in college and his student teaching, he had always planned on teaching by integrating the content areas to help the children make connections with what they were learning and help them retain more of the content. He said

I was really hoping to integrate other subjects into it [teaching of reading], and of course, you can’t do that. If we have something in our session this time that deals with science (rocks and stuff like that) we could integrate things like that, but we can’t do that now. But next year we’ll be able to a little bit more. (Parker, interview, April 27, 2007)

At Avery Elementary School, science and social studies were taught during a separate 30 minute block of time. The teachers found this to be too short of a time to teach these subjects effectively, and they also felt that the content covered during their school day was disjointed. Because the teachers adhered to the guidelines of Reading First and SBRR they felt they could not provide their students the type of instruction they wanted to. Berger and Luckmann (1966)
suggested that “institutions also, by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would be theoretically possible” (p. 55). Reading First defined the pattern of conduct by mandating strict adherence to a core reading program. Because of the fear of losing funding, for the most part the teachers did adhere to the core reading program. However, there was some deviation.

In speaking of institutional control, Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested that a person would be more willing to “deviate from programs set up for one by others than from programs that one has helped establish oneself” (p. 62). There were two instances during whole group instruction where teachers did deviate from the core reading program to provide their students with something they felt they needed. A third instance of someone straying from the core to suit her needs occurred as well, this instance involved a student selecting her own literature. These three instances that represent deviations from the assertion are provided in the following aside.

*** During an interview, Ms. Brown described how she became “labeled” when she got caught using picture cards from her old Saxon phonics program in her classroom. She said she wanted to use that particular picture card because it showed a picture of something that contained a sound that Harcourt didn’t address. She left the picture card displayed on her wall, and was reprimanded later when the RRFC observed her classroom and spotted it on the wall. The teacher was frustrated that she felt she had done something wrong, when she was really just trying to meet the needs of her students. She said she continued to use her Saxon phonics cards to supplement Harcourt, but was careful to put them away after use. Another first grade teacher did the same thing,
however, she cut off the word Saxon from the picture card so she could leave it displayed in her room.

In Ms. Argen’s first-grade classroom, I observed her reading a passage out loud to her students from the teacher’s manual regarding main idea. She then reviewed the story they had read the day before from the core reading program, and asked the students to identify the main idea of that story. After discussing the main idea of that story, Ms. Argen searched the pages of the teacher manual for approximately two minutes to see if it contained any more instances that taught main idea. She then said out loud to me and the students, “there aren’t any more main idea questions, but that is the most important thing on the test” (field notes, April 12, 2007). Ms. Argen then read aloud a passage from the teacher manual and said, “now, this is not a question in the book, it’s my question” (field notes, April 12, 2007) and asked the students questions to help them identify the main idea. When this lesson ended and students were transitioning to small groups, Ms. Argen walked past me and whispered, “FYI, that was probably not legal what I just did…but it’s legal with Mr. Parson” (field notes, April 12, 2007). Ms. Argen veered from the core reading program to teach her students a comprehension strategy and felt as if she were doing something “illegal”. She justified it by saying she knew her principal would support her, as he wanted to see better student achievement on the statewide assessment.

A third instance when someone strayed from the core reading program involved a student. During one of my observations, I saw a student find a creative way to read something she was interested in, as opposed to reading from the basal a she was supposed to. In Mr. Parker’s third-grade classroom, two students (a boy and a girl) were supposed to be partner reading to each other from their basal reader. When it was the boy’s turn to
read out loud, the girl would be holding her basal open, but would actually be reading from a trade book she had propped open against the inside of her basal reader. When it was her turn to read, she would lift her trade book and read her paragraphs from the basal, and then promptly return to her trade book when the boy took over reading. When the girl was repeatedly late in chiming in with her paragraphs, the boy caught on to what she was doing and took her trade book away, telling her she could have it back when they finished their story.

These instances show that teachers and students were willing to stray from the core if they felt it was not meeting their needs. These instances also show that the teachers and students felt it was necessary to be subversive about these attempts to stray from the core, as they felt they were doing something wrong.***

These programs offer teachers a score and sequence and a daily routine that many educators rely upon for daily instructional guidance. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 138). When the teachers at Avery Elementary were first introduced to Reading First, the LC gave them a breakdown of how they had to spend the 40 minutes of whole group core reading instruction. The schedule was based upon information provided by Harcourt, with input from the LC to ensure it met the requirements of Reading First. Sample Reading First schedules are available on the state’s professional development website, suggesting this was a topic that had been addressed during professional development the first year of implementation. The schedule outlines how the teachers could ensure they covered the five essential components of reading instruction each day, and how many minutes they should devote to each component. The teachers have said they have relaxed slightly since the beginning of Reading First, but not too much, as they still have been told to follow the schedule as closely as possible.
When Ms. Matthews first moved to Avery Elementary School, she worried about the strict schedule she was supposed to adhere to. She said that she was given the schedule when she first arrived at the school and it was broken down into minutes, and from what I understand…the first LC that was here she would actually come with a timer in to the classrooms to time the teachers to make sure okay, [sic] you only have 12 minutes for vocabulary, you only have this much time for this…This is what I’ve heard and of course the teachers were stressed out and to me that’s just ridiculous….You know, I just cried and I just was stressed already because I thought, “now how am I going to time myself 12 minutes for vocabulary?” If my kids aren’t getting this, then I should have the right as their classroom teacher to spend 15 minutes if I want to….But, after I realized that I know what’s best for my students in here, I know my kids, and I know what they need, and so I didn’t worry about it as much, after I got started into it.

Ms. Matthews began teaching at Avery Elementary during the final year of implementation, and felt confident enough in her teaching to vary slightly from the schedule if needed. However, during the first year of implementing Reading First, the other teachers felt pressured into rigidly following the schedule. Ms. Sellers said that she taught with a magnetic timer on her whiteboard timing her spelling, vocabulary, and word work so she would be in compliance with Reading First. Finally, the RRFC told her to relax a little, so she removed the timer. Though the timer was gone, she and the other Reading First teachers stayed close to that schedule, as their LC told them they needed to.

Almost every teacher I interviewed said they thought Reading First left them with little to no flexibility during instructional times in their classrooms. Multiple mentions were made about
the fact that they could no longer have “teachable moments” in their classrooms. Ms. Wood mentioned the lack of teachable moments while I was observing instruction in her classroom one day. After reading a story about a frog to her class from their core reading program one morning, a student raised his hand to share a story about a tree frog he had seen. The teacher looked at me and quietly said she wished she could just Google frogs and let the children learn about frogs by doing research from information found on websites related to frogs or informational books from the library. She knew she could incorporate the five components of reading into that type of instruction, but she was unable to because of the guidelines of Reading First. Ms. Wood said that back in her “creative teaching days” (Wood, field notes, April 11, 2007) she would have done that, but she couldn’t this year because of Reading First.

The principal, Mr. Parson, also realized the teachers missed their ability to teach creatively. He said, “I think it [Reading First] took away some master teachers’ discretion. It took away some creativity from some of those master teachers, or the thought of their discretion, their professional discretion” (Parson, interview, December 8, 2006). The principal realized that the will of the teachers had been controlled in such a way that it limited his best teachers from teaching in the way they were accustomed to. He also realized that it took away their ability to make decisions based upon their own knowledge, and were forced to forget what they knew to be in compliance with Reading First.

This inflexible schedule led to another instructional issue. The teachers at Avery Elementary felt that because of Reading First, they could not devote enough time and attention to writing and grammar instruction. According to the teachers, principal, and LC writing and grammar could not be taught during the scheduled time for Reading First. The teachers informed me that the core reading program did include grammar instruction, but they could not teach it
during the 120 minutes of Reading First time. The school made the decision that writing and grammar would be addressed during a 45 minute period of the day called the acceleration block. During this acceleration block, any student who was labeled at risk by the DIBELS assessment was attending reading intervention. The rest of the students were receiving instruction in writing and grammar. Students in the intervention reading group did not receive any writing and grammar instruction at all, unless they tested out of intervention by improving on the DIBELS.

This became a problem when the teachers received the scores from the statewide assessment and found the students who had been in intervention all year struggled with the grammar section of the test. Ms. Brown had two first-grade students who had been receiving intervention for reading and they both failed the grammar section on the statewide assessment. Ms. Brown suggested they failed the grammar section because of how the school day was structured around the Reading First schedule.

