ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CENTER TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH IDENTIFYING DYSLEXIA CHARACTERISTICS IN STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGY

by

Natasha Peoples

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explore the experiences of 10 participants teaching at a North Texas alternative education center, focusing on identifying dyslexia characteristics. The research is grounded in self-efficacy theory and phonological deficit theory, which both contribute to understanding lifelong effects of reading difficulties, particularly dyslexia. Self-efficacy theory emphasizes task-specific beliefs, while phonological deficit theory underscores the importance of accurate letter sound representation for a strong alphabetic foundation. Employing a phenomenological approach, the study gathers participants' perceptions, employing a triangulation method for data collection through interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. Data analysis followed Moustakas' modification of the Van Kaam method to identify common experiences. These common experiences concluded to the participants uncertainty regarding how to effectively support dyslexic students; stating they often relied on the campus special education teachers for guidance due to their limited training on dyslexia. The study suggests a need for an in-depth examination of current state dyslexia policies and a review of dyslexia courses in university preservice programs to address the identified research challenges. This examination would lead to the enhancement of educator's knowledge base of dyslexia identification issues in alternative education centers, offering valuable insights for future research and policymakers.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Phonological Awareness, Orton- Gillingham approach, Phonemic awareness, Early identification, Early intervention, Accommodations

Copyright Page

Dedication

Ephesians 5:20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (NIV). Thank you, Lord, for seeing me through!

To my mother who has been with me every step of the way and always pushing me to be the best version of myself. I appreciate you and I love you for being an amazing role model. I would not have been able to get through this without your patience and support.

To my husband, your love and support through this journey doesn't go unnoticed. I am so blessed to have you by my side!

To my daughters, I pray that you never let any obstacle life throws at you keep you from finishing anything you start. I love the both of you and I can't wait to watch you grow.

And to the individuals who chose to dedicate their time to this study, I dedicate this to you. Thank you for your willingness to be a part of a cause that means so much to me.

Acknowledgments

I am sincerely grateful to my esteemed committee for their invaluable support and guidance throughout this academic journey. Their expertise and encouragement have shaped this research. Special thanks to Dr. Branch and Dr. Bailey for their unwavering dedication.

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List of Abbreviations

Gifted and Talented (GT)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

International Dyslexia Association (IDA)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

School to Prison Pipeline (STPP)

Simple View of Reading (SVR)

Specific Learning Disorder (SLD)

School Year (SY)

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile (VAKT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of teachers who work in an alternative education center for at-risk students in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia. Chapter one provides the background for the study, highlights the problem under investigation, outlines the study's purpose, and emphasizes its significance. Additionally, this chapter frames the research questions and clarify important definitions related to the study.

Dyslexia, one of the most common learning disabilities in the United States (Knight, 2018), affects approximately 1 in 5 Americans, as estimated by the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity in 2020. Struggling to read can lead to relatively low literacy achievement among students, contributing to behavioral and social challenges in subsequent grades (Miles & Stipek, 2006). Evidence from the studies indicates that many classroom teachers are not prepared to teach reading effectively or identify students with reading deficits (D' Agostino et al, 2022; Didion et al, 2020).

Background

Dyslexia has been around since the late 1880s (Moats, & Dakin, 2008). However, what are teachers' experiences with understanding and recognizing the characteristics of this neurological in origin disability? Researchers have examined the validity of teacher preparation programs, which recognize the lack of training in systematic literacy (Passadellie et al, 2020). Using self-efficacy and phonological deficit theories as a guide, readers are able to understand the literature discussed around dyslexia characteristics, teacher preparation and teacher knowledge. There is also a gap in today's literature pertaining to unidentified dyslexic students'

pipeline to the judicial system; due to the lack of teacher training on identifying dyslexic characteristics in students. By exploring the common knowledge of 6-8th grade middle school and 9th-12th grade high school secondary teachers on a campus with 100% at-risk students, practitioners will understand where we are in the education system today regarding dyslexia and teacher preparation.

Historical Context

In 1887 Rudolf Berlin, a German ophthalmologist first used the term dyslexia to describe word blindness (Wagner, 1973). Since then, the term has continued to evolve into what it is today. Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that affects fluency, word recognition, and spelling (IDA, 2002). Characteristics are difficulties in phonological awareness, memory, and processing (Mundy & Hannant, 2020).

Dating back to 1878, Adolph Kussmaul, a German Neurologist noticed several of his patients struggling with basic reading skills. At the time, there was not a term for what Kussmaul was noticing in his patients. After many cases of struggling readers, he coined the term “word blindness” to describe what we know today as dyslexia (Bryson, 2013, p. 430). In 1896, British Medical Journal published the first academic paper on the term *Dyslexia* by William P Morgan (Kirby, 2020). Since then, there have been many developments regarding what dyslexia is.

Modern day researchers have not been able to agree on how dyslexia developed, but many psychological theories do exist. Currently, there are possible theories as to how dyslexia developed after the 1800s, a few early theories involved maternal nutrition, which is believed to affect intelligence levels in infants and children (Georgieff, Ramel, & Cusick, 2018). By the 1800s, a number of theories about dyslexia had been proposed, but there was little consensus.

One of the biggest factors in dyslexia development is the ongoing increase of poor reading instruction for children during this period (Moats, 1994).

Characteristics of dyslexia (difficulties with accurate and/or fluent reading/word recognition and/or spelling and decoding abilities**)** can be seen as early as preschool (Elliott, 2020). Although dyslexia is neurobiological in origin, it is seen to be heritable (Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 2008). The primary difficulties are phonological awareness, single-word recognition, reading fluency, accurately decoding unfamiliar words, and spelling (Handler, 2016). These risk factors are seen as unexpected in the child's cognitive ability, in relation to the child's peers (Juneja, 2018). For example, the child has an unexpected lack of appropriate academic progress in the areas of reading and spelling.

The State of Texas was the first state to produce a bill in relation to dyslexia. This bill is known as HB 157 69th Legislature and was passed in late 1985. After many years of waiting, the State of Texas mandated dyslexia screening by the local school districts (Texas Education Agency., 2018). However, these screenings were not completed unless a parent or guardian requested additional testing. Today, In the state of Texas, educators are required to receive one-hour of professional development regarding dyslexia to renew teacher certification licensure (Tex. Admin. Code § 21.004 (b), 2020)**.**

Shaywitz is one of the leading researchers in the field of dyslexia. She is known to provide educators with the modern understanding of dyslexia for the 21st century. Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2020) show that a typical reader with a normal functioning IQ would be considered a good reading as well as intelligent (see figure 1 below). However, dyslexic readers can have a very high functioning IQ but show poor reading skills (Shaywitz, Morris & Shaywitz, 2008). This recognition led to dyslexia now codified in the US federal law as (PL 115-391).

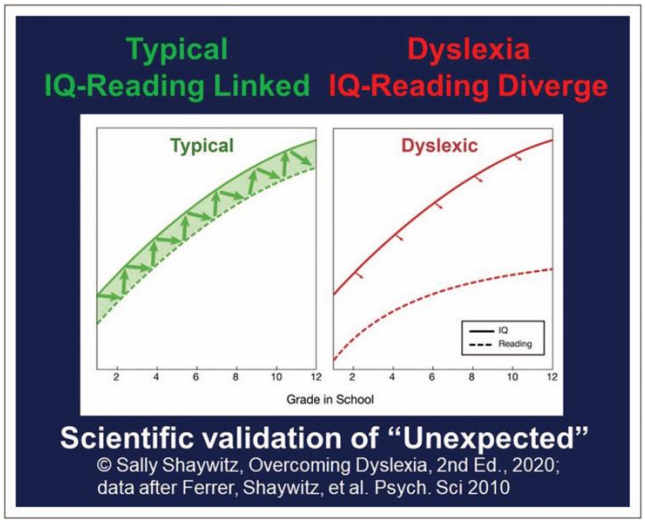

Figure 1-Typical IQ-Reading Linked to Dyslexia IQ-Reading Diverge (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020)

Theoretical Context

Several theories support different perspectives on education regarding knowledge of dyslexia. J. Baudouin de Courtenay's theory of phonological deficit (1870) explains the role of dyslexic reading impairment in phoneme correspondence (Ramus, 2003). Modern phonological deficit theorists believe that the representation of letter-sound correspondence is poor, affecting the retrieval of learned graphemes and foundational reading skills for alphabetic systems (Ramus, 2003).

Due to the variety of theories, there is no definitive explanation for what education currently understands about the relationship between spoken and written language (Shaywitz, Morris & Shaywitz, 2008). The phonological model appears to have the most support across the board. The phonological model is based on a hierarchy of components with vocabulary, syntax, and discourse attached (Shaywitz, 1996). It serves for processing distinctive sound elements in spoken language, being the lowest level of the hierarchy (Shaywitz, 1996). Educators should be aware and prepared to foster the development of students with reading deficits in their classrooms.

Problem Statement

The problem is at-risk students will suffer in society if dyslexia characteristics are not recognized in the classroom and addressed. The issues driving this investigation specific to an alternative education center, was that (a) 48% of the prison population has some form of dyslexia. For repeat offenders, there is a high chance that the individuals have been enrolled and sent to an alternative education center by their primary school or have attended a school that aligns with rehabilitating students with behavior issues; (b) there is no university or educator program in place to prepare preservice teachers to understand the characteristics of dyslexic students, and(c) Many preservice teachers feel incompetent to identify a student with dyslexia or reading deficits. The methodology and procedures of this phenomenological study unveils the experiences of teachers identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia that work in an alternative education center for at risk students. Data will be collected through interviews, document analysis of transcripts from professional development, and questionnaires of the educators that serve at the secondary level.

Some educators do not feel responsible for educating students with dyslexia. Evidence from research indicates that, due to a lack of information and experience with dyslexia, teachers feel they cannot directly support students with dyslexia (White, Mather, & Kirkpatrick, 2020). To the educator's point, if they do not feel responsible due to the lack of knowledge, what might come from that within a campus full of all at-risk students? A study aiming to measure primary school teachers' knowledge of dyslexia resulted in educators who may have taken a course over dyslexia in college had lower negative perceptions of dyslexia than teachers who did not do so (Tosun, Arıkan, & Babür, 2021). Peries et al.'s (2002) research findings highlight educators' lack of knowledge of dyslexia and awareness of available identification tools and processes. The

same educators seem to have a positive attitude towards getting involved in identifying dyslexia, but the educator's readiness to do so was low (Peries et al, 2021). Educators have an important role in the progression of students' achievement especially when it comes to being able to identify a student showing signs of having a reading disability such as dyslexia. This study investigates teachers' knowledge in recognizing dyslexia characteristics.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore teachers' experiences identifying dyslexia characteristics in an alternative education center in North Texas. At this stage in the research, dyslexia is generally defined as an individual who is demonstrating unexpected difficulties in reading in the areas of phonological processing (Shaywitz &Shaywitz, 2020). The theories guiding this study are self-efficacy theory and the theory of phonological deficits. Teachers have stressed that they want more dyslexia training to be able to recognize a student with dyslexia (Driver Youth Trust, 2014).

Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects the ability to read and write (Handler, 2016). While it is not considered to be an easy problem for anyone, dyslexics are different because of the impact that it has on the individuals' brain, or specifically their visual pathways (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). The solution to eeducators having an understanding of dyslexia and the underlying characteristics are not a simple one, but it is important that when dyslexics seek help they should be provided with knowledge, information, and support wherever possible (Driver Youth Trust, 2014). It is imperative that in today's classrooms educators need the opportunity to receive collaborative professional development within the subject area of dyslexia-related disorders to meet the needs of students facing a reading deficit (Bos et al., 1999).

Significance of the Study

The evidence indicates that students' achievement, teacher preparation, and domain-specific knowledge are all correlated (Hill, et al., 2018). According to child find laws and regulations, educators are responsible for recognizing, and preventing reading challenges such as dyslexia to promote early identification (Zirkel, 2018). Reading does not develop naturally for many children nor does skills for decoding, word recognition, and reading comprehension. Reading must be taught directly and systematically (Shaywitz, 2003). There are two neural systems for reading: parieto-temporal and occipito-temporal; The parieto-temporal region is for word analysis and occipito-temporal is for automatic, rapid responses, and used by skilled readers for rapid word recognition (Birsh, 2011). Low phonological processing skills are within the left hemisphere posterior processing anomalies typical of children with dyslexia (Shaywitz, 2003). Characteristics of dyslexia can be seen as early as five years of age (Bogdanowicz, 2003). These characteristics and risk factors are seen as unexpected in the child's cognitive ability, in relation to the child's educational level or age (Juneja, 2018).

Theoretical Perspective

This study is guided by Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, aiming to explore the role in identifying students with dyslexia characteristics. The study will examine the influence of Bandura's (1986) key constructs on the ability to identify dyslexia and how self-efficacy can enhance professional teaching practices. Moreover, it will investigate how self-efficacy influences educators' pursuit of quality professional development to feel more competent in regard to dyslexia. Ultimately, this research aims to explore teachers' experiences identifying dyslexia characteristics in an alternative education center in North Texas.

Empirical Perspective

Empirical research relies on observations and measurements rather than theories and beliefs, drawing knowledge from experience (Konata, 2022). This study aims to raise awareness of dyslexia and uncover age-appropriate characteristics in students who may be overlooked. Research contributes to the literature on effective professional development for educators and district leaders working with at-risk students (Lewis & McCann, 2009; McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019). Addressing the problem of 48% of the prison population having dyslexia, this research highlights the potential links between alternative education centers and repeat offenders. Additionally, it identifies the lack of preparedness among preservice teachers to recognize dyslexic students and the need for improved training programs to boost educators' competence in identifying dyslexia or reading deficits.

Practical perspective

This study's findings hold the potential to raise dyslexia awareness among educators, leaders, and districts amongst North Texas, encouraging reflection on personal beliefs and a recognition of the influence that unidentified dyslexic students have on society. It may encourage school leaders to prioritize quality professional development for their staff. Additionally, the newly acquired information can help educators identify dyslexia quickly and implement successful interventions for students who may be at risk.

Research Questions

Data collected is from ~10 educators that work at the secondary level in grades 6-12th. These educators are from all content subject areas. Due to Child Find laws any educator or staff member can request a dyslexia evaluation on a student if dyslexia is suspected. Child Find, is a legal obligation that requires schools to find children who have disabilities and need services

(Zirkel, 2018). The research question to gain more understand and knowledge of the phenomenon are as followed:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of teachers in secondary classrooms' recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia on an alternative education campus?

