

Are Elementary Reading Specialists Prepared to Address the Mental Health Needs of Struggling Readers?

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Outline of Literature Review

Needs of Students

- Academic
- Emotional
- Motivational
- Need for School-Based Support

School-Based Approaches

Role of Reading Specialists

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Academic Needs of Struggling Readers



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Reading is cognitively complex.

The Virginia Literacy Act mandates the Science of Reading.

- Explicit and systematic phonemic awareness and phonics instruction
- Multisensory techniques to engage students and aid memory
- Direct teaching of comprehension strategies
- Time to read a wide variety of texts

Emotions impact cognitive processes.

(Brown et al., 2014; Castles et al., 2018; Duke et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2020; McTighe & Willis, 2019; Pondiscio, 2023; Schwartz, 2019; Solari et al., 2020)

Mental Health Needs of Students

Rise in K-12 students with mental health needs in the U.S.

Early onset of anxiety, depression, and post traumatic stress

Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

Vulnerable Populations



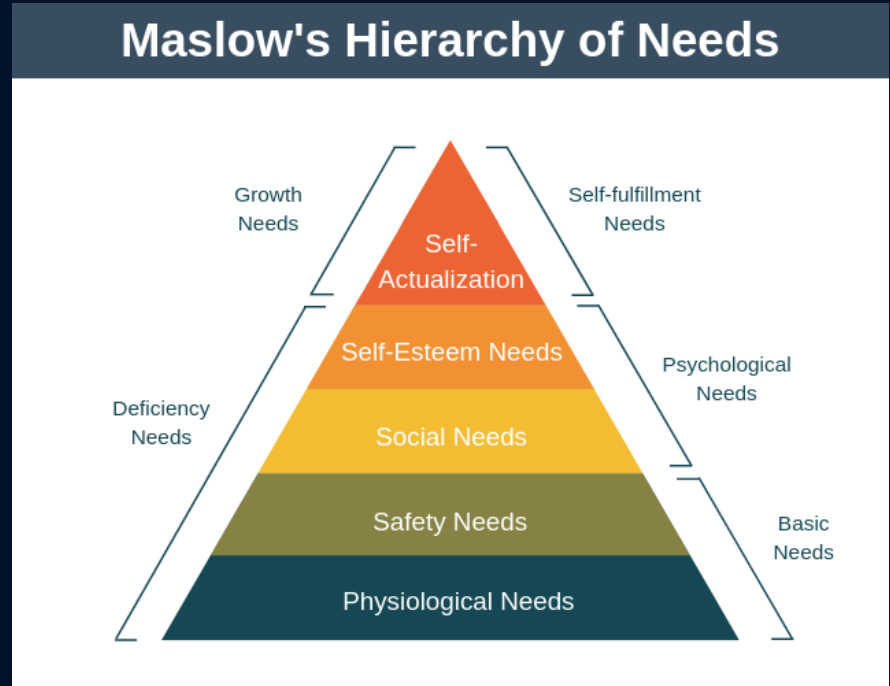
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(Bhogal et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2022; Duong et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Ma et al., 2021; Pannebakker et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2018)

Motivational Needs of Struggling Readers

Students must feel that their need for survival, safety, and love/belonging are at least partially met in order to have the capability to work toward academic goals.

(Smith & Quick, 2023).



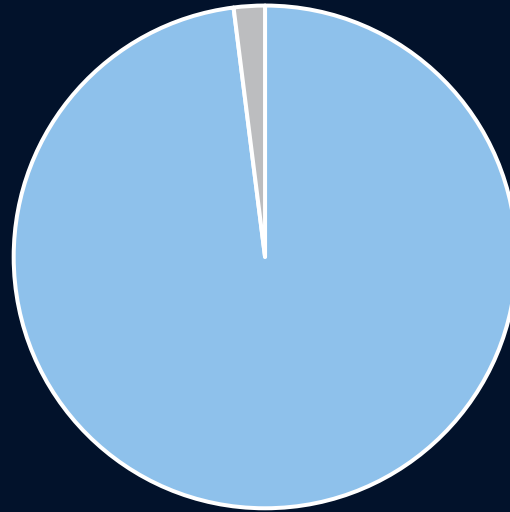
"[Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs-1](#)" by [Nmilligan](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Need for School-Based Support

School Mental Health Services

Only 2% of students received services from school counselors or mental health professionals.

98% of students with mental health needs are served only by teachers.



■ Teachers

■ School Counselors

(Sanchez et al., 2018)

School-Based Approaches

- Trauma-Informed Instruction
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Bibliotherapy
- Social-Emotional Learning



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(Gay, 2015; Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Langeberg, 2023; Monroy-Fraustro et al., 2021; Muniz, 2020; Sevinç, 2019 Rishel et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2021)

Role of Reading Specialists



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Dual responsibilities for instruction and coaching

Preparation involves training in literacy and leadership, but not the cognitive impact of trauma or mental health needs.

(Dagan & Bean, 2020; International Literacy Association, 2018; Martin et al., 2022; Nilsson, 2020; Zolkoski et al., 2020)

Teacher Self-Efficacy

An internal belief that teachers can prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact students' lives.



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High Self-Efficacy	Low Self-Efficacy
Have high efficacy for inclusion	Challenged by student differences
Instruct innovatively	Spend less time on instruction
Use evidence-based strategies for classroom management	Report more stress and poorer health
Set high goals for students	Make fewer attempts to meet students' needs
Persist to meet students' needs	Experience secondary trauma
Find personal fulfillment in job	Leave the field of education

Problem Statement

The problem is that elementary students struggling with mental health challenges are not meeting reading proficiency standards, and test scores continue to decrease.

Educators are reporting low self-efficacy in helping students with these mental health needs to increase their reading achievement.



Research Questions for Gap in Literature



Central Research Question: What are literacy specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy for instructing elementary students with mental health needs?

Sub-Question: What are the experiences of elementary literacy specialists who support and mentor general classroom teachers to effectively teach struggling readers with mental health needs?

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