Ms. Matthews, who was new to Avery Elementary and Reading First that year, said she could tell a difference in the writing of students at Avery Elementary compared to the students in her old, non-Reading First school. Ms. Matthews said it was obvious that the students at Avery Elementary had not received a lot of instruction in writing, and that they did not see a connection between writing and reading. She said

I can see a difference in the students - in their abilities, connecting [sic] reading and writing, and just the grammatical part of writing. The children, they can read, but it’s like they can’t apply those skills into their writing as well. I mean they can read a sentence and know that it ends in a period, but when they go to apply it themselves or to write a sentence that ends in a period, they have difficulty with that. (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007)
The lack of writing instruction was a concern for every teacher, and was something they planned to address next year. All of the teachers and the LC were making plans to incorporate writing and grammar into their language arts instruction during the following school year.

The rigidity of Reading First as described in the first 137 pages of the document softens in this next assertion and presents a departure from the type of instruction that the teachers at Avery Elementary thought they could implement in their classrooms. After reading the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) from the beginning, a reader may be surprised by the flexibility implied by the following statement related to instruction and the core reading program.

*However, RF teachers understand that no program teaches all students at all times. RF teachers know when to depart from the core program, change the pace, augment or delete particular lessons as the needs of students dictate.* (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 138). Had this been an item on a true or false test for the teachers at Avery Elementary during their third year of implementation, all 11 of them (plus the LC and principal) would have answered false. The data presented in the previous assertions suggest that the teachers were not only unaware of this sentence in the Reading First initiative, they actually believed the opposite to be true.

The teachers used language such as “illegal” and becoming “labeled” to describe what happened when they strayed from the core reading program, an important component of the objectivation of Reading First. The teachers felt that if the LC, RRFC, or members of the External Evaluation observed them straying from the core reading program they would be in danger of losing Reading First funding for their school. It was difficult at the end of year three to ascertain how and why this assertion did not make its way into classrooms. However, what was easy to ascertain from the language used by the teachers was that they were firm in their
understanding that they could not stray from the core, and that their understanding of this point came directly from the LC and RRFC. There were times the teachers did want to stray from the core, and there were a few instances in which some did, but they did it quietly and in fear of noncompliance.

The first assertion presented earlier describing how Reading First was going to “get” teachers to comply with SBRR may provide some insight into why teachers were not aware of the flexibility described in this assertion. If the goal of the mandated materials, assessment, and SBRR related professional development was to control the will of the teachers to ensure fidelity to SBRR, then allowing them to make their own decisions might provide them an opportunity to teach in ways that were not considered SBRR. Allowing teachers the flexibility and freedom to be the ultimate decision maker in the classroom might have influenced the implementation of the Reading First. The State Department of Education had to insist upon fidelity to SBRR to receive the federal funding, and the LEAs and local schools also had to insist upon fidelity. This assertion represents a potential to break from fidelity to Reading First, and may have been kept from teachers intentionally.

The teachers at Avery Elementary would have appreciated being able to stray from the core, as they felt Reading First and the core reading program did not meet the needs of all of their students, particularly those students reading above grade level. The teachers said that the stories and content they were to teach during the 40 minutes of core reading instruction were too easy for the students reading above grade level. Ms. Matthews spoke of this when she said “the low children are getting better instruction, the average students are staying the same, and the high students are not getting their needs met at all” (Matthews, interview, February 21, 2007). Ms. Argen agreed with Ms. Matthews when she said,
The ones that were low in the past that were struggling, we’ve seen changes…we think they’re doing better. The average child is still doing fine. The higher achievers are doing less, because we’re spending so much time with the others pulling them up…that the top are coming down and it’s showing up in the test scores. (Argen, interview, April 26, 2007)

Other teachers agreed and said that because their focus was on the struggling readers, they didn’t have enough time to devote to students who were not struggling. Ms. Sellers said you’re basically worried about the ones that can’t read. The ones that are not going to meet those DIBELS scores. Where you’ve got a child that’s reading 150 wpm, you may not meet with that child but once a week, if that. (Sellers, interview, May 9, 2007)

In Ms. Wood’s classroom, I saw an example of students who were not receiving instruction as she was spending her time working with other groups. During one observation, Ms. Wood called four students to her table and showed them a book written in a play format. She told them it was written as a play and that they could work together to choose characters and read it on their own. This group took the books and sat together on the rug to read it without the teacher’s assistance. Ms. Wood turned to me and quietly explained why she had not met longer with that group. She said “It is so nice to have eight top performing students. I don’t have to meet with them every day, which is nice when I have so many others that really need help” (Wood, field notes, March 21, 2007). Ms. Wood focused a lot of her instructional time on the students who needed additional help, and often times did not meet with the students who were above grade level.

The tension between the teachers saying Reading First would not allow them to meet the needs of their students and the assertion presented here suggest that the implementation of
Reading First was based upon interpretations made by multiple parties as it made its way into the classrooms. Reading First outlined a way to disseminate information to teachers, and that included distributing the information through the RRFC and the LC during professional development sessions. The LC and RRFC acted as mediators (Glavelek & Raphael, 1996), and the teachers looked to them to ensure they were in compliance with Reading First. As the information made its way through the chain of command, the meaning created by the multiple parties did not include any information regarding this assertion. As this statement is in opposition to the remainder of the document which seeks to control the will of the teachers, it is easy to see how this information was not made available to the teachers.

The teachers at Avery Elementary were working hard (and at times against their professional judgment) to ensure compliance with their understanding of Reading First as they did not want their school to lose funding. The pressure and support put in place by Reading First to overcome the will (McLaughlin, 1987) of the teacher had its intended effect at Avery Elementary most of the time.
CHAPTER FIVE

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, POLICY, AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Since its inception, funding from Reading First has been awarded to approximately 5,200 schools nationwide. Understanding the influence Reading First has on the instruction offered to students in these schools is imperative if we are to understand and learn from the implementation of this far-reaching program. Sarason (1990) argued that we should not continue to implement change in schools without first asking: “Why should we expect that what we will now recommend will be any more effective than our past efforts?” (p. 3). To address this issue, national and state level evaluations (Center on Education Policy, 2007; Gamse, Bloom, Kemple & Jacob, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2006) are being conducted to study the effectiveness of Reading First across the country. These large-scale studies will provide an informative look into the perceptions of reading instruction on a broad scale, yet they are not designed to provide detailed information as to what is occurring during day to day reading instruction in individual classrooms.

Cohen and Spillane (1992) suggested that researchers studying policy implementation usually stopped short of entering the classroom doors to study the instruction brought about because of a reform. My dissertation project was designed to provide an understanding of how Reading First influenced instruction in the classrooms of one elementary school, in an effort to look inside the black box of instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Valencia & Wixson, 2004) that ensued from the implementation of an externally developed program. As Gergen (1999) explained, “the point of social analysis is not, then, to ‘get it right’ about what is happening to us. Rather, such analysis should enable us to reflect and to create” (p. 195). The previous data
analysis is my representation of how Reading First influenced instruction at Avery Elementary. Results from my analysis were for the instruction in this one school and cannot be generalized beyond it; however, there were important insights from Avery Elementary that speak to the type of professional development that influences reading instruction, as well as insights into future policy implementations.

Professional Development

In addressing capacity, McLaughlin (1987) suggested increasing the knowledge of the teachers to be able to accurately and effectively implement reform. In addressing the will of the teachers, McLaughlin referred to the motivation or attitude of those involved in implementation. McLaughlin (1987) suggested that both the will and the capacity of teachers needed to be addressed in implementation efforts. The language of the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) implied that the State Department of Education was going to use professional development to increase teachers’ capacity for SBRR in an effort to “get” them to teach using only SBRR methods. Professional development, in this case, was being utilized as a tool to increase both capacity and will to ensure compliance with SBRR. Reading First addressed the capacity of the teachers, LC, and school administration by offering content-specific professional development throughout the implementation process. In fact, a key finding in an interim report published by the U.S. Department of Education (2006) showed that the teachers in Reading First schools received more professional development related to the five dimensions of reading instruction and general teaching strategies than teachers in Title I schools. Although the report showed that teachers were getting more professional development related to reading instruction, it did not provide information about the learning experiences of the teachers who attended the
professional development sessions. It also did not provide data on whether or not those sessions influenced their reading instruction.

The teachers at Avery Elementary have shown that just because they had more professional development did not mean that it was always beneficial professional development. The three days that every Reading First teacher across the state spent in a Teacher Academy most likely contributed to the increase in professional development shown in the interim report (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). However, the teachers at Avery Elementary have shown that just because they were present in a professional development session did not mean they were learning more about becoming an effective reading teacher.