Sub-Question One

How have secondary school teachers identified children in an alternative education setting who exhibit dyslexia-like characteristics?

Sub-Question Two

What strategies do secondary teachers use when teaching students with dyslexia characteristics?

Sub-Question Three

How has professional development assisted teachers in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia?

Definitions

1. *Dyslexia*- Dyslexia is characterized by an unexpected difficulty in reading in children and adults who otherwise possess the intelligence, motivation, and schooling considered necessary for accurate and fluent reading (Shaywitz, 1998).
2. *Preservice Teachers*- University students who are planning to teacher within the educational sector to “apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical context” after this graduating from their education degree plan. (Dicke et al., 2015, p.1)
3. *Phonemic Awareness* - Phonological Awareness are the smallest units constituting spoken language.(NRP, 2000).

4. *Phonological Awareness* - Phonological awareness is the ability to distinguish, identify, and manipulate the sounds of speech, is an important predictor of reading development (Torgesen et al., 1994; Ehri et al., 2001).
5. *At Risk Students* - An “at-risk” student is defined as a student who is likely to fail at school. School failure is typically seen as dropping out of school before a student 12th year of high school graduation (Kaufman et. al., 1992).
6. *Phonics-based instruction* - Alphabetics, decoding, and oral reading practice are all considered phonics-based instruction. (Vadasy, & Sanders, 2011).
7. *Multi-sensory teaching* – This Technique involves input of information from server sensory modalities simultaneously (Hulme, Monk, & Ives, 1987).

Summary

This study addressed the problem of at-risk students suffering in society if dyslexia characteristics are not recognized in the classroom and addressed. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore teachers' experiences identifying dyslexia characteristics in an alternative education center in North Texas.

Dyslexia cannot be cured and can potentially be an issue for a lifetime if not remediated. Understanding the characteristics and knowing early identification is the key to providing effective intervention (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007). Exploring the knowledge of secondary educators’ proficiency in the identification process of a student with dyslexia can change the lives of many.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this literature review is to explore teachers' experiences identifying dyslexia characteristics in an alternative education center in North Texas. . A systematic review of the literature is conducted to explore teachers' knowledge in recognizing characteristics of dyslexia in an alternative school that hosts at-risk students in North Texas. This chapter presents a review of the current literature related to the topic of study. First, the theories relevant to dyslexia characteristics are discussed, followed by a synthesis of recent literature about unidentified dyslexia classification. Then, the literature illustrates how educators can enhance a child's quality of life with a dyslexia identification. Finally, the need for the current study is addressed by identifying a gap in the literature regarding teacher preparation of dyslexia characteristics and at-risk students, presenting a viable need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation is grounded in both self-efficiency theory, and phonological deficit theory, regarding factors that have lifelong effects on reading difficulties, such as dyslexia are not addressed. In contrast, research has been conducted regarding the factors contributing to interventions, early inventions, and teacher preparation (McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019). Due to the complex nature of the factors contributing to the lack of teacher knowledge regarding dyslexia characteristics, foundational theories such as self-efficiency, and phonological deficit theory are incorporated in this dissertation (Li Yin, Malatesha, & Hong, 2020). The concept from which this study is derived directly linked to each theory.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy is described as a person's confidence in their ability to achieve in a given task or topic, not just relying on their real talents, and is based on Albert Bandura's social-cognitive theory (Artino, 2012; Benight & Bandura, 2004). The nature of self-efficacy is that self-efficacy beliefs are central to human functioning and influence individuals' choices, efforts, and task persistence (Bandura, 1986; Artino, 2012). Self-efficacy is essential to academic success because individuals who have high levels of self-efficacy are more willing to accept difficult tasks, put in extra effort, and persevere in the face of challenges (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1986; Benight & Bandura, 2004).

Researchers affirm that self-efficacy is just a person's belief about their capabilities, which might not be the real case (Artino, 2012). Bandura (1986) believed when people overrated their capabilities, they can persevere more in times of difficulty. Self-efficacy beliefs are specific to are task- and situations, contrasting with broader expectancies' measures, such as self-concept and self-perceptions of competence (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1986; Benight & Bandura, 2004). Therefore, self-efficacy significantly influences human functioning, especially in academic contexts. As Bandura (1986) argued, individuals with lower self-efficacy toward a task are less likely to do rigorous things than those with higher self-efficacy toward the same task. While teaching knowledge and skills are important, educators must focus on students' academic self-efficacy beliefs to provide more engaging and effective instruction (Bandura, 1986; Benight & Bandura, 2004). Artino (2012) highlights the domain specificity of self-efficacy, indicating that individuals judge their capabilities based on specific activity domains. According to Artino (2012), task- and domain-specific measures of perceived efficacy have greater predictive power than global measures. However, self-efficacy is not solely concerned with specific behaviors in

specific situations, and people can employ different levels of generality in assessing self-efficacy depending on the research context (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1986; Benight & Bandura, 2004).

Gist and Mitchell (1992) found that it goes beyond mere knowledge or skills and involves the conviction that one can effectively execute the necessary actions to succeed in a given task or domain. Similarly, self-efficacy influences the acquisition and utilization of knowledge to determine the degree of "knowing better." While possessing knowledge alone does not guarantee motivation or the application of that knowledge, Artino (2012) highlights that individuals need both knowledge and belief in their ability to apply that knowledge effectively. Educators who have high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to enhance their professional knowledge, abilities, and skills (Artino, 2012; Maddux, 2012). These same educators also use deeper cognitive and metacognitive methods, which enhance knowledge, understanding and retention (Bandura, 1986; Artino, 2012; Maddux, 2012). Additionally, Individuals who have high self-efficacy are more likely to take on difficult task in the workplace, put up more effort, and persevere in the face of challenges. These educators are motivated by their self-confidence, which produces better performance results (Maddux, 2012; Gist & Mitchell 1992, Bandura, 1986). Individuals with poor self-efficacy, on the other hand, would avoid projects or give up easily, which would restrict their chances of success (Bandura, 1986). Thus, self-efficacy theory emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between knowledge beliefs, and actions, implying that people who are confident in their abilities are more likely to participate in engaging activities, learn new things, and display improved performance outcomes.

Theory of Phonological Deficit

The phonological deficit theory is when dyslexic individuals have a specific impairment in the representation, storage, or retrieval of speech sounds (Ramus et al., 2003). The founder of

this theory is Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, a polish man who has shaped what is known today as a phoneme. Researchers believe this explains why dyslexic reading impairment by the phoneme correspondence. If letter sounds are not represented correctly or retained, the foundation alphabetic principle will suffer (Ramus et al., 2003). There is a link between cognitive deficit and behavioral issues within the phonological theory.

If foundational reading skills are not properly taught by a teacher in grades Kindergarder-third. A student could seem at risk of having dyslexia or a specific learning disability. Phonemic awareness plays a major role in reading acquisition through learning skills required to manipulate phonemes or word recognition and spelling. Without phonemic awareness, students may be able to memorize letter sounds but will not understand how to manipulate letter-sound relationships to read (Ramus et al., 2003). Phonemic awareness has been said to be a foretelling sign of later reading success.

In 2010, the Institute of Educational Sciences surveyed over 2,200 preservice teachers to assess preparation programs focused on fundamental components of reading instruction (Durrance, 2017). The findings revealed twenty-five percent of the preservice teachers in the IES study reported their preparation programs included a strong overall focus on reading instruction. There is a strong focus on reading instruction during their preservice teaching experiences (Durrance, 2017; Ramus et., 2003). Although it has been found that Phonological deficit may not be the sole cause of dyslexia, there are possibilities that it can cause reading impairments (Durrance, 2017).

Related Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to analysis teacher preparation of dyslexia characteristics and how it is currently described while analyzing related literature. The literature

intersects how many teachers are unable to recognize characteristics of dyslexia to help or prevent classroom frustration that has led the students to be identified as at-risk. Potentially leaving the student down the school to prison pipeline. This literature is related to teacher understanding of dyslexia, understanding foundational literacy skills, systematic literacy instruction, preservice education regarding dyslexia, and at-risk students.

Teachers' Understanding of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin (Shaywitz,1996). It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Dyslexia can also be characterized as having a phonological processing deficit (McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019). Typically, individuals with dyslexia have considerably better listening comprehension skills but often struggle with fluency and word recognition. While it is important for educators to understand what dyslexia is, it has been evident through existing literature, teachers lack a foundational understanding (Peries et al., 2021). Studies show educators in today's classroom lack the biological and cognitive processing understanding of dyslexia (Peries et al., 2021). In a 2018 study, it was found both preservice and classroom educators believed known misconceptions and mentioned visual factors when describing dyslexia (Knight, 2018). Furthermore, researchers have noticed most teachers understand dyslexia in terms of how dyslexic students' behavior can be impacted with student with literacy (Knight, 2018; McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019). Reachers' ability to observe can be generalized due to the are behavioral characteristics of dyslexia in a classroom setting. However, it is useful for teachers to understand dyslexia on the cognitive level which can be developed through effective teaching practices. High-quality, evidenced-based training is essential for teachers to gain understanding

of the multi-layered aspects of dyslexia, and dispel myths (Knight, 2018). Prior experience with a student identified as dyslexic was said to be one of the main sources of dyslexia knowledge (Knight, 2018; Yin, Joshi, & Yan, 2020).

When teaching dyslexic readers, intelligence quotient (IQ) can be average. However, their reading achievement will be significantly below what you would expect from an individual with an average IQ level (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). When understanding dyslexia, it is imperative educators understand learning to read starts with learning phonemes and graphemes (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020; Snowling, 2020). Phonemes and graphemes are considered to be one of the hardest to grasp in the English language with 44 sounds for the 26 letters within the alphabet (Snowling, 2020). As educators, it can be frustrating when preconceived expectation arise. However, researchers suggest educators should keeping in mind dyslexia can manifest itself in many ways. It is suggested to keep instruction simple and short in both speech and written material, do not stigmatize, use illustration to explain important representations, foster creativity, when using handouts; using less is more, and define vocabulary or abbreviation in advancing students will benefit in so many ways (Shaw & Anderson, 2017). Dyslexic students need equality in the classroom and for educators to understand accommodations are necessary for dyslexic students when equalize the playing field within the classroom setting (Wadlington, Jacob & Bailey, 1996).

Educators have resonated that it is essential for teachers to correctly determine dyslexia as well as offer interventions that are timely and quite appropriate to the affected victims. In this perspective, it is essential to have an understanding of the present scientific ideologies, and misconceptions alongside any form of unpredictability related to the concept (Peltier et al. 2022,

p. 2079). Consequently, this will lead to the alignment of changes necessitated to align the teacher's knowledge with the conceptual change theory.

According to Peltier et al. (2022), dyslexia is a specific learning disorder (SLD) with original traces in neurological as well as characterized by persistent difficulties with accurate as well as automatic word reading (p.2080). Moreover, it is a condition that varies in different persons in terms of its severity where most persons diagnosed with this condition experience difficulties in spelling as well as secondary consequences in skills related to writing as well as text comprehension.

While expectations of teacher's training often vary in various states as some states requires that dyslexia training should to be facilitated among the pre-service general education teacher as well as special education teacher preparation programs. For instance, Connecticut House Bill 7254 requires special education teachers pursuing initial, provisional or professional certification to meet the requirement for dyslexia. The objective is to ensure that the teachers are provided with skills effectively to handle children with a reading deficit (Knight, 2018).

The perceptions of teachers in secondary classrooms on recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia in an alternative education classroom will vary. Some teachers may be aware of the signs of dyslexia and have a more positive attitude towards helping this population (McMahan et al., 2019). Other teachers may be less informed, thus, may be less aware of the signs of dyslexia, and be more likely to misdiagnose or overlook students with dyslexia. Additionally, some teachers may view students with dyslexia as having learning difficulties and may be less likely to provide them with the appropriate support and resources they need (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022; Vadasy & Sanders, 2011; Kappa Delta Pi, 2010; McMahan, Oslund & Odegard, 2019).

Teachers should be provided professional development opportunities to learn about the signs and effects of dyslexia and how to best provide instruction to students with dyslexia characteristics in the classroom (Bos et al., 1999; Scales et al., 2018). Secondly, teachers should be aware and able to provide appropriate accommodations, such as extra time on tests, the use of assistive technology, and alternate methods of instruction, to ensure that students with dyslexia have the opportunity to participate in the classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Thirdly, teachers should have access to resources, such as dyslexia-specific accommodations, books, websites, and other materials, to ensure that students with dyslexia are receiving the best possible instruction in the classroom (Shaywitz et al., 2008; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

The inability to identify students with dyslexia can have a significant impact on the overall performance of a school. Without an accurate understanding of the student's specific needs, teachers may struggle to provide appropriate resources and strategies to help the student learn (Shaywitz et al., 2008; Bogdanowicz, 2003). This can lead to poor academic performance, frustration, and a feeling of exclusion (Catts & Petscher, 2018). Furthermore, without proper identification, students may not receive the accommodations they need to be successful in school, such as extra time to complete assignments or access to specialized tutoring. Ultimately, the lack of effective identification and support of students with dyslexia can have a negative effect on the overall success school wide (Catts & Petscher, 2018; Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010).

Dyslexia Characteristics

Dyslexia can look different among preschool age students to adolescents. Characteristics include difficulties with phonological awareness, unable to recognize speech sounds, rote memory for pronunciation and sounds, fluency, spelling, and writing (Karimupfumbi &

Dwarika, 2022). Another component of dyslexia can be seen in difficulties with reading comprehension, such as struggling to recall story features, failure to correctly answer questions and failure to complete reading at a timely manner. (IDA 2017; Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022).

School age children, ages 5-18 can possess the following characteristics of dyslexia:

- Preschool
- Delay in learning to talk
- Difficulty with rhyming
- Difficulty pronouncing words (e.g., “pusgetti” for “spaghetti,” “mawn lower” for “lawnmower”)
- Poor auditory memory for nursery rhymes and chants
- Difficulty adding new vocabulary words
- Inability to recall the right word (word retrieval)
- Trouble learning and naming letters and numbers and remembering the letters in his/ her name
- Aversion to print (e.g., doesn’t enjoy following along if a book is read aloud)

  Kindergarten and First Grade
- Difficulty breaking words into smaller parts, or syllables (e.g., “baseball” can be pulled apart into “base” “ball” or “napkin” can be pulled apart into “nap” “kin”)
- Difficulty identifying and manipulating sounds in syllables (e.g., “man” sounded out as /m/ /ă//n/)
- Difficulty remembering the names of letters and recalling their corresponding sounds
- Difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)

- Difficulty spelling words the way they sound (phonetically) or remembering letter sequences in very common words seen often in print (e.g., “sed” for “said”)

Second Grade and Third Grade

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty recognizing common sight words (e.g., “to,” “said,” “been”)
- Difficulty decoding single words
- Difficulty recalling the correct sounds for letters and letter patterns in reading
- Difficulty connecting speech sounds with appropriate letter or letter combinations and omitting letters in words for spelling (e.g., “after” spelled “eftr”)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Reliance on picture clues, story theme, or guessing at words
- Difficulty with written expression

Fourth Grade through Sixth Grade

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty reading aloud (e.g., fear of reading aloud in front of classmates)
- Avoidance of reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Acquisition of less vocabulary due to reduced independent reading

- Use of less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell than more appropriate words (e.g., “big” instead of “enormous”) 4
- Reliance on listening rather than reading for comprehension

Middle School and High School

- Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:
- Difficulty with the volume of reading and written work
- Frustration with the amount of time required and energy expended for reading
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading isslow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Difficulty with written assignments
- Tendency to avoid reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty learning a foreign language

Postsecondary

- Many of the previously described behaviors may remain problematic along with the following:
- Difficulty pronouncing names of people and places or parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places
- Difficulty with word retrieval
- Difficulty with spoken vocabulary
- Difficulty completing the reading demands for multiple course requirements

- Difficulty with notetaking
- Difficulty with written production
- Difficulty remembering sequences (e.g., mathematical and/or scientific formulas)

(Texas Education Agency; Dyslexia Handbook, 2021)

These characteristics of dyslexia within an educational settings are supported by dyslexia researcher Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2020), Li Yin et al. (2020) and Washburn et al. (2016).

Early Identification

Dyslexia is a common condition affecting up to 5% of the population (Shaywitz, 1996). In school, dyslexia can have a significant impact on a students' ability to learn and achieve their academic potential (Lindstrom, 2019). It can be difficult to identify, and many students with dyslexia do not receive the appropriate intervention or support needed (Lindstrom, 2019; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007).

Dyslexia identifications are often made at the end of primary school, when children are between 8-10 years old (third to fifth grade) (Bogdanowicz, 2003). Texas is one of the few states that have dyslexia legislation that includes a definition for dyslexia, screening criteria, state handbook, and professional development. Fletcher et al. (2020) notes screenings for dyslexic students were developed based on the results of a study found that children who exhibited signs or symptoms of dyslexia were more likely to have lower IQs and poorer reading skills than students without dyslexia. The screens are brief, consisting of only six questions, and are designed to be administered to students in the early grades (Kindergarden-first grade).

The screeners are intended to help teachers identify children who may be at risk for dyslexia and provide them with additional support before the condition becomes more severe. The screeners are currently being tested in a small number of schools (Tolson & Krnac 2015;

Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022). If they are found to be effective, the screeners may become more widespread and help to ensure students with dyslexia receive the support they need to learn and succeed.

Early identification and intervention are critical to the success of dyslexia students. Research has demonstrated children who are considered at risk for dyslexia have a greater outcome if identified early and provided appropriate interventions (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007). This instruction would consist of direct systematic instruction, with visual, auditorial, kinesthetic and tactile (VAKT) embedded within the instruction. Some interventions proposed such as teacher-administered, academic therapist administered, or medical professional administered are more likely to be effective than others (Fletcher et al., 2020; Lindstrom, 2019). It will be important for future research to determine which interventions are most successful in helping dyslexic students. For instance, interventions that are brief and teacher-administered may be more effective than those that are longer and require the involvement of a professional. Additionally, it will be important to determine the cost and logistics of implementing different interventions, as well as the effectiveness of those interventions in helping dyslexic students.

In this context, the intervention process typically starts in the classroom using the Simple View of Reading. Simple View Reading (SVR) model is defined as alphabetic coding which involves detecting word boundaries through letter-to-sound correspondences, however, decoding and language comprehension are equally crucial for reading comprehension as demonstrated by the SVR equation $R = D \times L$ (Kaye et al., 2022; Staden, 2016). SVR is a static model, it merely captures an individual's comprehension ability at one point in time as opposed to monitoring their development through multiple phases. Explaining progression in reading skills is not the

main objective, but highlighting the combined levels of decoding and language comprehension at one moment is (Kaye et al., 2022; Lonigan, Burgess & Schatschneider, 2018; Staden, 2016).

SVR acknowledges the importance of decoding and language comprehension for a successful reader but falls short of providing specific recommendations on instructional protocols, to enhance reading proficiency among children (Kaye et al., 2022; Lonigan, Burgess & Schatschneider, 2018). Interventions should focus on improving decoding abilities since kids usually possess stronger language understanding compared to their capability in recognizing words when they start schooling (Kaye et al., 2022; Staden, 2016).

Dyslexia interventions commonly use the Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach, and a commonly employed method for teaching reading skills involves a multisensory approach that specifically uses synthetic phonics and is based on the SVR theory (Kaye et al., 2022). Characteristics of the" OG approach is a systematic, sequential, multisensory, synthetic and phics-based approach to teaching reading" (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006., p.1). In regard to the efficacy of OG techniques there is some research available, the findings are insufficient in terms of scientific support for OG interventions (Kaye et al., 2022).

Educators must acquire an understanding of dyslexia as a neurobiological origin disorder, recognize the signs and characteristics, and provided appropriate interventions for students showing signs of dyslexia (Moats, 1994, 1995; Moats & Lyon, 1996; Rath, 1994). A solution to the problem can be taking a standardized approach to screening and identifying and providing interventions and accommodations (Moats & Lyon, 1996) Early identification holds the key to successful remediation for students with dyslexia (Tolson & Krnac, 2015).

Identifying dyslexia can be a daunting task. Therefore, researchers Kaye et al. (2022) aimed to determine if it is a possible to distinguish between first-grade students susceptible for dyslexia

and those experiencing initial challenges on their path to becoming proficient readers, without detectable signs of dyslexia. This study focused on evaluating 36 first-grade students from different school districts, using a variety of assessment instruments both pre-intervention and post-intervention. Highlighting the need for effective short-term interventions with personalized teaching is crucial for students experiencing difficulties in their academic performance. However, accurately screening for dyslexia can be a challenge despite several states having implemented related legislation (Moats & Lyon, 1996; Kaye et al., 2022). This study takes a closer look at whether Reading Recovery proves to be an effective short-term intervention while exploring research inquiries pertaining to recognizing signs of dyslexia and comparing characteristics found in students with or without Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery is based on Clay's (2005) complex literacy processing theory and the focus of Reading Recovery is on perceptual and cognitive behaviors' development in reading and writing through following a cognitive apprenticeship approach (Kaye et al., 2022). By developing integrated working systems this instruction targets improvement in both reading and writing skills. Moreover, reading is regarded as a challenging problem-solving exercise by Clay (2005), and it gets stronger through repetition (Kaye et al., 2022). The main idea behind this instruction is to teach students about how to read and write texts with an emphasis on phonological and orthographic information, in order to address the specific challenges that each student faces when it comes to learning and promote accelerated progress along with the development of a self-extending system (Moats,1994; Kaye et al., 2022).

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act underwent a revision that introduced response-to-intervention (RTI) models, which aimed to provide early intervention and identify students with learning disabilities after they have received sufficient instruction and

support (Otaiba et al., 2004; Ohl et al., 2013). This RTI model is structured into three tiers: Tier 1 focuses on high-quality general education, Tier 2 provides more personalized small-group instruction led by teachers, and Tier 3 delivers intensive instruction from qualified educators specializing in reading.

Research findings have revealed the positive impact of implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3 reading interventions for students falling within these tiers, resulting in improved reading success. For students who need reading intervention, it is important to act quickly, early intervention can significantly improve a student's readiness for reading (Ohl et al., 2013; Coyne et al., 2018).

Researchers have evaluated the effects of providing Tier 2 intervention to students in grades 1 through 3 discovered that supplemental Tier 2 intervention significantly improved students' phonemic awareness and decoding outcomes (Coyne et al., 2018; Otaiba et., 2004). This highlights the importance of targeted interventions tailored to each student's unique needs when participating in RTI intervention.

The RTI model has proven to be invaluable in enabling earlier identification and support for struggling readers, preventing academic setbacks, and fostering reading success (Coyne et al., 2018; Otaiba et., 2004; Ohl et al., 2013). By providing appropriate interventions at the right tiers, educators can effectively address individual students' specific needs, promoting their overall academic growth.

Integrating the RTI models in the education system has proven to be beneficial, offering a systematic approach to supporting students and meeting their distinct learning requirements. This strategy promotes the significance of early intervention, as it allows educators dedicated time during the school day to provide individualized support to students who are exhibiting reading

deficits, thereby improving the students overall reading ability (Otaiba et., 2004; Ohl et al., 2013).

Demystifying Dyslexia

Dyslexia is surrounded by several common myths, which researchers have tried to dispel through comprehensive research. One common myth suggests dyslexia is caused by difficulty with vision. Studies conducted by both Riddick (1995) and Greene (2015) have discovered there is no significant link between vision problems and dyslexia. Dyslexia is a neurological disorder that specifically affects reading ability (Shaywitz& Shaywitz, 2020). Riddick (1995), Snowling, Hulme, and Nation (2020), and Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2020) all highlight individuals with dyslexia encounter difficulties in learning how to read with fluency and accuracy. To avoid biases and misconceptions it is essential to equip educators with proper skills to support these students with dyslexia.

Another misconception is the reversal of letters when writing automatically classifies students as having some form of dyslexia. Letter reversals are considered common for students under second grade, according to Greene (2015), this does not always imply a student has dyslexia. The assumption dyslexic students have low intelligence is another myth. When educating educators about age-appropriate reading and writing skill you can avoid misinterpretations. The assumption that dyslexic individuals have a below average IQ is false, Shaywitz (1996), Green (2015), and Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2020) have proven students with dyslexia typically have an average or above-average IQ. However, having dyslexia can show challenges in other academic areas.

The perception of dyslexia can vary among different countries across the world. For instance, in Pakistan, Naeem et al. (2014) found, due to the increasing levels of illiteracy rates

and different government policies the term dyslexia is not widely recognized and considered unbelievable. In many other developing countries, it is also true and highlighted by Makgato et al. (2022) and Naeem et al. (2014), compared to the scientific approach in developed countries like the United States. To ensure dyslexic individuals receive support and accommodations, it is imperative educators increase their understanding of dyslexia's neurological origins on a globe scale (Makgato et al., 2022)

The myth that dyslexia is influenced by laziness, or intelligence, has been investigated by many researchers. Handler (2016) and Barr (2018) studies have highlighted other factors, such as reading strategies and learning style play a more prominent role in dyslexia factors. Dyslexia is a multifaceted reading disability and individuals are seen on the spectrum from high functioning to low functioning. Both researchers Riddick (1995) and Handler (2016) emphasize dyslexia does not have a one-size fits all approach. Dyslexia identification requires multiple accommodations and interventions to accurately be able to support a student's accuracy and fluency.

These studies collectively demystify dyslexia, shedding light on dyslexia being neurological in nature and dyslexia's unique characteristics. Research has allowed educators to understand and supporting students with dyslexia without bias. By promoting a better understanding of dyslexia, as a society we can create a inclusive and supportive education system.

Foundational Literacy Skills

Having an understanding and mastery over basic literary abilities are crucial requirements for teachers to teach young learners to read (Hudson., 2021; Snowling & Hulme, 2011; Abreu, Fricke & Wealer, 2020) However, many instructors possessed limited awareness regarding foundational literacy proficiencies (Hudson., 2021; Paige et al., 2021). To address this gap,

Hudson et al. (2012) and his team of researchers argue the development of student literacy depends on teacher preparation and content knowledge in the individual's literacy abilities of phonological awareness, phonics, and morphological awareness to be able to teach effectively (Moats, 1994, 2009).

Teacher education programs offer more extensive training in the science of reading (Koch & Spörer, 2017; Share 2021). Training in this fundamental area will help teachers to teach science of reading skills effectively (Hudson et al., 2021; Share 2021). Many educators seem to have no idea about the correct progression for instructing these competencies. To be able to teach basic literacy abilities efficiently, educators need a complete grasp on both instruction series and appraisal approaches (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007; Vadasy & Sanders, 2011). Educators should be capable of identifying the areas where students are facing difficulties (Hudson et al., 2021). If educators are able to understand and apply basic literacy abilities within the classroom setting, educators can offer personalized instruction which will aid in enhancing educators teaching skills. Hudson et al., (2021) research found teachers who received extra education in the field of reading sciences exhibited a greater grasp on foundational literacy abilities.

Reading involves similar cognitive processes regardless of the language (Share, 2021). According to Share (2021), better reading outcomes for children could be achieved through a more comprehensive understanding of the science of reading. Teacher education programs should offer more comprehensive instruction on foundational literacy skills. Schools and school districts should offer continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to ensure they stay current with their knowledge and skills (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2016; Wong & Russak, 2020; Reed, 2021). To teach reading effectively, educators must comprehend the cognitive procedures at play. Therefore, it is suggested educational institutions must furnish their

teachers with resources and support for this endeavor (Piasta et al., 2009; Peires et al., 2021; Hudson et al., 2021). For children who are potentially at risk, evidence-based teaching techniques can have a big impact on their future academic success (Snowling and Hulme, 2011).

Systematic Literacy Instruction

Systematic literacy instruction is a phonics-based instruction. This instruction allows for individuals to show growth in the areas of comprehension and fluency due to the carefully planned nature of the content. Reading does not develop naturally nor do skills for specific decoding, word recognition, and reading comprehension. Reading must be taught directly and systematically. Explicit research has demonstrated students reach a higher level of achievement with this explicit instruction (Gill & Kozloff, 2004; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

The Orton-Gillingham Literacy is necessary for fostering fluency and reading comprehension. This approach focuses on letter and sound relationships, automaticity, and basic concepts of spelling and writing (Lemke, 2019; Ritchey & Goeke, 2006). This systematic approach is largely used for students with reading differences. Researchers have found a significant differences between students who received one year's worth of reading instruction from a teacher using the Orton-Gillingham Literacy Approach and those who did not receive the same amount of instructional time from a teacher who had not used an Orton-Gillingham Literacy Approach curriculum (Lemke, 2019; Davis, 2013; Gill & Kozloff, 2004).