The Teacher Academy, which was intended to provide systematic information on a large scale, had almost no impact on the capacity of the teachers for teaching reading. The first professional development the teachers received from Reading First came in the form of a Teacher Academy that viewed teacher learning as “frontal training and re-training on what works” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 689). What worked, according to the Teacher Academy, was SBRR and it was required of all teachers in Reading First schools. The desire to control the will of the teachers with the systematic introduction to SBRR led to a delivery of content to teachers who were not given the opportunity to question it. During the redelivery method of professional development used at the Teacher Academy, the teachers were treated as empty receptacles that more knowledgeable others needed to fill with information in an effort to retrain them to improve the instruction they offered their students. This approach was ineffective in bringing about change in teacher knowledge. It did, however, serve another of its intended purposes, as it did overcome the will of the teachers at Avery Elementary and scared them into complying with SBRR.
Professional development that seeks to increase capacity through the delivery of content read aloud to teachers from a binder is in stark contrast to research that describes effective professional development (Borko, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 1980, 1986; Little, 1993; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996). The Teacher Academy allowed little to no opportunity for teachers to become intellectually engaged with what they were learning and to apply it to their local teaching contexts. It also did not treat teachers as professional members of a learning community. Teachers were unable to work as members of a collaborative community of peers to make sense of the content they were given, and incorporate it into what they already knew about teaching reading.

The professional development that did increase the teachers’ knowledge about teaching reading, as well as influence the reading instruction at Avery Elementary was provided locally. This professional development was provided by a more knowledgeable other located directly in the school with first-hand knowledge of the teachers, school administration, and student population. The LC, armed with content specific knowledge, assisted the teachers on a daily basis with their classroom instruction. The impact the LC had on the knowledge of the teachers and on the instruction they provided was positive. The positive impact came not just from the content the LC taught, but how she taught it. The professional development offered locally by the LC is aligned with research that shows teachers benefit from working collaboratively with their peers in learning communities. The teachers were engaged actively as learners through book study participation and through attending professional development opportunities outside of the school and then sharing what they learned with their peers.

The teachers also actively engaged in learning about reading instruction when they sought help from the LC on how to effectively meet an individual student’s needs. The teachers
grew to understand the need for differentiating instruction within their classrooms based upon insight they gained from assessments. The teachers used that knowledge to seek out the LC in an effort to describe the needs of a student, and ask her for specific help for that student. Because the teachers had access to a LC in their school, they became active participants in their construction of knowledge related to teaching reading. The LC was the mediator in this relationship (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996), sharing information with the teachers as well as showing them how to find the information on their own. She led them in small, collaborative groups in which members of a discursive community (Hruby, 2001) worked together to create knowledge related to Reading First, SBRR, and reading instruction.

Future policies that seek to make content specific changes would be well served to prepare an instructional leader for each school well in advance of implementation. An instructional leader who is familiar with the student population, as well as the teacher population, can organize and facilitate meaningful professional development sessions on content that is well tailored to the needs of the teachers. The professional development sessions that teachers from Avery Elementary felt were most meaningful were those in which they were allowed to share and learn from their peers. The teachers appreciated the opportunity to discuss their instruction with others in similar circumstances. These learning opportunities were provided and facilitated by the LC, who ensured the discussion was relevant to reading instruction and who could also provide content specific information to enhance the discussion the teachers were participating in.

The content of the professional development provided through Reading First was important, but even more important was how the content was taught. The Teacher Academy’s retraining model was virtually ineffective at improving teacher capacity. The local, ongoing
professional development led by the LC that was aligned with research on effective professional development did lead to change in teacher capacity as well as change in teachers’ instruction. Reading First invested heavily in professional development, and the teachers at Avery Elementary almost all reported that they learned from the local, ongoing professional development. However, because of the restrictions placed on them by Reading First, they were not able to fully display their knowledge in the instruction they provided their students. Their instruction for the most part was directly tied to the assessment they administered and their core reading program, leaving them almost no opportunity to use the knowledge they had acquired about teaching reading.

The teachers spoke fondly of “next year” when their school would no longer be receiving funding from Reading First. They were looking forward to using what they had learned from Reading First, coupled with their knowledge of their students and their community, to teach in a way they felt would be beneficial. Future studies that examine reading instruction in Reading First schools in the years following the cessation of funding are warranted. When the funding and restrictions are removed, the teachers will have the opportunity to practice what they have learned using materials and literature they feel are more appropriate for their students. Teacher knowledge coupled with teacher discretion may be more powerful than effortless, and at times mindless, adherence to a core reading program.

Tension Between Doing What Was Right and Implementing Reading First

There was a tension expressed among the teachers at Avery Elementary School. The tension was between fully utilizing the knowledge they had gained through their prior education as well as their local, ongoing professional development, and adhering strictly to Reading First. Adhering to Reading First meant allowing the teacher manual from the core reading program to
dictate the instruction they offered their students. At the end of year three, some of the teachers were willing to admit they strayed from the core reading program to provide the instruction they felt their students needed. The majority of other teachers were still fearful of straying from Reading First and SBRR as they said they never knew who would walk through their door to observe. The threat of losing funding created the tension between the teachers being able to do what they felt was right, and having to adhere to Reading First. This tension should cause those involved in educational reform to reconsider the concepts of capacity and will (McLaughlin, 1987).

Reading First left little room for the will of the teachers to interfere with the implementation of SBRR. However, this close control over the will of the teachers left them unable to provide the instruction their students deserved and possibly would have benefited from. According to the principal, it also removed the discretion and creativity of master teachers.

Reading First addressed both concepts McLaughlin (1987) suggested would help overcome will – pressure and support. The pressure of the External Evaluation, RRFC, and LC ensured compliance for the most part. It also suggested to the teachers that any deviation from Reading First had to be done quietly and in a minimal capacity. Based upon observations and interviews of the teachers at Avery Elementary School, I would suggest that once the capacity of the teachers has increased, the elements that were put in place to control the will of the teachers should be decreased.

A large amount of money was spent increasing the knowledge (or capacity) of teachers in Reading First schools. What they did with that knowledge was limited, due to the constraints against the will of the teachers. If we are to view teachers as knowledgeable professionals, it would be wise to allow them the opportunity to show how their increased capacity can lead to an
ultimately better version of the policy they are implementing. At Avery Elementary, as the teachers’ capacity increased, they found flaws with Reading First, and wanted to improve upon the instruction they were offering. Had the pressure and support decreased over time, they could have modified Reading First with the goal of improving their students’ achievement.

It seems contradictory to increase teacher knowledge while mandating mindless adherence to a core reading program. It seems logical to teach teachers to think critically about their instruction, and then allow them the opportunity to do it. Had the capacity increased over the three years and the control over the will of the teachers decreased over those same years, the LC at a Reading First school could have played a vital role in the transition from fidelity to the core to informed instructional decision making. Reconceptualizing capacity and will (McLaughlin, 1987) could ultimately lead to better content specific policy implementation with long-term effects that remain after the implementation ends. Having a more knowledgeable other in the school to scaffold the teachers as they move away from the strict, rigid adherence to a policy and transition into their own discretionary decision making could have lasting effects on future instruction. As one teacher at Avery Elementary suggested, they would all be like “kids in a candy store next year” (Taylor, field notes, April 26, 2007) as they would be free to do whatever they chose in regards to reading instruction in their classroom.

An increase in capacity should lead to a decrease in control over the will of teachers. To borrow the words of Tyack and Cuban (1995), this type of transition might lead to teachers modifying or improving reforms in a structured manner, instead of deflecting, coopting, or sabotaging them. Knowing that at some point the teachers could offer input into improvements or modifications of a policy might improve the level of buy-in throughout the implementation.
Socially Constructing Reading First

Though Reading First had measures in place to ensure it was standardized across the state, it was not enough to overcome some interpretations made by local school personnel. As the policy made its way from the NRC (1998) and NRP (2000a, 2000b) reports to classrooms across the state, there were multiple opportunities for groups of individuals to construct their understanding on how to best implement this policy. The reports of the committees were not intended to become comprehensive classroom instruction. As such, they had to be interpreted by each individual state as it described how it would carry out Reading First in its classrooms.

Through professional development, Reading First and SBRR were interpreted again as the RRFC and LC worked together to instruct the teachers. The professional development and support in place was attempting to transform schools into systematic sights (Sarason, 1990). However, Reading First did not consider that members of a discursive community (Hruby, 2001; Berger & Luckman, 1966) work together to construct meaning based upon the language they use, their past histories, culture, and environment.

The use of literacy centers in this particular Reading First school is an example of how the school personnel, along with the RRFC, as well as the leaders at the Teacher Academy constructed their understanding of Reading First. It was the most problematic aspect of Reading First for the teachers, though literacy centers were not even mentioned in the written representation of Reading First. Literacy centers were the result of an interpretation of a potentially problematic situation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) into an unproblematic, existing solution. Where a grey area existed (on how to implement more active student engagement and less teacher directed instruction), the leaders at the Teacher Academy, RRFC, LC, and teachers took what they knew and were comfortable with, and made Reading First conform to that.
A second and more salient example of how this text was socially constructed upon implementation is that the teachers were unaware of the fact that the written objectivation of Reading First suggested they could depart from the core reading program when they felt it did not meet the needs of their students. This last section of text written into the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003) described the teachers as knowledgeable decision makers in their classrooms. The information presented in that section was never made available to the teachers. Perhaps because the state Department of Education wanted to ensure compliance they did not communicate this point.