When comparing the Orton-Gillingham Literacy approach to Houghton-Mifflin Basal Reading Program, which uses the whole language classroom, students that use an Orton-Gillingham Literacy Approach curriculum student has also indicated growth in the areas of phonological awareness, decoding, and reading comprehension while using the Houghton-

Mifflin Basal Reading Program students showed growth in the area of reading comprehension (Joshi, Dahlgren, & Boulware-Gooden, 2002; Davis, 2013).

Systematic literacy instruction is instrumental in facilitating reading growth (Lemke, 2019). Explicit instruction and literacy concepts are proven to be highly effective in supporting a student with a reading deficit (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020; Lemke, 2019; Davis, 2013; Gill & Kozloff, 2004).

Identifying Literacy Skills

Preservice teachers lack knowledge of basic language constructs that are needed to teach at-risk learners at any level, and this needs to change (Cunningham et al., 2004; Washburn, Joshi, & Binks-Cantrell, 2016; Wong & Russak, 2020). Experts tell us teacher preparation programs are not preparing novice educators to achieve mastery of essential literacy skills. According to Cunningham et al., (2004) 20% of K-3 classroom teachers were unable to correctly identify the number of phonemes in a set of words, and only 60% of teachers could recognize common irregular words. This is a logical claim when examining elementary school preservice teachers' knowledge of basic language concept and their experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics.

Addressing the needs of students with dyslexia requires knowledge of multi-dimensional approaches to understanding the structure of language. McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard (2019), examined the potential association between training provided through accredited teacher training programs and the level of teacher's knowledge of five literacy domains: phonological sensitivity, phonemic awareness, decoding, encoding, and morphology. All of the participants held a bachelor's or master's degree in the field of education. They also all have a teaching certification and have taught for 12 or more years. From this study they found the educators were weak in the

area of spelling and morphology, suggesting a need for improvement in teacher training in that area and provide effective professional development (McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019). This highlights the necessity for improving teaching amongst educators and providing professional development in these specific literacy areas.

For example, Piasta et al., (2009) found when examining teacher knowledge of explicit decoding instruction in connection to students' word-reading gains; teachers who have more knowledge in explicit instruction students showed higher gains than students who come from classroom teachers that do not have as much knowledge in decoding instruction. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating language concepts into preservice teacher education which will contribute to more effective teaching approaches. Poor reading abilities can have a long-lasting effect on students' progress in today's classrooms (McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019, Piasta et al., 2009; Bell, 2013).

Preservice Education Regarding Dyslexia

The global and national levels have demonstrated many preservice educators have misconceptions about dyslexia (Peltier, Heddy & Peltier, 2020; Greene, 2015; Naeem et al., 2014). The issues involved are in helping preservice teachers differentiate literacy instruction for diverse learners in an urban school. To address this issue researchers suggests a practice-based model should be implemented, where teachers are given multiple opportunities to focus on observation theories through guided practice under the direct supervision of a professor or veteran teacher (DeGraff, Schmidt & Waddell, 2015; Acaray, 2020; Durrance, 2017).

Clinical experience through internships provides future teachers with the necessary experiences for teaching reading effectively. This model bridges the gap between theory and

practice in addition to bridging the gap between teacher preparation programs in K-12 schools (DeGraff, Schmidt & Waddell, 2015; Acaray, 2020).

In contrast, a recent study found education majors' rate themselves as moderately responsible for students with dyslexia education progression (White, Mather & Kirpatrick, 2020). There seems to be a lack of knowledge about how critical reading instruction for children with dyslexia is (Acaray, 2020; Durrance, 2017). Educators seems to be uncertain about the application of decodable versus no decodable material in training, and educators also seems to have difficulty distinguishing between speech perception (recognizing and modifying sounds in actual conversation) and phonics (attaching sounds to written symbols) (Acaray, 2020; White, Mather & Kirpatrick, 2020). Fundamental reading abilities are a challenge for these already identified with dyslexia.

There is an implementation gap when it comes to dyslexia, as a result of teachers already knowing what they need to know to help their students as well as many others (White, Mather & Kirpatrick, 2020). Addressing the gap within preservice education will ensure all students receive the proper support they need to succeed in reading.

Preparing Educators

You cannot just simply watch a good teacher teach in order to become a good teacher (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Leko & Brownell; Cunningham et al., 2004; Roberts et al, 2013). Preservice teachers come into the classroom with their own set of bias and experiences (Acaray et al, 2020; Leko & Brownell, 2011). Research on preservice special education teachers' attitudes towards children with disabilities, researchers found there was "no significant difference between preservice special education teachers' age gender, class level and democratic tendencies (Acaray et al, 2020, p.340). The impact of preservice teacher preparation

programs relying on the education's engagement in the process and shaping of their own experiences (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Robert et al., 2013).

Preservice teacher preparation programs use practicum experiences to help establish necessary skills for first year teachers (Roberts et al, 2013). Preservice special education teachers need support from a cooperating teacher who can model and support preservice education; in developing effective strategies that can support the cognitive development around instructional decisions (Cunningham et al., 2004; Roberts et al, 2013). In recent years, research indicates the role of field experience using a cooperating teacher and the need for specific feedback, that can support, and guide preservice teachers to promote a positive belief system (Leko & Brownell; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013).

Research indicates a significant difference between preservice education teachers' knowledge of special education laws (Acarcy we al., 2020; Cunningham et al., 2004) Contributing to attitude towards special education children's rights, preservice educators that have a positive attitude towards children rights have more courses aligned with educational law to support democratic tendencies among special education preservice teachers (Acarcy et al, 2020). Cooperating teachers can help foster critical thinking by modeling such behavior these results make sense (Roberts et al., 2013; Acarcy et al, 2020). Roberts et al., (2013), suggest preservice educators need to think like a teacher and participant in joint with a cooperating teacher to help develop practices for preservice teachers; So, these future teachers can successfully start their own career in a special education classroom.

It is critical for preservice teachers to leave their training programs competent and knowledge teachers of reading (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Jimenez-Silva, et al., 2012.

Preparing preservice teachers to teach and have confidence is also a key component (Jimenez-Silva, et al., 2012). Preservice teachers need experience in research-based methods of instruction rather than just receiving lectures or reading textbook information (Jimenez-Silva, et al., 2012; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). A study involving 197 undergraduate education major students, it was found

> to build confidence, curricula cannot solely be delivered to teachers in pre-packaged lectures or texts covering content that focuses solely on diversity. This type of prescriptive formula does not engage the preservice teachers in understanding how particular methods of instruction are (p. 23).

Teacher training programs have limited impact on changing preservice teachers' beliefs, which has influenced how preservice teacher internalize the content within these preparation programs (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Roberts et al., 2013; Leko & Brownell, 2011). So, "the relationship between teacher preparation and what preservice teachers learn…is not unidirectional; instead, it depends on what preservice teachers contribute to their opportunities to learn (Robert et al., 2013 p. 230)."

Teaching At-Risk Students

Alternative education campuses are designed to provide students who are considered or have been labeled as at-risk of dropping and failing to succeed in a traditional setting an opportunity to learn in another environment. At-risk students have unique needs as they are associated with a lack of motivation to succeed, low performance in education, lack of social skills, and depression, to name a few since their needs are mostly neglected (Legault, Green-Demers & Pelletier , Lewis, & McCann, 2009; Xu et al., 2022). The current education system is failing at-

risk minority students as it is mainly focused on standardization and competition rather than meeting the needs of the students (Lewis, & McCann, 2009; Xu et al., 2022). However, studies indicate teachers have a significant role in creating an environment that meets students' needs. As a result, there is a need for professional development, teacher preparation, support, and culturally responsive practices to meet the needs of at-risk students ((Kaufman, Owings & National Center for Education Statistics, 1992, Lewis, & McCann, 2009; Xu et al., 2022). Teachers should have positive dispositions, such as respect for the students, a commitment to their learning, and a willingness to work with at-risk students and find agreeable solutions. Additionally, educators should employ effective practices such as creating a culturally responsive classroom, providing personalized instruction, and engaging in reflective practices (Lewis & McCann, 2009; Xu et al., 2022).

It is said the "idea behind an alternative school is to provide special education opportunities for those needing different options from the usual curriculum offered in mainstream schools" (Lehr & Lange, 2003, p. 59). Specific features such as personalized instruction by teachers who are focused on individual student needs in a nurturing environment seem to be the most effective classroom in an alternative education center.

In general, teachers must be aware of the student's needs, understand their cultural background, and build positive relationships with them (Bogdanowicz, 2003; Lewis, & McCann, 2009; Xu et al., 2022). Teachers should focus on creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, engaging with students in meaningful dialogue, and providing personalized instruction to meet the needs of all students (Xu et al., 2022). Government and schools may implement different social-emotional programs to help the at-risk minority meet their academic needs, where teachers are a focal point. Teaching reforms must first impact the teacher's day-to-

day classroom operations to affect student learning (Lehr & Lange, 2003; Lewis, & McCann, 2009; Xu et al., 2022).

School-to-Prison Pipeline

We currently live in a country who led the nation with a statistic of 1 of 100 men and women begin incarcerated (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011). It is said to be because of the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP). There are so many widespread definitions of STPP, for this research we will focus on STPP in relation to "policies and practices…with respect to school discipline, in the public schools and juvenile justice systems that decreases the probability of negative life outcomes, …through involvement in the juvenile justice system. (Skiba et al., 2014, p.1)." These zero-tolerance policies within the school system are the typical students fighting, skipping class, and breaking school rules. These minor infractions are being handled by assigning students with school detention, placing students on suspension, and alternative school placements for minor infractions (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014; Winn et al., 2011). However, some small offenses are being handled by local law enforcement if the district finds the infraction necessary. (Winn et al., 2011). From there, students start to become disengaged in their education process and become targets for disciplinary issues (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; Winn et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Policies are not the only predeterminer to cause the STPP, research has found through research, it is also race, suspension record educational background and if the students are identified as having a special education label. Since different research studies use varied definitions for disabilities, the statistics on disabled adolescents in the juvenile justice system might not be as accurate as those who consider factors like race, ethnicity, class, and other demographic characteristics. (Redfield & Nance, 2016; Skiba et al., 2014).

Black and brown students who have a learning disability are three times more likely to be suspended, and four times more likely to be held in a correctional facility than their white peers (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; Redfield & Nance, 2016). There is substantial evidence that shows the combination of race and disabilities as a predictor of becoming a repeat offender. Juveniles with a mental health diagnosis that is not considered a learning disability are the strongest predictor for both minorities and white juveniles to end up with 21-50% chance of incarcerated and/or repeat offenders (Redfield & Nance, 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). The Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA) requires special education students be placed in a mainstream classroom or in the least restrictive environment whenever possible. However, these same students are disproportionately isolated or excluded from their peers and/or places in an alternative education school. Research has found students with disabilities spend on average just about 50% of their time in school outside of the mainstream classroom setting and 74% of students labeled with an intellectual disability spend less than 80% in a mainstream classroom setting (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

Lack of literacy practices is another problem that leads to the STPP. (Winn, 2011; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Students in high poverty communities are not given the necessary tools to learn phonics, decoding and comprehension (Winn et al., 2011). These marginalized groups are already behind and due to the lack of funding they are receiving poor curriculum that teach the students surface level material.

Alternative Education Campuses

Alternative education schools play a critical role in today's education system. Alternative education campuses have been known to house "disruptive or dangerous" students from grades 3-12 (Judi et al., 2010. p1). Due to no regulation, students who attend these campuses are facing

consequences. The consequences steam from criminalizing students but exclusion, based on race, poverty, and disability (Kliner, Porch & Ferris, 2002; Vanderhaar, 2010). In order to understand the likelihood of placement in disciplinary alternative schools and how it is consistently related to predicators and the probability of juvenile future juvenile imprisonment researchers founds the findings were very similar to the incarceration rate in the United States with 1 in 10 children entering 3rd grade will experience disciplinary place by the 12th grade (Judi et al., 2010; Redfield & Nance, 2016;). Risk factors were race, previous education, retention, special education, truancy along with suspension (Vanderhaar, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014).

According to Kliner, Porch & Ferris (2002), alternative education campuses in large districts with a high population of minorities and low socioeconomic status students are highly unlikely to collaborate with the juvenile justice system and local police department. (Kliner, Porch & Ferris, 2002). In contrast, Vanderhaar (2010) research highlights the significant racial gap with 13.1% of black students in 3rd grade were place in the districts alternative education campus compared to their white peers with 3.8%. African American males seems to be overrepresented in student placements as well as overrepresented in detained as juveniles. The results also found, out of the 544 students that participated in the study and placed in the district's alternative education campus, 215 of the students experienced juvenile detention before 12th grade (Vanderhaar, 2010).

These placements suggest alternative education campuses may be increasing the juvenile detention rates rather than reducing the rate of juvenile delinquent and providing opportunities for behavior reform (Kliner, Porch & Ferris, 2002; Vanderhaar, 2010; Lehr & Lange, 2003). While some districts may view these campuses as a positive alternative for students, the findings

of Vanderhaar (2020) and Kliner, Porch & Ferris (2002) raise concern about have these educational placements are stigmatized and criminalizing for today's youth.

Learning Disabilities and Incarceration

Topics on the relationship between individuals that have been identified as having dyslexia or a reading deficit, and crime are not new (Deuel, 1981; Elbeheri et. al., 2009). Students, whom have dyslexia characteristics that go undiagnosed that receive insufficient educational support, may feel less-than their peers; Influencing students to possess challenging behavior as a way of responding to insufficient support (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020; Elbeheri et. al., 2009). This challenging behavior can then play as a way of achieving recognition by school peers.

Having poor reading skills as a mid- to late adolescence is associated with an increased risk for challenging behaviors (Chiarello, Thompson, & Sowell, 2011; Cassidy et al., 2021). Julian Cox, who is currently serving a life sentence in HM Prison Gartree, is convinced that him having dyslexia played a crucial role in the incidents that resulted in his arrest. Cox was an undiagnosed dyslexic student using coping strategies to get by which he characterized himself as having a "mega problem" and low self-esteem (Cox, 2001). Researchers Elbeheri, Everatt & Malki (2009), notes due to dyslexic screeners not being assessed until the child is between the age of 8 -10 allow students like Cox to experience years of failure in literacy, resulting in a lack of motivation to learn, with consequently the reduction in one's self-esteem (Cox, 2001, Elbeheri et. al., 2009).