A final example of socially constructing Reading First occurred when the teachers discussed the policy among themselves in an attempt to make sense of what it was mandating. These non-structured learning opportunities led to instructional changes that were not intended in Reading First. The teachers utilized each other, as well as their LC, to make sense of how to best implement Reading First. The insight into Reading First that came from these incidental learning opportunities led to subtle variations in how Reading First was implemented.

Viewing knowledge as socially constructed offers insights into why policy and practice have seldom been closely related in studies of past policy implementations. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested

I am constantly surrounded by objects that “proclaim” the subjective intentions of my fellowmen, although I may sometimes have difficulty being quite sure just what it is that a particular object is “proclaiming,” especially if it was produced by men whom I have not known well or at all in face-to-face situations. (p. 35)

Reading First began as an object that proclaimed what worked in terms of elementary reading instruction based upon the reports of the NRC (1998) and NRP (2000a, 2000b). As the members
of the State Department of Education (2003) described how they would ensure compliance of SBRR and Reading First, they had to interpret the written objectivation of Reading First. This interpretation was then delivered and redelivered to RRFCs, LCs, and teachers across the state. Along the way, interpretations were made that reflected the prior knowledge of those mediating (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996) the delivery of Reading First content. Those interpretations did lead to variations in the implementation of Reading First. However, there were not as many variations as might have occurred because of the systematic design of Reading First with its rigid material and assessment requirements in place to control the will of the teachers.

The pressure and support of Reading First, along with its systematic procedures in place, managed to overcome the will of the teachers most of the time at Avery Elementary. As the analysis suggests, the instruction was closely aligned with the majority of the written document that outlined Reading First, even though it may not have been in the best interest of the students.

When constructing my understanding of the implementation of Reading First, I was left to consider this: if knowledge is socially constructed why was the implementation of Reading First at Avery Elementary so closely aligned with the written objectivation of it? An explanation for this was found in the language used by the teachers. In analyzing the data, it became evident that the will of the teachers had been overcome when I heard teachers describe the Reading First handbook they had received as the Reading First Bible. The teachers viewed this document as something that had to be followed, much as they would follow the words in the Bible. The teachers described straying from the core reading program as being “illegal” (Argen, field notes, April 12, 2007). They also said that if they strayed they would be “labeled” (Brown, interview, May 7, 2007). Strict adherence to the Reading First Bible was equated with compliance and
maintaining funding for the school. Straying from the Reading First Bible was equated with breaking laws, being publicly humiliated, and losing funding for the school.

Studying Reading First through the lens of social constructionism did not show large amounts of variation due to the multiple interpretations made. It showed that as Reading First made its way into the classrooms, the policy was interpreted and integrated into the existing knowledge of the mediator (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). It was then delivered to the teachers, who attempted to adhere to their understanding of it as closely as possible so their school would remain in compliance. Some teachers did show they were willing to go against the words of Reading First for the benefit of their students, but most were fearful enough of the pressure and support put in place that they chose to adhere to it.

Impact on Instruction

As stated in the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003), the goal of Reading First was to utilize SBRR principles and practices so that all students would read proficiently by the end of third grade. Through pressure and support, the will of the teachers was for the most part overcome and implementation did appear to closely match the intentions of SBRR. The question remains: what did SBRR instruction mean for the teachers and students at Avery Elementary?

An interim report on Reading First (Gamse, Bloom, Kemple & Jacob, 2008), reported what was thought to be a positive impact on reading instruction in Reading First schools. That positive impact was that there was an increase in the time spent on the five essential components of reading instruction at Reading First schools. At first glance one might intuitively think this was a positive effect. However, after spending six months at Avery Elementary school, two questions related to that finding come to mind:

1. Does more instruction automatically mean better instruction?
2. At what cost does this additional reading instruction come?

These questions were best answered by observing instruction and talking with the teachers and school administration about the implementation.

*More Instruction Based on the Core Reading Program*

To understand whether more instruction led to better instruction, one would have to evaluate the quality of the instruction offered. From my observations at Avery Elementary, I can suggest that to measure this, one would need to look no farther than studying the quality of the teacher manual and the content of the DIBELS assessment. Because the teachers were required to teach from the core reading program, and along the way it was made clear to them that they could not depart from it, the quantity of instruction is not what was important at Avery Elementary, it was the quality and content of the instruction they were permitted to provide.

The teachers at Avery Elementary for the most part adhered to the core reading program, even when it went against their better judgment. The professional development the teachers received addressed the capacity (McLaughlin, 1987) of the teachers, and the requirement of a SBRR core reading program addressed the will (McLaughlin, 1987) of the teachers. As Ball and Cohen (1996) have suggested, materials are often used to control content in classrooms implementing reform. At Avery Elementary, the core reading program dictated what vocabulary words the students could learn, what stories they could read, what comprehension strategies they could be taught, and what spelling words needed to be learned. The core reading program also dictated the pacing of this instruction – not the needs of the students.

The professional development the teachers received, coupled with their prior knowledge, gave them enough knowledge to know when the core reading program was not enough for their students. The teachers thought it was not strong enough on certain domains of reading instruction
and they should have been allowed to bring in supplemental materials to enhance their instruction without being made to feel like they were doing something wrong. The teachers should also have been given the opportunity to bring in materials to enrich the instruction they were offering the students who were reading above grade level. The teachers found the core program too easy for some students, and thought they could not adequately teach those students using that program. Reading First was intended to improve the instruction offered to students who needed additional assistance in reading instruction, but because the materials were so limiting, it hindered the instruction the teachers could offer students reading above grade level.

All students need to be accounted for when considering reading instruction. Though Avery Elementary met the criteria to receive funds from Reading First, there were students in the school who needed instruction that would enrich their already solid understanding of the grade level requirements in reading instruction.

Effective teachers match “accelerating demands to student competence” (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, & Morrow, 1998) and Reading First limited the ability of the teachers at Avery Elementary to do that. Future programs that look towards controlling the curriculum with the use of core reading programs should ensure the teachers have the ability to supplement the materials to meet the needs of all of their students.

The LEA used *A Consumer’s Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program* (2003) to evaluate the materials being used at Avery Elementary. According to the guide, the Harcourt program was found to be based in SBRR. However, the teachers at Avery Elementary found it lacking in clear and comprehensive phonics instruction. The necessity for a guide to assist LEAs and schools with material selection is understandable, however, the matter of one guide suggesting a core reading program is based in SBRR should not alone override teacher
discretion. One core reading program was not able to meet the needs of every student and teacher at Avery Elementary. Knowledgeable teachers who are able to present information on the limitations of their core reading program and who can also justify the rationale for needing to supplement it should be given the opportunity to do so.

One-third of the reading instruction time was used for the core reading program at Avery Elementary. Though it may have helped increase the amount of time spent on the five components of reading, it did not meet the needs of the students. In this regard, more instruction was not necessarily better for the students at Avery Elementary.

*More Instruction Based Upon the DIBELS Data*

A third-grade teacher’s specific concerns about the DIBELS having no comprehension assessment actualized a comment made by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Spellings stated during an interview that “What gets measured gets done. Amen” (Interview, 2005, p. 371). The measurement that mattered in Reading First was DIBELS, and the teachers at Avery Elementary worked hard during their small group instruction to ensure their students could do what was asked of them on that assessment. The majority of the small group instruction I observed was based solely on the subtests of the DIBELS assessment. As Margaret Spellings (2005) suggested, what got measured did get done at Avery Elementary. But what did more instruction based upon the DIBELS mean for these students?

At Avery Elementary, instruction based upon DIBELS data and helping students make progress on the DIBELS subtests did not address comprehension at all. The individual components required on the DIBELS subtests were taught as isolated skills, void of any authentic reading experience. Only when the students were working on the oral reading fluency
subtest was their instruction linked to reading. Even then it was the reading of short passages
designed to improve reading rate, and not authentic children’s literature.

Because the DIBELS did not assess comprehension, it was not until the students reached
the benchmark on the oral reading fluency subtest that the small group instruction they received
focused on their ability to read and comprehend a text. Even in third grade, where the teachers
were questioning the lack of comprehension assessment on the DIBELS, the students in their
classes who were struggling to reach the benchmark on the oral reading fluency subtest were still
not expected to read a text and comprehend it during small group instruction. When one uses this
information to contextualize the findings of the interim report that showed no improvement in
student comprehension, it is likely that at Avery Elementary School, the DIBELS assessment did
not lead to improved student comprehension. This was true for the majority of students at Avery
Elementary, but particularly true for the students who were struggling.

The instruction offered to struggling readers has been described in the past as different
than the instruction offered to more capable readers (Allington, 1983; Goodman, 2004). The
DIBELS assessment led to a difference in the small group instruction offered at Avery
Elementary School. During small group instruction, the teaching of reading took place in the
same order presented in the DIBELS subtests. Goodman (2004) argued that approaching reading
as a series of isolated skills turns “written language into a set of decontextualized abstractions,
hard to learn and without any intrinsic motivation for the learner” (Goodman, 2004, p. 200).
Pearson (2006) also criticized DIBELS, suggesting that it might lead to instruction based solely
upon isolated, specific skills. These concerns were validated during this study. Instruction
became closely aligned with the DIBELS subtests, and did not incorporate comprehension
during small group instruction until the students reached the benchmark on all subtests.
DIBELS driven instruction did not produce students who were able to comprehend texts to the level the third-grade teachers expected. The standardized test scores on the state’s curriculum measure reflected this (see Appendix G). The teachers felt better prepared to offer targeted instruction, but that instruction was targeted on reading quickly enough to reach the benchmark on the DIBELS, not on producing readers who could comprehend texts. Reidel (2007) examined the relationship between the DIBELS subtests and student comprehension, and found that only one subtest (oral reading fluency) adequately predicted the students’ ability to comprehend texts. In fact, one of the subtests (phoneme segmentation fluency) was only slightly better than chance at predicting comprehension status. Reidel recommended the discontinuation of the remaining DIBELS subtests midway through first grade.

I concur with this recommendation, and further suggest the DIBELS should be used in conjunction with other assessments, particularly ones that measure comprehension. I further recommend that the DIBELS not be used as the sole criteria for a student’s placement in a reading intervention program. As the teachers at Avery Elementary suggested, DIBELS was not always effective at identifying students who needed intervention. Students who needed further instruction in vocabulary and comprehension were not afforded the opportunity to receive intervention. Only students who could not read the words quickly enough benefited from further intervention, and that intervention was geared towards benchmarking on the DIBELS subtests.

As Margaret Spellings (2005) suggested, because DIBELS was tested, it was taught. It is now crucial to understand the ramifications of the decision to use DIBELS by states nationwide by studying the influence it has on the instruction offered to students and the learning that results from that instruction. Future studies with larger sample sizes are necessary to begin to identify how much time teachers are spending offering instruction based upon the DIBELS subtests and
the influence that instruction has on the students’ ability to comprehend texts. It would also be useful to conduct a study similar to Riedel’s (2007) using the comprehension scores of third-grade students who have been administered the DIBELS for four years. At Avery Elementary, instructional decision making aligned closely with the DIBELS subtests produced readers focused on beating the clock, and not on comprehending the text. This small group instruction also showed that more instruction did not mean better instruction.

The Cost of More Reading Instruction

The teachers at Avery Elementary suggested that the increase in the time spent teaching reading led to a decrease in the time they could devote to teaching grammar and writing to their students. It also negatively impacted the amount of time they could spend teaching science and social studies. The majority of the teachers were looking forward to the following year when Reading First funds were no longer being received, so they could begin to integrate the content areas and emphasize the connection between reading and writing.

With the exception of making the school day longer, the only way to increase instructional time for one subject is to take time away from another. The emphasis on improving reading instruction was important for this school, with a history of poor performance on standardized reading scores. However, the teachers felt it was an overemphasis that led to weaknesses in other content areas. Future policies that mandate instructional time should be cognizant of this, and help the schools find ways to integrate reading and writing instruction across the content areas.

Student Achievement at Avery Elementary School

Everything from the professional development, to the new materials, to the mandated use of assessments to inform instruction was designed to help the students read proficiently by the
end of third grade. It would be remiss to conclude this discussion without considering the impact Reading First had on the students’ achievement.

Every spring, the students at Avery Elementary School take a statewide assessment that measures their mastery of the curriculum. The data from this assessment related to reading instruction confirm what the teachers suggested. Reading First did not meet the needs of all students and did little to improve student achievement in reading.

Looking briefly at the student test scores (see Appendix K), it shows what appears to be a positive finding: that the number of students who met expectations on this assessment increased. However, upon further examination, it shows that the increase was mainly due to the fact that the number of students who exceeded expectations dropped. At Avery Elementary school, it was not the struggling students rising above the did not meet expectations category that led to this increase. It was the students who had previously exceeded expectations whose scores dropped that led to the increase in the meets expectations category.

In fact, the third-grade students who had received three years of Reading First instruction (first, second, and third grade) fared the worst on this assessment. This current group of third-graders had the most students in the did not meet expectations category, and the fewest students in the exceeding expectations category. The explanation offered by the teachers and supported by the observational data is that they spent a lot of time teaching to the average student with their core reading program, and assisting the struggling readers during small group instruction. Overall, the average and struggling students remained relatively unchanged, and the students who had been excelling were achieving less than they had previously.

After the first year of implementation, the teachers, LC, and administration were aware of these troubling statistics. However, their hands were tied. By accepting the funding, they made a
commitment to carry out SBRR and Reading First for three years. The data suggest that it was these disappointing test scores coupled with the increase in the teachers’ knowledge of teaching reading acquired from local professional development that caused some teachers to become more willing to deviate from Reading First to meet their students’ needs. Unfortunately, due to the measures in place to overcome the will of the teachers (pressure and support), most teachers chose to adhere to the stringent guidelines of Reading First.

Limitations

My dissertation project was designed as a case study of one school because instruction cannot be separated from the context in which it occurred. Stake (2000) suggested that the results and presentation of a case study are shaped by both the researcher and the reader. Researchers will pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships—and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape—reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it differently connected and more likely to be personally useful. (Stake, 2000, p. 442-443)

My dissertation project was a look inside the black box of reading instruction at Avery Elementary School that was produced during the implementation of an externally developed reading program. Future research looking inside the black box in other school environments will serve to further enrich our understanding of programs intended to change subject area specific instruction.

One limitation of the present study is that the results may have been different had I waited to interview the teachers until all funding had been received from this program. The teachers had been so focused on complying with Reading First for almost three years that they
may have felt the need to couch their comments to ensure they would not lose funding for their school. I believe the teachers were candid about the implementation of Reading First, however, some may have opened up more if the threat of noncompliance was removed.

Another limitation for this study that may have influenced the results was the time of year some of the observations were conducted. Several of the observations were conducted in late April, a time when the teachers were feeling pressured to ensure their students were able to benchmark on the third and final DIBELS assessment the LC was preparing to administer. Though this was the case for some teachers, it did not affect others as their observations were conducted earlier in the school year.

A third limitation of this study is that it only represents the teachers, LC, and administration at Avery Elementary School. The students, parents, and other school personnel not as closely tied to Reading First were not represented in this data.

Conclusion

In regards to Reading First’s influence on reading instruction at Avery Elementary School, it appears that for every positive finding there is a negative one to contradict it. The teachers gained knowledge about teaching reading, but they were not able to fully utilize it in their instruction. The teachers learned how to use an assessment to provide needs-based instruction, but that assessment led to instruction on isolated skills and speed reading. The school was able to fund a full-time LC, but the LC’s hands were tied when the teachers wanted to stray from Reading First. The school had funds to purchase additional materials, but they had to be based in SBRR.

However, the most troubling positive and negative outcome of Reading First was the fact that more students met the expectations on the statewide assessment, but only because those who
had been exceeding expectations dropped. Reading First at Avery Elementary school produced students who could read words rapidly, but did not have the knowledge to fully comprehend the texts they were reading.

It is essential that we learn from the implementation of this program. It is hopeful that the instruction that ensues after the restrictions of Reading First are lifted from Avery Elementary is provided by knowledgeable teachers with the discretion to teach the students using materials and methods they feel best suit their student population. Working with their LC in a community of peers interested in learning about reading instruction, the teachers increased their knowledge of the teaching of reading. Maybe next year they will be able to share that knowledge with their students.
REFERENCES


Available online at http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/


http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/aireports/i13f0017.pdf


APPENDIX A

Congressional Charge to the National Reading Panel

Calendar No. 125
105th Congress 1st Session
SENATE Report 105-58

Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 1998

July 24, 1997.-Ordered to be printed.

Mr. Specter, from the Committee on Appropriations, submitted the following

REPORT

(To accompany S. 1061)

The Committee on Appropriations reports the bill (S. 1061) making appropriations for Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, reports favorably thereon and recommends that the bill do pass.