Although, having dyslexia is not a prerequisite to ending up in the juvenal system, 97% of inmates reported having been in special education or have received reading accommodations in school (Cassidy et. al., 2021). In a study conducted in two maximum-security prisons in

Louisiana, researchers found 47% of the participants were identified as dyslexic. Among the individuals, 36% were considered proficient, and 17% showed signs of cognitive impairment. Both men and women in the study reported experiencing some sort of academic and behavioral issues in school, which ultimately resulted in 87% of the prisoners having dropped out of school (Cassidy et al., 2021). Inequalities and disparities between racial groups in the educational and criminal justice systems may be fueled by the school-to-prison pipeline, which also may cause serious, long-lasting harm to students. Early identification of dyslexia may potentially avoid the school-to-prison pipeline (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020; Cassidy et al., 2021; Elbeheri et. al., 2009).

Summary

Reading impacts the future of students who struggle to acquire proficiencies. It is important to analyze how states can hold teacher certification programs accountable for the lack of teacher education knowledge. A few literature reviews were described showcasing their evidence and why targeting the training of teachers working with at-risk students experiencing difficulties is necessary. Research indicates teacher knowledge impacts students' reading outcomes and that direct and informed instruction should be provided by properly prepared teachers to improve student achievement (Koch & Spörer, 2017; McMahan, Oslund, & Odegard, 2019). Districts providing nationwide ongoing professional development to educators while still providing resources educators can use to build on have proven to be the most effective for teaching reading instruction by national expert studies (DeGraff, Schmidt & Waddell, 2015; Reed, 2021; Washburn, Joshi, & Binks-Cantrell, 2016). As of now, no evidence indicates the most effective approach; and improvement is necessary. However, to enhance the quality of

instruction, it is important to understand phonemic awareness, sequential phonics, and systematic instruction studies (Shaywitz, 1998).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers who work in an alternative education center for at-risk students in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia.This study will look at teachers' perspective of characteristics of dyslexia at an alternative educations center. The indicator of this design is: (a) document analysis, (b) interviews, and (c) questionnaires. Data Collection and analysis procedures are presented along with the trustworthiness.

Research Design

To conduct this study, qualitative phenomenological method is most appropriate because it enables the voices of participants to be heard and examined rather than only equating their perspectives to a number value (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A phenomenological approach is the most appropriate method for this research because it captures the all-around understanding from the experiences of individuals who have undergone experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This research focuses on teachers' experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics, and is transcendental phenomenology in nature. Transcendental phenomenology study was the best fit to understand human experiences, in particular the experiences of educators, and their understanding of dyslexia characteristics. This transcendental phenomenological study is composed of secondary teachers' experiences of identifying dyslexia characteristics. Through interviews, questionnaire entries, along with document analysis, the researcher will explore the phenomenon of inclusive practices in an alternative education center. Kubat (2018) notes qualitative interviews, interviewer notes, and open-ended questions generally yield meaningful

information. Utilizing the perspectives of educators in different course topics (math, science, reading, and social studies), the researcher will compile the information to uncover emergent and dynamic evidence that will compare the various levels of experiences with this population (Creswell et al, 2018).

Research Question(s)

Data is collected from 10 educators that work at the secondary level in grades 6-12. These educators are from all content core subject areas. The participants were chosen based on being current staff members with an active Texas teacher certification teaching at the secondary level (Grades 6-12th). Child find law gives educators the legal right to recommend, "children who are *suspected of being a child with a disability (Zirkel, 2015, p.2)*". This allows any educator or staff member access to request a dyslexia evaluation on a student if dyslexia is suspected. The research question to gain more understand and knowledge of the phenomenon are as followed:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of teachers in secondary classrooms recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia on an alternative education campus?

Sub-Question One

How have secondary school teachers identified children in an alternative education setting who exhibit dyslexia-like characteristics.

Sub-Question Two

What are the experiences of secondary teachers teaching students with a reading deficit?

Sub-Question Three

How has previous professional development assisted teachers in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia.

Participants and Setting

To be considered eligible, participants must have experienced the study's phenomenon, as highlighted by Moustakas (1994). The selection of sites is dependent on the chosen research design, as emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018).

Participants

To eliminate the possible impact of outside variables and assure the generalizability of results, quantitative research calls for the standardization of methods and the random selection of participants. In contrast, participants are chosen for qualitative research with a specific aim in mind, helping to better inform the research questions and understand the characteristics of dyslexia.. Participants in this study are teachers of all content subject areas that are student facing for an extended period of the day. This would include all certified core classroom teachers. Out of the 54 staff members on campus, 10 educators were selected randomly. The sample were a purposive sample because it will allow the participants to provide insight on the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

An email inviting all 10 secondary certified teachers to participate in the study was sent. The invitation included a description of the purpose and problem of the study along with the procedure that was conducted through this process. Once all documents from the participants were returned and acknowledged with a signature, the interviews commenced after IRB approval.

Setting

The setting for this study is an alternative education center in a top performing district within North Texas. This district is home to approximately 53,000 students and 4,500 educators. This urban alternative school provides temporary placement for behavior management, alternative to suspension or expulsion. The primary goal for this campus is for the students to successfully return to their home campus without losing classroom instructional days. The teacher to student ratios never exceeds 1:15 at one time.

According to the Texas Performance Reporting System 2020-2021 school year, the campus serves a total of 23 students in grades 6^{th}-12^{th} grade. The school's ethnic population breakdown is 5% white, 8.7% African American, 65.2% Hispanic, 4.3% Asian, 13% of the student population being identified as dyslexic or under the special education umbrella and 82.6% at-risk. The ethnic breakdown of teachers is 17.1% White, 16.6% African American, 3.8% Hispanic and 1.1% Asian. The Educational Breakdown of highest degrees held is 0.4% doctoral degree, 18.7% master's degree, 20.6% bachelor's and 0.2% no degree. Teacher experiences from highest to beginner was as follows with 4.2% over 30 years' experience, 21-30 years of experience 7.0%, 11-20 years' experience 18.0%, 6-10 years' experience 4.8% 1-5 years' experience 5.3% and beginning teacher is 0.5% (TEA, 2022).

The reason for this single school research is based on the increasing number of youth who have been involved in high-impact crimes with the city. In 2020, the local police department reported 162 minors between the ages of 10-16 have been subject to criminal charges; and 2021, that number has increased to 245 minors (Texas Department of Public Safety, 2020). More than half of these minors have attended their districts alternative education campus.

Researcher Positionality

In this section, the researcher's positionality is described. This will allow me as the researcher to articulate my motivation for conducting this study through ontological, axiological, and epistemological. In addition, an overview of the researcher's role and how my background has influenced me to conduct this research on this topic.

Interpretive Framework

Social constructivist is commonly used with phenomenological approaches. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, a social constructivist approach was utilized. Social constructivists assume individuals' experiences have influenced their social interactions and knowledge (Creswell & Post, 2018). As the researcher, general questions have been created to ask the interviewees to allow participants to share their experiences in the classroom setting working with students with a reading deficit. Through this constructivist framework, this research will seek to understand how teacher beliefs are formed within education. This research will provide insight on what teachers' experiences are with identifying dyslexia characteristics within students.

Philosophical Assumptions

In this section, the focus will be elaborating on ontological, epistemological, and axiological philosophical assumptions. Creswell and Poth (2018) the three theoretical assumptions will influence how data are collected and analyzed. Philosophical assumptions are known to be the beliefs surrounding the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher, \ assumptions are critical and can change over time. However, as research evolves, philosophical assumption can evolve as well. In the sections to come, assumptions will be explained and how they guided my research.

Ontological Assumption

An ontological assumption is characterized by "Multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35). My beliefs start from God himself. Proverbs 18:15 reads, "An intelligent heart acquired knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge." Therefore, as the researcher, it is important to me to continue to grow not only in God's word but to always learn from other experiences. When interacting with the participants, the plan is to understand their different perspectives and how they view dyslexia without having a background in the field.The participants' views guided me when developing themes within the study, to get a clear view of their own perceptions and classroom experiences.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption is the need to get close to the participants while conducting research (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The goal was to become familiar with each participant to understand how the phenomenon of teachers' experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students has impacted their classroom as a whole. My epistemological assumption of this study is teachers at the alternative education centers' perspectives will vary based on experiences. However, as the researcher, it is understood the participant's experience are not my own. My role as the researcher is to establish rapport with all the participants by telling them the "why" behind my research.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumption within research is to understand, "individual values are honored and are negotiated among individuals" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35). Creswell and Poth (2014) note that researchers should feel free to include their own view and experiences while interacting

with the participants. As a certified dyslexia therapist and having worked for a company that provides accommodations for students with reading deficits, the knowledge gained from the participants significantly influences my axiological assumptions The plan is to bracket my biases to report the truth of the phenomenon in the final report and not use my own interpretation. The goal was to keep in mind this research will impact future educators and students.

Researcher's Role

As the human instrument for this study, all interviews were conducted and analyzed to report the emerging themes, from multiple sources (Moustakas, 1994). Having been in education for the past 15 years, with only five of those years being a classroom teacher, I thought about all the students I passed on, not knowing if the students were showing visible characteristics of dyslexia or may have had a reading deficit. After obtaining my certification as a dyslexia therapist, I was thankful to have still been in the same district as the students I continued to think of, that I potentially failed because of my lack of awareness. Fortunately, I was able to provide dyslexia testing to eight or the 12 students. I would say I was surprised; However, I was not, all eight of the students showed characteristics and were identified as having dyslexia. Two of the four students I was unable to test were incarcerated and nine out of the 12 students attended the districts alternative education campus.

In my current professional role, I do not have authority over or a personal connection with any of the participants. To promote a sense of comfort, I provided a brief description of my purpose, objectives, and position regarding the topic. This briefing demonstrated transparency between me the researcher and participants. As the human instrument in this research, I gave meaning and understanding during the research analysis (Krauss, 2013)

Data Collection Plan

When collecting data, the chosen methods used will allow for insight into their perceptions. There are four types of forms of qualitative data: interviews, observation, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2018). However this study will be using three methods of data collection: interviews, documents, and questionnaires; This design is appropriate for understanding teachers' perspectives of Dyslexia and how at an alternative education center, educators identify students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia.

The initial portion of this data collection is through interviews. Field surveys and interviews are said to be one of the most effective ways to collect data (Clements, 2021). Maximizing the quality of interview data available for analysis is found to be crucial, and researcher's flexibility is essential. It is best practice for the participants to be offered multiple methods to accomplish an interview (Heath et al., 2018).

Next, the gathering of document analysis was initiated. When conducting research, using document analysis may deliver rapid results, and provide quick access to historical information (Ragin, 2014). Finally, the selected participants completed a questionnaire. Questionnaires are a fast, efficient tool to gather information to analyze subjects' behaviors, preferences, intentions, attitudes and options of a topic (Abgaz et al., 2018). They can also be collected quickly due to the researcher not needing to be present when obtaining the information collected. While analyzing all the data points, the data was looked at holistically to make data-driven conclusions.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

According to Terrell (2016), interview protocols can be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured. Qualitative one-on-one semi-structured interview method was conducted virtually

through interviews utilizing the platform Zoom. Using a semi-structured interview approach initial questions were asked, as well as follow up questions. For example, five specific questions aligned to my research questions. This created the opportunity to expand the type/amount of documented information that can be collected, and to ask follow-up questions (Terrell, 2016). The interviews will potentially be video, and audio recorded. My interview questions are open-ended to allow the participants to reflect on their beliefs, experiences, and prior classroom knowledge. The reflective nature of the questions will enable the participants to articulate their experiences while providing a full explanation related to their experiences.

Individual Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Potential Interview Questions

1. What is your definition of Dyslexia? (CRQ)
2. What do you know about children with Dyslexia? (CRQ)
3. What pre-service training have you received to prepare you for working with students with a reading deficit? (SQ3)
4. What is your perspective on receiving professional training on handling students with dyslexia? (SQ3)
5. How has your previous professional development helped you in identifying students with dyslexia? (Follow Up question: If so, can you be specific what professional development has been the most beneficial?) (SQ3)
6. What support do you find necessary to be able to successfully provide instruction to students with Dyslexia within your classroom? (SQ2)
7. How has your teaching experience developed your knowledge in relation to students who have characteristics of dyslexia? (SQ1)

8. What are the known characteristics of a student with dyslexia? (CRQ)
9. How does the inability to identify students with Dyslexia affect classroom management? (SQ1)
10. What types of experiences do alternative education center teachers have with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students? (SQ1)
11. What strategies do teachers employ to identify dyslexia characteristics in students? (SQ3)
12. What are the barriers that teachers may encounter when attempting to identify dyslexia characteristics in students? (SQ2)
13. What else would you like to contribute to this study?

Question one was intended to gain background information from the participants regarding dyslexia. Addressed sub-question one, question two aimed to understand what the participants know about dyslexia. Exploring pre-service training, question three addressed to gain an understanding of what training the participants received to prepare them for instructing students with a reading deficit. Sub-question three addressed to understand the perspective of professional development in relation to handling a student with dyslexia which is question four. Question five addressed sub-question three by exploring specific professional development opportunities. By gaining insight into how to provide instruction, question six addressed sub-question two. To gain understanding of the teaching experiences, question seven addressed sub-question one. The central research on the characteristics of dyslexia is addressed by question eight. Questions nine and 10 addressed sub-question one to understand the participant's experience in identifying characteristics and classroom management. Addressing sub-question three, question 11 gains insight into teaching strategies when identifying students with dyslexia characteristics. respective

buildings. Question 12 addressed sub-question two to exploring barriers teachers may be faced with, when identifying a student with dyslexia characteristics.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

A semi-structured interview protocol was administered to teachers at an alternative education campus. The interview included open-ended questions about their experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students; each interview was bounded by a specific time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After interviews were concluded, the audio was transcribed and stored digitally under the participant's pseudonym. To assure accurate transcribing the transcribed interviews were sent to each participant. The interviewee had a chance to check for inaccuracies. From there, each interview was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the responses. Responses were analyzed to identify patterns and trends in the data.