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Reading development and disability.-The Committee is impressed with the important accomplishments reported from the NICHD research program on reading development and disability, and is eager to have this information brought to the attention of educators, policymakers, and parents. Noting the fact that the NICHD is already collaborating with the Department of Education, the Committee urges the Director of the NICHD in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to convene a national panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. The Committee recommends that the panel be comprised of 15 individuals, who are not officers or employees of the Federal Government and include leading scientists in reading research, representatives of colleges of education, reading teachers, educational administrators, and parents. Based on its findings, the panel should present a report to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Education, and the appropriate congressional committees. The report should present the panel’s conclusions, an indication of the readiness for application in the classroom of the results of this research, and, if appropriate, a strategy for rapidly disseminating this information to facilitate effective reading instruction in the schools. If found warranted, the panel should also recommend a plan for additional research regarding early reading development and instruction. The Committee looks forward to discussing the findings of the report during the hearing on the fiscal year 1999 budget.

RETRIEVED FROM THE NATIONAL READING PANEL’S WEBSITE ON JANUARY 20, 2008.

http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/NRPAbout/officialcharge.htm
APPENDIX B

Members of the National Reading Panel

Members of the National Reading Panel

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Joanna Williams, Ph.D. Dale Willows, Ph.D.
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Members of the National Reading Panel Subgroups

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<td>Michael L. Kamil, Chair</td>
<td>S.J. Samuels, Co-Chair</td>
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<td>Gloria Correro</td>
<td>Gwenette Ferguson</td>
<td>Timothy Shanahan, Co-Chair</td>
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<td>Norma Garza</td>
<td>Sally E. Shaywitz</td>
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<td>Dale Willows</td>
<td>Thomas Trabasso</td>
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<td>Joanne Yatvin</td>
<td>Joanna Williams</td>
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Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Education</th>
<th>Technology/Next Steps</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gloria Correro, Co-Chair</td>
<td>Michael L. Kamil, Chair</td>
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<td>Michael L. Kamil, Co-Chair</td>
<td>Donald N. Langenberg</td>
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<td>Cora Bagley Marrett</td>
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<td>Norma Garza</td>
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</table>

Staff of the National Reading Panel

F. William Dommel, Jr., J.D., Executive Director
Vinita Chhabra, M.Ed., Research Scientist Mary E. McCarthy, Ph.D., Senior Staff Psychologist
Judith Rothenberg, Secretary Stephanne Player, Support Staff
Jaimee Nusbacher, Meeting Manager Patrick Riccards, Senior Advisor

Retrieved from the National Reading Panel’s website on January 20, 2008.

http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/members.cfm
APPENDIX C

Administrative Interview Protocol

RF Administrative Representative (principal or assistant principal) Interview Guide

I want to begin by asking some questions related to how your school became a RF school.

- How did your school come to decide to apply for funding through Reading First?
- Who was involved in that decision making process?
- What were your initial thoughts when you found out your school was going to receive the funding?
- What kind of response did you get from the teachers at your school regarding Reading First?
- What were your biggest concerns (if any) that you had before implementing RF the first year?

Now I would like to ask you some questions related to the training you have received as an administrator at a RF school.

- What kind of training did you receive before the first year? Who provided that training?
- Did you feel the training (if any) prepared you to help implement RF in your school? If so, how?
- Have you received any other ongoing training from RF over the past two and a half years? If so, who provided the training? Was the training beneficial?
- Is there anything you wished you had been given training/information on as your school has implemented the program?

The next set of questions is related to the actual implementation of RF in your school over the last two and a quarter school years.

- Since the beginning of the first year of RF, what kinds of changes (if any) have you seen in how teachers teach reading in your school?
- What would you attribute those changes to?
- Since the beginning of the first year of RF, what kinds of changes (if any) have you seen in the progress your students have made in the area of reading?
- What would you attribute those changes to?
- If you had to list any positive outcomes from having RF in your school, what would they be?
- If you had to list any negative outcomes from having RF in your school, what would they be?
- Overall, what would you say is the “climate” among your school personnel regarding RF?
- Your school will not be receiving funding from RF next year, can you tell me why that is?

I have three last general questions to ask.

- If you could change anything about RF what would it be?
- If you could change anything about how you implemented RF in your school what would that be?
- If you could offer advice to principals/assistant principals who were thinking about implementing a reading program in their schools, what would you tell them?
APPENDIX D

Inviting Teacher Participants

Dear

My name is Nancy Edwards and I'm a doctoral student at UGA working on a degree in Reading Education. Before I became a life-long student, I worked as a kindergarten and second grade teacher in Fulton County, GA. Based upon my teaching experience and my experience reading and learning about the Reading First initiative, I have chosen to do my dissertation based upon a case study of a RF school – and your principal generously has allowed me to come to your school to learn from you.

I’m really, genuinely interested in learning about the implementation of RF from those who are involved in it on a day to day basis. I believe that teachers have very valuable information they can share on the implementation process that others (including myself) can learn from.

I would like to ask if any K-3 grade teacher would be interested in allowing me to observe reading instruction in their classroom at least two times, and then be interviewed by myself one time at a day/time that is convenient for you. Participation is voluntary and will be kept completely confidential. I will only refer to your school as Avery Elementary and will assign pseudonyms for any participants as well. I take this very seriously.

I also take your time very seriously. I know you are busy so I would like to offer any participant a $25 compensation for your time at the completion of the interview.

Again, I know you are all very busy and I sincerely appreciate your time. Please respond back to this email if you are interested in participating. No response is necessary if you do not feel you have the time to participate. Thanks for considering this.
APPENDIX E

Literacy Coach Interview Protocol

I’d like to begin by asking questions about how Reading First began in your school.

- When did you find out your school was applying for funding from RF?
- Were you involved in the application process? If not, do you know who was?
- What were your initial thoughts when you found out your school was going to receive funding from RF?

Now I would like to ask you some questions related to the training you have received as a RF literacy coach.

- What kind of training did you receive before the first year of RF? Who provided the training?
- Do you believe the training helped you prepare to implement RF in your school?
- Was there anything the training could have provided to help you be more prepared?
- Can you describe any other ongoing training you have received as an LC during the last two and a quarter school years?

The next set of questions is related to the actual implementation of RF in your school over the last two and a quarter school years.

- Since the beginning of the first year of RF, what kinds of changes (if any) have you seen in how teachers teach reading in your school?
- What would you attribute those changes to?
- Since the beginning of the first year of RF, what kinds of changes (if any) have you seen in the progress your students have made in the area of reading?
- What would you attribute those changes to?
- If you had to list any positive outcomes from having RF in your school, what would they be?
- If you had to list any negative outcomes from having RF in your school, what would they be?
- Overall, what would you say is the “climate” among your school personnel regarding RF?
- What types of professional development have you offered to your K-3 teachers as a part of RF? Do you believe the professional development you offered at your school has led to changes in the way teachers are teaching reading?

I have three last general questions to ask.

- If you could change anything about RF what would it be?
- If you could change anything about your position as a LC in a RF school what would that be?
- If you could offer advice to someone about to become a literacy coach in an RF school, what would you tell her or him?
APPENDIX F

Teacher Interview Protocol

- What were your initial thoughts when you found out your school was going to receive the funding?
- How do you think the other teachers in your school felt when they found out they were going to be teaching in a RF school?
- What were your biggest concerns (if any) that you had before implementing RF the first year?

Now I would like to ask you some questions related to the training you have received as a teacher at a RF school.

- How confident did you feel about your abilities to teach reading before RF?
- Did you have any questions or concerns about teaching reading?
- What kind of training did you receive before the first year? Who provided that training?
- Did you feel the training (if any) prepared you to help implement RF in your school? If so, how?
- Have you received any other ongoing training from RF over the past two and a half years? If so, who provided the training? Was the training beneficial?
- Is there anything you wished you had been given training/information on as your school has implemented the program?
- If you had any questions or concerns about how to teach reading before RF, did the RF training address any of those questions or concerns?

The next set of questions is related to the actual implementation of RF in your school over the last two and a quarter school years.

- Since the beginning of the first year of RF, what kinds of changes (if any) have you made in how you teach reading? (How is your teaching different as an RF teacher than it was before RF?)
- What would you attribute those changes to?
- Since the beginning of the first year of RF, what kinds of changes (if any) have you seen in the progress your students have made in the area of reading?
- What would you attribute those changes to?
- If you had to list any positive outcomes from having RF in your school, what would they be?
- If you had to list any negative outcomes from having RF in your school, what would they be?
- Overall, what would you say is the “climate” among other teachers regarding RF?

I have two last general questions to ask.

- If you could change anything about RF what would it be?
- If you could offer advice to the people who write reading reforms for elementary schools, what would you tell them?
APPENDIX G

How Reading First Aims to “Get” The Teachers to Comply with SBRR

The key question is: How will [State Name] get Reading First teachers to use SBRR?
The following points lead from the five essential components of reading to SBRR core reading programs based on SBRR assessments with an underpinning of SBRR professional development to the final point of changing current teacher practices to internalized sound SBRR pedagogy.

• Reading programs will fully reflect scientifically based reading research.

• Supplemental and intervention programs will reflect SBRR and be designed to assist struggling readers.

• [State Name] will ensure that comprehensive reading programs are not layered on less effective programs not based on SBRR.

• [State Name] will inform our instruction based on systematic assessment comprising screening, diagnostic, classroom progress monitoring and outcome measures such measures will have strong psychometric properties including reliability and validity.

• Professional development will be provided to ensure that teachers in Reading First schools will have a thorough grounding in SBRR instructional strategies.

• Individuals highly knowledgeable in SBRR and cognizant of the realities inherent in changing teacher behaviors will provide leadership in [State Name] Reading First. Professional development will be multi-tiered. The Department of Education will direct training for all teachers K-3 and Special Education and approve all professional development training funded by Reading First schools at the LEA level. Further, the Department of Education will provide intensive training for Reading First literacy coaches and administrators.

• Teachers will be provided professional development in how to use all programs to most effectively teach the five components of reading.

• Professional development will assist administrators and teachers in scheduling the school day to maximize instructional

APPENDIX H

Analysis Procedures Related to Professional Development

1. List of assertions that describe fully all of the professional development opportunities available to teachers according to the [State Name] Reading First Initiative (2003):

   Teacher Academies
   1. Access to information about effective, research-based practices in reading instruction can be provided on a large scale through systematic and interactive professional development (State Department of Education, 2003, pp. 66-67).
   2. The primary goal of the [State Name] Teacher Reading Academies is to promote the widespread use of effective, research-based practices in reading instruction….Consensus documents including the reports from the National Reading Panel and the National Research Council will serve as the cornerstones for the content of the [State Name] Teacher Reading Academies. (State Department of Education, 2003, pp. 66-67)
      - Rationale for the selection of these assertions: As this was the teachers’ first professional development offered in conjunction with Reading First, it was important to gather data related to this experience. The first assertion was selected as it addressed how the information was delivered at the Teacher Academy, and the second assertion was selected as it described what was taught at the Teacher Academies.

   Local, Ongoing Professional Development
   1. Literacy Coaches will be on-site to provide ongoing training and support to teachers within classrooms. The provision of a full-time Literacy Coach for RF schools is done in recognition of research that has found that effective professional development “takes place in the school as part of the workday” and that teachers need “expertise from colleagues, mentors and outside experts [that] is accessible and engaged as often as necessary…”(Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide, 2000, p. 6). (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 64)
   2. Additionally, literacy coaches will be trained to provide support to classroom teachers to identify and implement grouping strategies, positive behavior management, daily routines, procedures and schedules, progress monitoring, and the spatial organization of the room. (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 64).
   3. The formation of study groups in which professionals come together as a learning community to study, implement what they are learning, and share the results is another critical component of [State Name] Professional Development plan. These study groups, facilitated by the literacy coach, will meet regularly. (State Department of Education, p. 63)
      - Rationale for the selection of these assertions: Reading First was providing funds for each school to have an LC. This LC’s role was to help inform the teachers on topics related to SBRR and Reading First through continued professional development. The first assertion was selected as it described why the schools would have a LC (research base for it). The second assertion
showed what the LC was going to be assisting the teachers with. The third assertion shows how the LC is going to deliver the content.

Additional Professional Development
1. All professional development training for teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals responsible for reading instruction will be based in scientifically based reading research (State Department of Education, 2003, p. 68).
   - Rationale for the selection of these assertions: This was a topic discussed in the Reading First proposal that suggested the teachers would be receiving more professional development than they had in the past, but that all the professional development had to be aligned with SBRR.

2. All data related to professional development was then read and physically sorted into the appropriate assertion it addressed (confirming and disconfirming evidence were placed together with the assertion they addressed and were used together to fully understand how that assertion looked upon implementation).
   Data related to professional development that did not fit into any assertion was retained for use in an aside (or a space in the writing of the text that would not fit into any other category but was important to the study).

3. Data for each assertion was then read, and reread from a social constructionist perspective, looking for whether or not the data confirmed the assertion (and if so how), and also how the disconfirming data informed the study. Particular attention was paid to the words used by the participants and the words of the RF document, to see how the implementation matched (or did not match) the intentions of RF. (see list of key words presented below)

Example related to the Teacher Academies:

As I read through all of the data that I had compiled related to the Teacher Academies, I found that all but one participant described it as being beneficial. The principal described it as being “backwards”. He suggested that the Teacher Academy just told the teachers what to do (and more importantly what not to do) but did not tell them why to do it. The principal said the teachers learned more from the continuing professional development provided by the LC who gave them more information on why they were supposed to be teaching that way.

I found it interesting that the LC had been a classroom teacher the first year of implementing RF, so she had attended a Teacher Academy just like the other teachers in the school. Though she described her job as being tied to enforcing RF, she was open and candid when said that she did not learn anything (“absolutely nothing”) from the Teacher Academy. She said it was a “horrible experience”.

The classroom teachers provided more insight into why the Teacher Academy experience was not beneficial. In their replies there was a recurring theme of dissatisfaction with having to be read to. They described it as “hilarious”, “mundane”,

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“not like training”, “not helpful” (see chart below). The teachers also suggested that they did not have time to “absorb” or “digest” everything that was presented. Looking through the data from the teachers, I was able to see that the amount of material and the way the material was presented at the Teacher Academy led to most of the dissatisfaction with the experience. Their words describe a passive learner, or a blank slate that is supposed to accept everything they are told without questioning. According to the participants, this was not an effective form of professional development for these teachers.

The disconfirming evidence from Ms. Walters (coupled with one sentence from Ms. Andrews: “it would have been better if we could have shared ideas with each other”) provided information into why the presentation method influenced the teachers’ perceptions of their experience. Hearing and reading about Ms. Walters’ positive experience at the Teacher Academy where the leaders allowed time for discussion and questions about the content was in contrast to the other teachers who simply had to sit and be read to. This disconfirming evidence allowed me to see the difference between the ten teachers who had unsatisfactory remarks to make about the Teacher Academy, and the one who did have a good experience. This insight was also informed by the principal’s comments when he suggested they did not explain “why” at the Teacher Academy, but just told them “what to do”. The teachers who did not have the opportunity to ask questions or discuss the content did not have an opportunity understand what they were being told, but were just told to follow it blindly (as the leaders were doing by reading the script).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe how people take something potentially problematic and relate it to something they already know. Ms. Walters had the opportunity to do this through discussing it with others, and through being able to ask questions to relate the new information to her local school context. The discussion allowed members of a discursive community (Hruby, 2001) to come together to more fully understand a new, problematic issue (how to incorporate SBRR and RF into their school and classroom). Simply passively listening (see key words below – words used by all but one participant are passive and not involving any thought when describing the Teacher Academy – very different from the interactive, proactive, engaged words that they used to describe the local, ongoing professional development) did not lead to enhanced learning at the Teacher Academy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words Taken From Reading First Related to Teacher Academy &amp; from Teacher Academy Leaders</th>
<th>Participants’ Words Related to Teacher Academy</th>
<th>Words Taken From Reading First Related to Local, Ongoing Professional Development</th>
<th>Participants’ Words Related to Local, Ongoing Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Hilarious</td>
<td>LC onsite to provide training</td>
<td>Specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>Disbelief – surely she’s not going to read to us</td>
<td>Teachers need expertise that is easily accessible</td>
<td>Personalized</td>
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<td>We have to read to you</td>
<td>So we sat there, while they read to us</td>
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<td>Detailed</td>
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<td>Goal: to promote effective, research based practices</td>
<td>Wasn’t like a training or any way to approach Reading First</td>
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<td>LC is a resource</td>
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<td>Based upon NRC and NRP research reports</td>
<td>Redelivery people - they were delivering it to me</td>
<td></td>
<td>LC says: teachers come to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing new</td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal says: teachers want help having someone there who can help is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stuff we had in undergraduate education courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>LC knows more of what we need</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could not go in depth and teach us</td>
<td></td>
<td>LC knows what the school’s program is</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reinventing the wheel</td>
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<td>LC addresses individual students’ needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Did not prepare me or help me in any way</td>
<td></td>
<td>LC meets our needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reading First is it…anything else is wrong</td>
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<td>LC knows students in our school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>One participant said: they opened up the floor for discussion and we could bounce things back and forth. Leaders in my session were open to questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>We’re not competing with each other – we help each other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It was a lot to digest</td>
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<td>What helped me more was coming back to</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t think I learned as much as the two LCs have been able to do</td>
<td>We get more attention from the LC</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>It was the same thing most teachers know already</td>
<td>We get to focus on our grade level’s needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>That didn’t help me at all, going to the Academy</td>
<td>That’s the best thing, sharing ideas and hearing what works for each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>We had to have the whole notebook read to us</td>
<td>Really helped us look at data and see how to help a student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Too much information at one time</td>
<td>It was so much more beneficial. I learned much more here</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was confused as to what to do when I got back to my classroom</td>
<td>LC asks us what we want to be trained on</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very little instruction on how to conduct small groups</td>
<td>LC will even come and model it for us</td>
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<tr>
<td>It was mostly centers</td>
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<td>It was very broad</td>
<td>If LC doesn’t know, she’ll go find an answer for us</td>
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<td>I wouldn’t say that it adequately prepared anybody</td>
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<tr>
<td>I learned less at the training than anything else we did</td>
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<tr>
<td>It did not prepare me in any way</td>
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</table>
4. According to Erickson (1986), I presented general description (or how representative the data was of the assertion), particular description (or direct quotes or field notes to show evidence of the assertion), and interpretive comments for each assertion (with a summary at the end of a category of assertions, i.e. all professional development).