Document Analysis Data Collection Approach

Another source of data collected was documents. Analyzing data provides an understanding of dyslexia or special education profession development is being provided to educators. Yin (2014) notes that obtaining documents for analysis is a relevant data source. However, these documents have their disadvantages. The information given can be biased from the participants (Yin, 2014). To avoid bias, documentation analysis is important. Professional development transcript reports were analyzed as part of this case study. The participants were asked to submit records from the last three years of professional development while working at the alternative school campus. Access to the professional development transcript of the registered professional development was given by the participants. The importance of collecting data, as it can reduce any issues or challenges of reflexivity (Yin, 2014).

Document Analysis Data Analysis Plan

The initial step in analyzing the data from the professional development transcripts received were carefully examined. Followed by the categorization of the documents by teacher years of experience. From there, the professional development course documents were analyzed and highlighted based on the significant commonalities to understand the essence of the phenomenological experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Once complete, the common words and categories from the participants were analyzed from each data source and derived themes.

Questionnaires Data Collection Approach

Qualitative questionnaires are known to consist of a variety of open-ended questions, true/false questions, and dyslexia perspective questions. They are self-administered with fixed order to all participants. Participants were able to type their response in their own words based on their prior knowledge. Questionnaires can be used as an effective tool for categorizing responses. "Qualitative survey datasets can provide richness and depth, when viewed in their entirety, even if individual responses might themselves be brief" (Braun et al., 2020).

Questionnaire Questions

1. How did your preservice experience prepare you to understand the transmission of dyslexia to family members?
2. Have you used any multi-sensory teaching methods when identifying dyslexics?
3. What is the relationship between word difficulty level and Dyslexia?
4. What strategies have you found most successful in identifying dyslexia characteristics in your students?
5. Could you tell us a bit about the process you go through when you suspect a student might have Dyslexia?
6. How have you seen Dyslexia affect the learning progress of your students?

7. What challenges have you faced when working with dyslexic students?
8. What advice would you give to other teachers who are trying to identify dyslexia characteristics in their students?

Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

As part of the data analysis plan for this phenomenological study, the questionnaire data was prepared and organized, allowing themes to be identified using both deductive and inductive coding. Each participant had a pseudonym and responses were summarized, and relationships between patterns and relationships in the data is explained. Credibility was ensured through the data from each participant verifying responses. Reporting was the final step to the data analysis plan for the questionnaire portion (Creswell, 2018). An in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences are provided by the findings, which was presented as a narrative report with key themes and representative quotes from the participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study can address credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Creswell,2013). Accurately representing the data gathered throughout a study is imperative (Creswell, 2013). Credibility, confirmability, and transferability all work together to strengthen and support the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Credibility was addressed through the use of interviews, document analysis and questionnaires. Triangulation allows for multiple data points to be used to develop a textual-structural description of a participant's experience of the phenomenon accurately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data analysis was returned to the participants so each participant can check

for accuracy. Then the data were analyzed a second time to ensure accuracy for my personal research credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As we as leaning on doctoral students and staff to maintain a level of peer accountability to help maintain proper procedures during the research process. Allowing the participants an opportunity to review interpret data to determine if the researcher is capturing the information accurately is recommended and provides the participants with "preliminary analyses consisting of a description of themes".

Transferability

Transferability defines the degree to which research can be transferred to other texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Organizing the data into themes showed how each theme and the findings can be associated with the theories in chapter one. The above trustworthiness methods was achieved by using a triangulation, involving peer checks, direct quotes, and quality time with the participants. For this research to be transferable, a full description of the site, the participants, and the methods was written thorough, thick, and rich descriptions.

Confirmability

Confirmability of the processes within the research should be documented in detail (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Throughout this process, the plan was to maintain an audit and keep notes of accurate data collection records, from there confirmability was achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using and having an audit trail system protected against misused data. Creswell and Poth (2018) described an audit trail as a process to provide accounting records of information that can be maintained with specific transactions; Confirmability audit, triangulation, and reflexivity.

Dependability

Dependability focuses on consistent analysis. Dependability for this study took place through the audit process. There was a thorough process when reviewing the data. A detailed description of the data and the analysis process was also provided to show the study's dependability.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a must when conducting qualitative research. This consideration should take place prior to conducting the study, beginning of the study, while collecting data, analyzing data, when reporting data and finally when publishing qualitative research. When obtaining site approval, you can either select a site that does not have any restrictions with research, give credit after project is done or submitting for approval (Creswell and Poth, 2018). I was able to gain site approval for research consideration. Once completed, I contacted the participant and inform them of the study along with obtaining any appropriate approval needed. Confidentiality is key, so letting the participants know and understand the data will the stored and how long can build trust.

Consideration given to the potential risk and benefits should be discussed with the participants, including evaluation of possible risk. At the initial meeting I made sure both the subjects and I understood all the factors.

Summary

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodology, data collection, and design used for a qualitative phenomenological study on alternative education center teachers' experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students. This phenomenological study used data collected through interviews, document analysis of core subject area teachers, and

questionnaires of the educators on campus teachers at the secondary level. Transcriptions of each interview were recorded and signed for verification from each participant.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study to explore the experiences of teachers who work in an alternative education center for at-risk students in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia. Typically, individuals with dyslexia have average or above average level listening comprehension skills but often struggle with fluency and word recognition. While it is important for educators to understand what dyslexia is, evidence indicates through existing literature, teachers lack a foundational understanding (Peries et al., 2021). A phenomenological approach was chosen to explore the experiences of teachers in secondary classrooms recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia on an alternative education campus (Creswell, 2013). The research questions are aimed to gain understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon are as followed:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of teachers in secondary classrooms recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia on an alternative education campus?

Sub-Question One

How have secondary school teachers identified children in an alternative education setting who exhibit dyslexia-like characteristics?

Sub-Question Two

What are the experiences of secondary teachers teaching students with a reading deficit?

Sub-Question Three

How has previous professional development assisted teachers in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia?

Participants

Using the purposeful sampling method, the participants were core subject area (English language arts, math, science, and social studies) teachers. Each of the participants met the following conditions: 1) certified in Texas as a general education classroom teacher; 2) employed at the approved campus; and 3) taught a core subject area at the secondary level in grades six through twelve. Each of the 10 participants completed the participant questionnaire, turned in professional development transcripts, and participated in one-on-one interviews. Each of the participants who filled out the online questionnaire provided certification program, and active content area certifications, which is illustrated in Table 1. Pseudonyms were used for participants to protect each participant's confidentiality. The table s participants names, certification type, subject area content area, and grades taught.

Below is the participant table:

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Completed Alternative Certification	Teaching certifications	Content Area	Grade Level
Marisol	No	Generalist EC-6, English as a Second Language Supplemental, Certified Academic Language Therapist	Special Education - All Content Areas	6th
Linda	No	Generalist (4-8), Math (4-8)	Mathematics	6th - 8th
Pamela	No	Elementary Self-Contained (1-8), Special Education (EC-12), Mid-Management Administrator PK-12)	Special Education - All Content Areas	9th - 12th
Lisa	No	English as a Second Language, English Language Arts and Reading (4-8), Principal (EC-12)	English Language Arts	6th - 8th
Lily	No	Secondary English (6-12), English as a Second Language Supplemental	English Language Arts	6th - 8th
Brenda	No	Science Composite (6-12), Generalist (4-8) Mathematics (4-8) Chemistry (8-12)	Mathematics	6th - 8th
Diana	No	Physical Science (8-12), English as a Second Language Supplemental	Science	9th - 12th

Charles	No	Generalist (4-8), Special Education (EC-12)	Special Education - All Content Areas	9th - 12th
Sarah	No	Generalist (EC-6), English as a Second Language, Principal as Instructional Leader (EC-12)	Social Studies	6th
Timonthy	Yes	English Language Arts and Reading (8-12), Principal (EC-12)	English Language Arts	9th - 12th

Marisol

Marisol, a highly qualified educator with a diverse range of certifications, in Generalist EC-6, English as a Second Language Supplemental, Certified Academic Language Therapist, Special Education - All Content Area. Currently a 6th-grade teacher, teacher at the Alternative Education Center. Background in Special education and "passionate about providing students with an inclusive learning environment". She has been at the alternative education center for the past two years. Being a 6th grade teacher is not her "forever role" the plan is to finish this year out and apply to become a dyslexia therapist for the district.

Linda

Linda, a Generalist (4-8) and Math 4-8 certified educator. She has dedicated 9 years to teaching and 3 years teaching 6th-8th grades at the alternative education center. Linda Graduated from Oklahoma State University with an education degree in the early 2000s. However, she is a product of her district population. Linda was committed to giving back to her community and working with at-risk students. "Having been in their shoes and not thinking college was an option", once she graduated from college, she landed a job at the alternative education center and has been there since.

Pamela

Pamela, an experienced educator with 32 years of teaching. She has a background as an Elementary Self-Contained and Special Education teacher and holds a Mid-Management Administrator PK-12 certification. Currently teaching grades 9th-12th, her career began on various army bases throughout the world. As of now, she plans to retire next year, but is torn, “I truly want to continue to make a difference in students' lives.” However, she acknowledges there has been a shift in students and wonders if now is the right time to step away from education. She is one of two of the longest educators that have been at the alternative education center since 2004.

Lisa

Lisa, an educator with a ton of skill set, holds certifications in English as a Second Language, English Language Arts and Reading (4-8), and serves as a Principal (EC-12). She is experienced and has dedicated her teaching expertise to 6th-8th graders at an alternative school. Beyond the classroom, she opened a business providing students with an opportunity to receive content support after school hours. “Owning a business is something I always wanted to do” but Lisa states “I have no intentions of running the business full time. My heart is here with my coworkers”. Lisa administrator Timothy describes her as, “a valuable asset in both instructional and administrative capacities within the campus.”

Lily

Lily, expertise is in Secondary English (6-12), English as a Second Language Supplemental, and English Language Arts, has found her home at the alternative education school. She has been working on the campus for the past five years. She stated, “I appreciate the flexible environment it offers; students are here for 15 to 30 days and then they are off to their

main campus". She expresses love for the small class ratios, allowing her to focus attention on the content and student's leaner. She highlights the close-knit, and family-like dynamic the school provided.

Brenda

Brenda is a seasoned educator holding certifications in Science Composite (6-12), Generalist (4-8), Mathematics (4-8), Chemistry (8-12), and Mathematics. She has dedicated the last six years of her career to teaching 6th-8th graders at the alternative school. As she marks her sixth year at the alternative education center this August, Brenda longs for more opportunities in leadership. She has three kids in school and stated, "I tell my kids to reach of the stars, I can't stay in my role as teacher here forever". Brenda came to the Alternative education center after receiving backlash on her previous campus that she was "to aggressive" and should teach at the secondary grade level. The district placed her at the alternative education center, and she feel that was the best decision they could have made for her career.

Diana

Diana, an educator with 22 years of teaching experience, and has devoted the last 15 years to the alternative education center. She holds certifications in Physical Science (8-12), English as a Second Language Supplemental, and Science. Diana teaches grades 9th-12th at the alternative education center. She has a passion for science education and her ability to meet diverse student needs.

Charles

Charles, is an experienced educator with three decades of experience at the secondary level. He holds certifications as a Generalist (4-8), Special Education (EC-12), and Special Education - All Content Areas. During his 11-year tenure at the alternative school he taught 9th-

12th grade. His extensive 30-year career across the state of Texas at the secondary level shows his dedication to providing quality education. Charles is 79, which is the oldest educator in the building. “I come to work every day with a smile on my face, I believe this job keeps me young” Charles said during our interview. Charles mentioned he has seen education transform in many ways over the years and excited to see what the next ten years brings.

Sarah

Sarah, holds certifications as a Generalist (EC-6), English as a Second Language, and Principal as Instructional Leader (EC-12). She started teaching at the elementary level, and over the past seven years, she has transitioned to teaching 6th grade at the alternative education center. This past October she passed her principal certification and completed her master’s degree in principalship in December 2024. Sarah interned with the administration at her current campus and loved it “It something about being with your own students and allowing them to see you in another role”. She is currently serving as the 504 Coordinator for the campus, but due to the law changing this current school year. She is uncertain what her position will look like next year since the majority of her 504 students will now fall under Special Education.

Timothy

As one of the principals on campus, Timothy did not go the traditional route to get into education. He is the only educator that was interviewed that obtained an alternative certification. He has been at the alternative education center for the past 7 years and hold certification in English Language Arts and Reading (8-12), Principal (EC-12). Teacher-turned-leader taught Reading recovery for grader 9th-12th. “Reading recovery is a class in place where the students can receive credit for a course they may have previously missed while at their home campus”.

Although he enjoyed being in the classroom day to day, he wanted to make a significant impact on the campus after several leadership changes.

The participant composition (gender) consisted of 1 (6.67%) male and 9 (93.33%) females. Participants represented the following racial groups: 2 (33.3%) Black or African American, 5 (83.33%) white, 2 (6.67 %) Hispanic and 1 (6.67%) two of more races. Participants' age ranged among participants ranged from 31 to 65 and above: 2 (26.67%) participants ranged from 31 and 40 years old, 3 (30.00%) between 41 and 50 years old, 2 (13.33%) participants between the ages of 43 and 50 years old, and 3 (30.00%) aged 50 and older.

Results

The results of the analyses of the questionnaire, individual interviews, and documents resulted in three themes and two subthemes. Identifying dyslexia characteristics was still a developing concept for many of the participants. The data were triangulated through three data collection methods that include a questionnaire, individual interviews, and data analysis of professional development transcripts. The questionnaires were sent through Google Forms. Once the participants finished the questionnaire, the participants were asked to participate in an one-on-one interview and submit professional development transcripts from Eduphoria! database for data analysis. The individual interviews occurred via Zoom, Google Meets or in person. The interview questions were designed in an open-ended format, allowing the participants to freely express their thoughts and provide any additional information they believe is pertinent to the questions.

The themes identified were (a) Unsure of How to Support Dyslexic students; (b) Lack of Training; and (c) Self-Efficacy. The results are presented in this chapter based on recurring themes identified in the responses.

Table 2

Theme Development

Themes	Sub-theme
Unsure of How to Support Dyslexic students	Lack of knowledge
Lack of Training	Lack of Support, Previous Experience
Self-Efficacy	

Uncertain How to Support Dyslexic Students

Many of the teacher participants possessed limited knowledge about dyslexia or had a brief experience at some point in their teaching careers with a student identified as having dyslexia. Most of the educators were able to explain what dyslexia is; however, they could not explain how to provide support for students with the disability. Pamela mentioned, “I know it has something to do with students having difficulties in reading and understanding how to decode words.” While another participant Lily who works at the alternative campus said, “It’s a recognized disability under special education.”

There is a strong correlation between special education and dyslexia, although they are the same. “I know there's been a shift in most schools where students identified used to have to use an elective to attend their dyslexia class, but now the students are being pulled out like the special education students during ELA instruction.” This quote was from Marisol when asked to discuss her background knowledge of children with dyslexia. She also has a special education background but has been teaching English Language Arts for the past few years at the Alternative Education Center.

Lack of knowledge

The data collected from the participants revealed a recurring theme of lack of awareness. It was evident in the participants' responses when analyzing their questionnaire and interviews. Uncertainty refers to how teachers were unclear about how they should support their students with a reading deficit. For example, in Linda's interview, she explored the similarities between the characteristics of non-dyslexic students, identified students, and those students who received reading intervention through a special education pull-out. She expressed uncertainty about whether her students' characteristics were influenced by their primary teacher's curriculum. Linda suggested, "Is it possible there is a correlation? I'm not convinced there's a difference." Linda was uncertain about her students who were not taught phonics in the primary grades and if they would still show characteristics of dyslexia. She believes the characteristics were the same but stated, "Characteristics could be different if the student is severe, I suppose." Inadequate awareness emerged from the participants' uncertainty multiple times; for example, during Sarah's interview, she shared, it was not till her fifth year of teaching that she heard the term dyslexia. There was a student she had who could answer any question she would ask the class whole group but when it came to the exam, the student could not perform. Sarah said,

> "It was strange! I would quiz the students with the same questions that were on the exam and watch the student time and time bomb the test. It was so hard to watch; she was a bright kid, but I couldn't seem to figure out the issue. I spoke to a colleague of mine about what was happening, and they recommended I contact the parent to recommend testing. About a month later the student is getting pulled out for having dyslexia. That was my very first encounter with the term in general."

Years later, Sarah left the elementary level and started working at the alternative school with at-risk students as a special education teacher. Sarah's colleague, Linda, feels not only is the term *dyslexia* not wide-spread, but she does not know the first thing to do if a student with a reading deficit is struggling in her classroom. She said, "Working at the high school level, students don't just come out to say they need help. They act out in different ways. So, it is a bit hard to tell if the students are struggling or not." Timothy's understanding was to follow the students IEP or 504 paperwork. However, Timothy said, "if the student does not have a diagnosis and walks in the door with an unknown disability, that could be much harder. There is no playbook for me to follow, nor do I feel competent to aid help because I simply have not been trained on how to provide support."

Lack of Training

Participants shared they are not properly trained or expected to be able to identify the characteristics of a student facing reading difficulties. During an interview, Charles shared his thoughts on the amount of professional development surrounding struggling students,

> "We are to be training yearly, if I'm not mistaken. This past year, the staff was given a PowerPoint with dyslexia facts and traits. After we were done viewing the slide deck, we had to email the administrator our thoughts about what we just read. which, for me, was one sentence. And if I am truly being honest, I did not learn what I sent over to my administrator from the slide deck. I googled the question and was able to come up with a response. So no, I do not feel properly trained to work with dyslexic students."

This common theme continued through the course of interviews conducted.

> Diana stated that, "As a campus we were trained in Emergent Bilinguals (EB) which was an amazing training. That training talked about how EB students struggle with reading

and processing skills, but I'm sorry that did not answer your question. [What is your perspective on receiving professional training on handling students with dyslexia?] But that is the only training I received for struggling readers that was truly engaging."

Diana was uncertain about mentioning her training. She believed students with dyslexia characteristics were the same as EB students reading difficulties.

After collecting all their professional development sessions for the past three years. The only staff member that was exposed to special education was the administrator. "I help support 504 and with the new HB 3824; it is imperative I understand what is expected for my campus," Sarah stated.

A Hundred percent of the staff did receive "Special Programs-Professional Development" training for the school year (SY) 2022-2023 school year. However, SY 2021-2022 only 40% attending "*Beyond the Red Pen*" which covered students with experiencing difficulties and how to lesson plan to provide equitable classroom instruction. 80% of participants in SY 2020-2021 did receive *"Accessibility-Accommodations Training*". The information gave the staff members details on what accommodation are offered and available to the students for the state test that 2020-2021 school year.

Table 3

Teacher Professional Development 2020-2023

Participants Professional Development (related to struggling readers)			
Names	SY 2022/2023	SY 2021/2022	SY 2020/2021
Pamela	Special Programs-Professional Development	Beyond the Red Pen	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Marisol	Early Reader Observable Behaviors, Dyslexia: IEP/Case Management Training	N/A	N/A
Linda	Special Programs-Professional Development	None	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Diana	Special Programs-Professional Development	None	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Brenda	Special Programs-Professional Development	Beyond the Red Pen	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Lily	Special Programs-Professional Development	Beyond the Red Pen	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Lucy	Special Programs-Professional Development	None	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Charles	Special Programs-Professional Development	None	N/A
Timothy	Special Programs-Professional Development	None	Accessibility-Accommodations Training
Sarah	Section 504 EdPlan Training, Introduction to section 504	Focused Reading Intervention	Accessibility-Accommodations Training

Lack of Support

Data revealed there is a lack of support for the educators. Most participants saw this lack of support was indeed challenging but caused educators to find their own way. They shared some teachers would rather do nothing to support struggling students because it is so much easier than all the documentation that comes along with reporting a student for no change to be made. Lily said, “I’ve seen our teachers see a student struggling and just continue on with the lesson.” Linda described the teachers’ having a lot of responsibilities “even if I go to the special education teacher to tell them I have a student that may need some help, sometimes they do not have time to deal with it either because they have their own caseload to manage.” Throughout the data collection phase, participants consistently mentioned a significant part of the challenge comes from insufficient information and staffing. Marisol echoed some of the participant's insights: “Everyone is just so busy, so unless a student has a severe case, your request goes to deaf ears.”

Participants shared they need a greater understanding of the process to support a student with reading difficulties. As a campus, the need is focused on improving attendance. Brenda shared,

> "I know the protocols to initiate if a student is continuously absent, but since there is no process to help support students that are continuously showing signs of struggle, I don't have the time to gather the documents needed. And so, I rely on their home campus."

Brenda expressed the importance of the administration team providing training that will help the educators support the students facing reading difficulties within their classrooms.

Previous Experience

Some teacher participants shared how their experiences and personal struggles have taught them how to support their students. For example, Lucy, has not received any formal professional development related to dyslexia identification while employed at the Alternative Education Center. Although she has never been officially diagnosed as dyslexic, she believes she exhibits mild characteristics. As a result, she draws from her own experiences as a student and previous training she received before working in her current position. Lucy explained, "I rely on my past experiences. When a student faces difficulties, I investigate the root causes and make a mental note to consider further evaluation. If the student consistently exhibits certain characteristics, I would let someone know."

Self-Efficacy

While not every teacher was able to share a specific scenario involving their own experience with the identification of a student with dyslexia during their time at the alternative school. Each teacher was able to list several characteristics associated with students who struggle with reading. Most teachers relied on their prior knowledge of a known student who had already been identified to be able to list those characteristics, and they were also aware of the impact of

their shortcomings. Teachers heavily acknowledged the impact of their shortcoming. Even though most of the educators do not feel supported by their administration team, in regard to providing the staff protocols to identifying students with a reading deficit, Charles expressed, "Training is available; it is just going to take me time and effort to find the right training to better myself in this profession." Charles, as well as the others, were able to recognize and identify areas for improvement when it came to the question of professional development. "As long as I've been a teacher, it is nobody's fault but mine why I don't know how to formally support students who are struggling to read in my classroom." Diana said.

Outlier Data and Findings

While analyzing the data from the participants, an unexpected outlier surfaced, which did not align with the study's primary focus.

Gifted and Talented

When analyzing the participants professional development transcripts; 90% of the participants had multiple Gifted and Talented (GT) professional development hours in addition to the annual State requirement of 6 hours. Based on the Texas Education Agency's Texas Academic Performance Reports for 2021-2022 SY 92.1% were labeled at-risk and only 2.6% were labeled as GT. With the majority of the students being at-risk Timothy exclaimed

> "Having a variety of professional development courses, whether GT or behavior management. All of it plays a role in developing professional pedagogies. I believe it is beneficial to be well-versed in your profession when dealing with any type of students."

Timothy discussed how varies professional development impacts students in different ways. "GT training among with many other sessions the Alternative Education Center staff had on their transcripts provides support for students."

Research Question Responses

This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences identifying dyslexia characteristics in an alternative education center in North Texas. The collected data in this study was structed to address the central and three sub-research questions. Data was collected through document analysis, interviews, and questionnaires. This section presents both the research questions and their respective responses.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of teachers in secondary classrooms recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia on an alternative education campus? Overall, the participants demonstrated the ability to define dyslexia and list some common characteristics, including students identified as dyslexic do not like to read aloud, student with dyslexia have a longer processing speed, students with dyslexia have trouble decoding, and may have poor spelling abilities. Timothy remarked in his interview,

> "The students are already predetermined [dyslexic] because they come here with an established 504 plan. We don't identify dyslexic students here much nor have I recognized sigs with a student and went through the process of identification, we support the intervention and the plans that are given to us when the student arrives."

Timothy as well as many others rely on the student's home campuses. Some participants like Linda mentioned "Signs of dyslexia could have been present at some point, but the behavior issues may have enabled me to see all the signs."

Sub-Question One

How have secondary school teachers identified children in an alternative education setting who exhibit dyslexia-like characteristics? Unanimously, the 10 participants did not have

an encounter identifying students with dyslexia-like characteristics. Forty percent of the participants knew the process. Lily stated in her interview,

> "If I suspect dyslexia or any type of disability, I tell the counselor, and I have her do everything she needs to do on her side to get the student tested. From there, I let my AP know so he is aware."

Although exaggerating, Lily did state the process is not overnight and can take months before testing is complete. The participants mentioned, due to the lack of resources, a lot of the time testing is done at the campus level. Their home campus has a 504 coordinator, a diagnostician, and the resources to handle the testing or start the multi-tiered system of supports process for the student.

Sub-Question Two

What are the experiences of secondary teachers teaching students with a reading deficit? All the participants had a scenario teaching a student who exhibited signs of having a reading deficit. The experiences for many of the participants were to place the student in a small group setting, working one on one with the student, as well as putting accommodation in place to help the student successfully complete assignments. Most of the participants mentioned the use of technology and how much of a powerful tool technology could be if used in the right manner. When it came specifically to the Alternative Education Center Lucy expressed,

> "Having a SPED person [Teacher] there with us is great when having a student who is experiencing trouble reading. Because we work at the type of school we do, we do not deal with the cream of the crock students. Reading deficits look different for all students. But having that SPED teacher in the classroom helps assist when I need to extra set of hands.

Not all classrooms within the campus have a SPED teacher assistance within the classroom. It was noted the SPED teacher is present in the classroom only when there is an identified SPED student present.

Sub-Question Three

How has previous professional development assisted teachers in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia. Unfortunately, one out of the 10 participants were able to identify a professional development that played a significant role in their teaching career. Brenda expressed,

> "A few years ago, we had a group of dyslexia therapists in the district come out to the campus and give us a dyslexia assimilation. From that professional development, I learned empathy and what the students who are dyslexic actually go through on a day to day within their classrooms. The professional development was a great opportunity to understand students who may have dyslexia. And for me to build strategies to incorporate.

Brenda has been an Alternative Education Center employee for over five years. In contrast, her colleagues did not have that same experience nor attend the training. According to Brenda, the training was conducted in the 2018-2019 SY. Within the last three years, 40% of the staff have received their annual dyslexia training.

Summary

This transcendental phenomenological study investigates the experiences of teachers working in an alternative education center, specifically focusing on their ability to identify dyslexia characteristics in at-risk students. Chapter four is a summary of the identified themes and sub-themes within this study. The study included descriptions and direct quotations of

participants' lived experiences that pertained to the identified themes. The data collected, interviews, and participant questionnaire helped address the study's central question and sub-questions. The study's findings contributed to providing a deeper understanding, while understanding dyslexia is crucial for educators, many teachers lack the foundational knowledge required for this task.'

The 10 core subject area participants offered their insights. A prominent theme became evident when participants expressed uncertainty about how to effectively support dyslexic students. They often relied on special education teachers for guidance because of their limited training. The lack of professional development and support made the challenges for the educators even more difficult. In response to the research questions, teachers struggled to identify dyslexia-like characteristics, typically seeking assistance from the students' home campuses and special education resources. The study uncovered the need for improved training and support to enhance educators' ability to identify and address dyslexia characteristics on an alternative education center campus.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of teachers working in an alternative education center, specifically focusing on their ability to identify dyslexia characteristics in at-risk students. A group of 10 core subject (math, reading, science and social studies) area teachers served as participants in this study. In this chapter, the synthesized and summarization of the thematic findings and interpretation of the Alternative Education teachers' lived experience of the ability to identify dyslexia characteristics in at-risk students was showcased. An explanation of the implications for policy and practice, followed by the theoretical and methodological implications. Limitations, delimitations, and recommendations for future research will be outlined. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the entire study.

Discussion

The findings of this study, as reported by core subject area teachers from the Alternative Education Center, align with the empirical and theoretical literature discussed in Chapter 2. In this section, the study's results are discussed, focusing on the identified themes, literature, and the theoretical framework. These findings, gathered through interviews, questionnaires, and professional development transcripts, will form as the foundation for creating new approaches aimed to improve teacher professional development in Alternative Education Center campuses, ultimately resulting in enhanced student identification.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who work in an alternative education center for at-risk students in identifying students with characteristics of

dyslexia. While analyzing the data gathered from the participants, themes and sub-themes became evident, providing understanding 10 of the teachers' lived experiences. The themes that emerged were (1) Unsure of how to support Dyslexic students, (2) Lack of training, and (3) Self-Efficacy. These themes came to light as a result of the data gathered from the participants and the analysis of the collected data. These findings contributed to providing answers to the research questions and sub-questions.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The following thematic findings were present in the research: (a) Unsure of How to Support Dyslexic Students; (b) Lack of Training; and (c) Self-Efficacy. The sub-themes presented for Unsure of How to Support Dyslexic Students included Lack of Knowledge. The sub-themes presented for lack of training included lack of support and previous experience. There were no sub-themes presented for Self-Efficacy. The substantive implications we've discussed, as well as a thorough summary of the main themes and their underlying subtopics, will be presented in detail below.