General description was provided by counting how many participants had offered data related to that assertion. Particular description was offered through including quotes and field note examples for each assertion. Interpretive comments were provided by looking at confirming and disconfirming evidence and incorporating the theoretical framework of social constructionism into the discussion. Key words from data for the assertions were helpful in comparing the words of the teachers to the intentions of Reading First. For the summative interpretive comments on a category of assertions (i.e., professional development), it was beneficial to look at the key words across assertions to see the differences in how the teachers reported their experiences with the different types of professional development.
APPENDIX I

Sample Reading Instruction Schedule

1:00 – 2:00 Needs Based Instruction / Centers
- Sight word fluency
- ORF with leveled readers (oral reading fluency)
- Decoding with decodable readers
- Comprehension strategies

2:00-2:20 Read Aloud
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

2:20-3:00 Whole Group with Core Reading Program
- Phonics / Spelling
- Shared literature
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
## APPENDIX J

### Assessments Required by Reading First

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Reading Component Measures</th>
<th>Screening</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Progress Monitoring</th>
<th>Outcome Assessment</th>
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<td></td>
<td>K 1 2 3</td>
<td>K 1 2 3</td>
<td>K 1 2 3</td>
<td>K 1 2 3</td>
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<td><strong>Phonemic Awareness</strong></td>
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<td>Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, 6th ed. (English and Spanish)</td>
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<td>(X) (X) (X) (X)</td>
<td>(X) (X) (X) (X)</td>
<td>(X) (X) (X) (X)</td>
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<td>Initial Sound Fluency</td>
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<td>Phonoeme Segmentation Fluency</td>
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<td>Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation</td>
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<td><strong>Phonics</strong></td>
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<td>Letter Naming Fluency</td>
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<td>Nonsense Word Fluency</td>
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<td>Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised (WRMT)</td>
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<td>(X) (X) (X)</td>
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<td>*Letter Identification</td>
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<td>*Word attack</td>
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<td><strong>Fluency</strong></td>
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<td>Grey Oral Reading Test IV (GORT-IV)</td>
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<td>Rate</td>
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<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
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<td>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-3)</td>
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<td><strong>Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)</strong></td>
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<td>*Vocabulary</td>
<td>X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Listening</td>
<td>X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Language</td>
<td>X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, 6th ed. (Eng &amp; Sp)</td>
<td>(X) (X) (X)</td>
<td>(X) (X) (X)</td>
<td>(X) (X) (X)</td>
<td>(X) (X) (X)</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Word Use Fluency</td>
<td>X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Gray Oral Reading Test IV (GORT-IV)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Reading Comprehension</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy Skills, 6th ed. (Eng &amp; Sp)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Retell Fluency and Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX K
Statewide Assessment Scores from Avery Elementary School

1st Grade
Percentage of Students at Each Performance Level: Comparison For All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>English/Lang. Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School: 2006-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 7, 59, 34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: 2005-2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 7, 65, 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: 2004-2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 6, 49, 44</td>
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2nd Grade
Percentage of Students at Each Performance Level: Comparison For All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>English/Lang. Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>School: 2006-2007</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 5, 40, 55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: 2005-2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 14, 54, 32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: 2004-2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 12, 30, 58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3rd Grade
Percentage of Students at Each Performance Level: Comparison For All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>English/Lang. Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School: 2006-2007</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 66</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 15, 55, 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: 2005-2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 10, 60, 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: 2004-2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested: 83</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students: 1, 36, 62</td>
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Table 1

Timeline of Entry into the Field and Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entry Into The Field</td>
<td>August 2006</td>
<td>Contacted the principal, Received written permission to conduct research at Avery Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 2006</td>
<td>Proposal approved by doctoral committee, Approval received to conduct human subjects research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>December 2006</td>
<td>Met principal, Toured school, Met literacy coach, Interviewed principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>January 2007</td>
<td>Met teachers and explained research project, Emailed teachers regarding participation in study, Interviewed literacy coach, Began observing and interviewing teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>February 2007-May 2007</td>
<td>Continued observing and interviewing teacher, Attended Reading First related meetings, Met with media center specialist, Met with literacy coach</td>
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</table>
Table 2
Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Miller</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Argen</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Wood</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Brown</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Completing Masters Degree</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sellers</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Walters</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>32 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gifted Endorsement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sheldon</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Matthews</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Andrews</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>29 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Board Certified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Parker</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>First year teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Taylor</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working on Doctorate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Stevens</td>
<td>Literacy Coach</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Parson</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist Degree</td>
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</table>
Table 3

Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose of Visit</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 18, 2006</td>
<td>Meet / interview principal</td>
<td>School instructional schedule</td>
<td>Toured school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview transcripts</td>
<td>Met LC briefly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 9, 2007</td>
<td>Attend Reading First Leadership Meeting 3:45pm</td>
<td>Agenda from meeting</td>
<td>Introduced myself to leadership team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Met media center specialist and special ed teacher and realized they had valuable insight into RF at this school (members of leadership team)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 2007</td>
<td>Interview LC 10:00am</td>
<td>Interview transcripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 18, 2007</td>
<td>Emailed all 16 teachers asking for participants</td>
<td>(email note saved as word file)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 2nd grade teacher (T24 first observation)</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 25, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 2nd grade teacher (T24 second observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction and informal conversation we had during lunch period</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher (T33 first observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Purpose of Visit</td>
<td>Data Collected</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 8, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher (T33 second observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed&lt;br&gt;Observed reading intervention instruction offered to a small group during acceleration block&lt;br&gt;Interviewed T24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 13, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher (T32 first observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed&lt;br&gt;Observed instruction during acceleration block (language arts/grammar/writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher (T32 second observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed&lt;br&gt;Interviewed the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 22, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher (T31 first observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of meeting</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Purpose of Visit</td>
<td>Data Collected</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 23, 2007</td>
<td>Attempted second observation of T31 but she was out sick</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 26, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>T34 first observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 27, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>T34 second observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 20, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 1st grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed. Observed spec ed teacher teach a small group of first graders in the regular education classroom (inclusion)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T12 first observation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed Spec Ed teacher</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 1st grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction observed. Observed spec ed teacher teach a small group of first graders in the regular education classroom (inclusion) Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>T12 second observation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed Spec Ed teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed 3rd grade teacher</td>
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<td>T31 second observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 1st grade</td>
<td>Field notes of</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Purpose of Visit</td>
<td>Data Collected</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 12, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
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<td>(T12 second observation)</td>
<td>Field notes of session</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(T22 first observation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 26, 2007</td>
<td>Conducted Interviews with:</td>
<td>Interview Transcripts</td>
<td>Interviewed three teachers during their planning time and after school.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>T 04</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>T12</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(T22 second observation)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(T14 first observation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>interviewed teacher during planning time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewed T14</td>
<td>Interview Transcripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10, 2007</td>
<td>Observed 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; grade teacher</td>
<td>Field notes of instruction</td>
<td>Full 120 minutes of reading instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(T14 second observation)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31, 2007</td>
<td>Interviewed Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>Interview Transcripts</td>
<td>Interviewed teacher during post planning day.</td>
</tr>
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</table>