Unsure of How to Support Dyslexic Students. Most of the participants were unsure when it came to how to support dyslexic students in their classrooms. Each educator receives a packet with the appropriate accommodation when a new student arrives who has an IEP or a 504 plan for their disabilities. The plan is to be followed to stay in compliance with federal and state laws. However, the educators still felt incompetent and expressed they lacked the necessary support and strategies to support dyslexic students. Many researchers such as McMahan et al., (2019) feel it is useful for teachers to understand dyslexia on the cognitive level. Providing an opportunity to attend high-quality, evidenced-based training is essential for teachers to gain understanding (Knight, 2018). Support will look different for each student, depending on the

severity of their disability, and each educator expressed that is why they feel unsure and incompetent.

Lack of Training. Based on participant responses, it seems as though educators did not receive any pre-service training related to students with disabilities or reading deficits, and they are currently not receiving any effective professional development. The professional development received within the last three years covered testing accommodations for students with dyslexia. However, within the past three years, the teacher did not receive any training that provided the necessary support for them to be able to accommodate the students' needs outside of standardized testing environments. A lack of resources and support from the district as well as campus administration contributes to this need that is currently not being addressed. Researcher have suggested providing educators with a practice-based model, where teachers are given the opportunities to focus on observation theories through guided practice under the direct supervision of a professor or veteran teacher (DeGraff, Schmidt & Waddell, 2015; Acaray, 2020; Durrance, 2017).

Self-Efficacy. Previous experiences with a student identified as dyslexic is said to be one of the main sources of dyslexia knowledge (Knight, 2018; Yin, Joshi, & Yan, 2020). This was also said to be true for all participants working at the Alternative Education Center during this study as well. Due to the lack of pre-service training and professional development opportunities the educators realized they were going to have to take matters into their own hands. All ten participants want to evolve within their profession and want to grow professionally. Most acknowledged the weight does not just lay on their administrators' shoulders. They should proactively seek professional development for dyslexic student support.

Implications for Policy or Practice

Policy greatly impacts the future of students facing reading difficulties. Therefore, it is important to routinely evaluate and make any necessary changes to policies. Employing policies that directly support students and educators can potentially eliminate such things as the STPP. In practice, educators can benefit from a better understanding of the impact of a lack of training from preservice education training and campus professional development. A lack of understanding of dyslexia characteristics can significantly affect future Alternative Education Center students.

Implications for Policy

According to previous studies from researchers such as Shaywitz & Shaywitz, (2020) the importance of policymakers developing policies supporting dyslexia students is essential to the future students. While Texas requires educators to receive one hour of professional development regarding dyslexia to renew teacher certification licensure (Tex. Admin. Code § 21.004 (b), 2020), it is recommended that policymakers require that professional development to not only cover dyslexia characteristics but also how to implement strategies when having suspected dyslexic students. Every educator has a responsibility to be able to recognize and prevent reading challenges such as dyslexia to promote early identification (Zirkel, 2015).

In addition, the research findings suggest that state and local education systems should share the responsibility of ongoing teacher training on dyslexia. The requirements for training will look different in different states. The results revealed that none of the 10 participants had received preservice education in regard to dyslexia. Policies being in place will benefit educators professionally before their first years as educators. Educators want to feel competent but first need protocols in place. Although researcher and councilman Cassidy pushes for the Bureau of

Prisons to screen prisoners for dyslexia, screeners should also be employed when a student enters any alternative education center (Cassidy et al., 2021).

Implications for Practice

There are several implications for practice related to the two groups supported by this research. Teachers and administrators can collaborate to foster positive change by providing awareness to support dyslexic students. Implications for teachers and administrators are outlined below.

Implications for Administrators. The implications for practice recommendations are for both administration and teachers. The administration team refers to the principals, counselors, and district special education directors and coordinators. These individuals are important in supporting teachers' understanding of students with dyslexia characteristics or reading deficits. Based on the research, it is recommended the administration team provide and develop protocols for educators to execute when students present any characteristics of a reading deficit. Having the administrators provide resources to support the teachers will allow for a streamlined identification process. Some educators mentioned that the current process requires multiple artifacts to even begin the initial documentation. If this process could be simplified, educators may feel more inclined to gather the proper documentation.

The lack of professional development was also a significant topic. Due to the educators' feelings of not attending any effective nor engaging professional development within the last 3 years, it is recommended that administrators provide mandatory training that is engaging and allows for the educators to understand not only the characteristics but instructional strategies to provide to students facing a reading deficit. Another suggestion would be, after the educators

have attended training, enforcing the educators to list instructional support strategies within their weekly lesson plans.

Implications for Teachers. It is recommended they attend mandatory dyslexia training. These professional development session(s) should provide valuable insights and practical strategies for identification. Throughout the year, it should be recommended educators be updated on current research and trends related to dyslexia, read relevant literature, and engage in continuous learning to expand their knowledge.

It is important for me to acknowledge the participants mentioned when a student with a known disability arrives, they are given the student's existing IEPs and 504 plans to review. It is recommended educators collaborate with the student support team to ensure proper accommodations and interventions are being implemented. Due to the educators highly relying on the home campus of the student to screen the student, it is also recommended that educators regularly observe their students' reading and writing behaviors. Additionally, observe indicators such as students' struggles in decoding words, spelling challenges, or hesitancy to read aloud. Collaborative efforts can also strengthen educators' ability to identify students in need.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The research is grounded in self-efficacy theory and phonological deficit theory, which both contribute to understanding the lifelong effects of reading difficulties, particularly dyslexia can have.

Theoretical Implications

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory throughout this research focused on educators' pursuit of quality professional development to feel more competent regarding dyslexia. The teachers seem to be aware of their own limitations and the impact of these shortcomings on their

ability to formally support students struggling with reading. The teachers acknowledged the need for training and recognized their responsibility to seek out professional development. Charles's statement, “Training is available; it is just going to take me time and effort to find the right training to better myself in this profession," reflects a sense of self-efficacy—the belief in one's capability to enhance their skills and effectiveness in addressing students' needs (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1986; Benight & Bandura, 2004). Similarly, Diana's recognition she acknowledged her responsibility addressed the theme of self-efficacy among the educators as well.

There is a link between cognitive deficits and behavioral issues within the phonological theory. That is why it was so important for the Alternative Education Center to be a site for the research. Failure to adequately identify and teach foundational reading skills in the primary grades may result in a student appearing to be at risk for dyslexia or a specific learning disability. Leaving educators puzzled on dyslexia characteristics or wondering if the issue simply that students are not being taught foundational skills, phonemic awareness plays a crucial role in the acquisition of reading skills (Ramus et al., 2003). This study revealed that of the 10 educators who are certified at the primary level, none of them received any preservice training in the field of dyslexia, specifically during their teacher education program.

Empirical Implications

The study has empirical implications because of the lack of professional development, limited knowledge about dyslexia, the need for systemic changes, and the influence of training in support strategies. The researcher revealed teachers have not been provided professional development opportunities to learn about the signs and effects of dyslexia and how to best provide instruction to students with dyslexia characteristics in the classroom. This issue has grown more nd more common over the years, according to Bos et al. (1999) and Scales et al.

(2018). Educators are challenged with finding appropriate resources and strategies to support students with a reading deficit. The lack of training has led to ineffective identification and support for students with dyslexia. (Catts & Petscher, 2018; Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010).

The central research question is, “What are the experiences of teachers in secondary classrooms recognizing students with characteristics of dyslexia on an alternative education campus?” Explores the existing difficulties educators face in supporting the recognition of dyslexia characteristics. While some educators naturally adopt the responsibility of seeking professional development and learning opportunities, others may refrain from taking on that responsibility due to the professional development not being mandatory or because they feel they have been teaching for a while without the knowledge, so why take on the extra hours of continuing education.

The systemic change should take place at the university level through preservice education. That change will allow educators to receive the necessary training to support foundational literacy skills. Researchers have suggested educators who have received specific training on dyslexia may be better equipped to implement effective support strategies for students, indicating the potential beneficial effects of focused professional development (Jimenez-Silva, et al., 2012).

Limitations and Delimitations

The research is limited as I analyzed open-ended responses, and is a subjective process and may not be acceptable as a scientific approach to analysis data. The second limitation was I created the survey questionnaire, making subjective decisions about the questions and the answer responses. Consequently, while most of the questions from the questionnaire demonstrated high reliability, question three did not.

The research is delimited as it focused on one Alternative Education Center in the North Texas region within one district. The Alternative Education Center consists of one elementary teacher and 15 secondary educators. With a total of 21 staff members, I interviewed 47.62% of the staff: 10 secondary core subject area educators). Another delimitation was that I only researched secondary educators. I wonder if I would have interviewed primary educators at an Alternative education Center would the educators have more experience identifying students at the primary level.

Recommendations for Future Research

For this qualitative study, a sample size of 10 participants employed at one Alternative Education Center was the focus to obtain data to describe the teachers' experience. For future research, comparing the experiences of teachers in alternative education centers with those in traditional settings. For example, this research could reveal unique challenges and effective strategies in different educational settings with different experiences with dyslexia identification. Within the present study, the participants relied on the students' primary campuses to make the identification of dyslexia characteristics. It would be interesting to see if these identifications are happening more regularly on a general education campus or if the traditional campus relies on the alternative education center due to their low-class size ratios.

Another recommendation for future researchers is to study implementation of dyslexia-related training in teacher preparation programs across the state of Texas. It would be considered important to assess the effectiveness of these training programs to equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to take back to their classrooms. The study emphasized a lack of preservice training at the university level; it would be interesting to understand what kind of

training is effective for teachers and the effects of such training on teachers' ability to identify and support students with dyslexia characteristics.

Last, it is recommended future researchers examine educational policies related to dyslexia screening and support among Texas districts. The study would assess the connection between policy recommendations and the experiences of educators, identifying potential gaps and areas for improvement and ensuring more effective dyslexia support across Texas districts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore teachers' experiences identifying dyslexia characteristics in an alternative education center in North Texas. The participants, 10 core subject Alterative Education Center teachers, revealed a lack of foundational understanding and training in recognizing dyslexia characteristics within their classrooms. Themes such as Uncertain How to Support Dyslexic Students, Lack of Training, and Self-Efficacy filled the responses, highlighting the need for effective, comprehensive professional development related to dyslexic characteristics. One outlier from the data was Gifted and Talented professional development.

The data collected for this study came from documented analysis (professional development transcripts), interviews, and a questionnaire. The research highlights, despite the importance of identifying dyslexia characteristics for students, most of the participants feel unsure when it comes to how to support their students facing a reading deficit within their classroom from day to day. The lack of awareness, along with previous training, contributed to the educators' challenges. Professional development sessions, when available, consisted of a slide deck of dyslexic facts and characteristics, leaving teachers wanting more impactful and engaging training opportunities.

In conclusion, the research emphasizes the need for targeted, professional development for educators in alternative education settings to enhance their ability to identify and support students with dyslexia characteristics. The findings of the study recommend a review of existing state dyslexia policies and a review of university preservice dyslexia courses to address the research challenges. These insights will provide a better understanding of the issues surrounding dyslexia identification in alternative education centers and offer valuable recommendations for future research and lawmakers.

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APPENDIX A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 24, 2023

[redacted]

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1154 Alternative Education Center Teachers' Experiences with Identifying Dyslexia Characteristics in Students

[redacted]

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

Dear [redacted]

After careful review of your research proposal Alternative education *center teachers' experience* identifying dyslexia characteristics, I have decided to grant you *permission to access our staff* and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ I grant permission for [redacted] to contact secondary educators having worked with grade 6th-12th in general education core subject area. to invite them to participate in her research study.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Title of the Project: Alternative education center teachers; experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students

Principal Investigator: [redacted] Doctoral Candidate, School of Education Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be Participants must be North Texas alternative school educators and have worked at the alternative school of education, secondary educators having worked with grade 6^{th}-12^{th}, and general education core subject area teacher will teach math, reading, science, or social studies. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the central phenomenon of alternative education center teacher's experiences with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students for teachers at the secondary level. This study will provide information on how to continue to provide support to educators who work with at-risk student who may/may be unidentified as having dyslexia.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: You will complete a screening/demographics survey to determine if you are a potential research participant. Once you have been determined to be eligible to participate, data collected from this survey will also be used for research purposes. After this determination, you will be asked to:
If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an on-line survey that will take no more than 20 minuets.
2. Participate in an audio-recorded interview. This interview will be approximately 20 minutes and will be audio recorded for data analysis from researcher.
3. Once transcript from interview has been compiled, the transcript will be emailed to each participant to be reviews for accuracy taking no more than approximately 10 minutes.
4. Participant will be asked to submit professional development documentation from the last three years.

The entire process should take no more than approximately 60minuetes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society would include educators in the field of education to increase dyslexia awareness to establish effective professional development.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.]
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary.

Is study participation voluntary?

Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or position within school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is [redacted] You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [redacted] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [redacted], at [redacted].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D

Interview Question

1) What is your definition of Dyslexia?

2) What do you know about children with Dyslexia?

3) What if any pre-service training have you received to prepare you for working with students with a reading deficit?

4) What is your perspective on receiving professional training on handling students with dyslexia?

5) How has your previous professional development helped you in identifying students with dyslexia? (Follow Up question: If so, can you be specific what professional development has been the most beneficial?)

6) What support do you find necessary to be about to successfully provide instruction to students with Dyslexia within your classroom?

7) How has your teaching experience developed your knowledge in relation to students who have characteristics of dyslexia?

8) What are the known characteristics of a student with dyslexia?

9) How does the inability to identify students with Dyslexia affect the overall performance?

10) What types of experiences do alternative education center teachers have with identifying dyslexia characteristics in students?

11) What strategies do teachers employ to identify dyslexia characteristics in students?

12) What are the barriers that teachers may encounter when attempting to identify dyslexia characteristics in students?

APPENDIX E

Questionnaire

1. How did your preservice experience prepare you to understand the transmission of dyslexia to family members?

2. Have you used any multi-sensory teaching methods when identifying dyslexics?

3. What is the relationship between word difficulty level and Dyslexia?

4. What strategies have you found most successful in identifying dyslexia characteristics in your students?

5. Could you tell us a bit about the process you go through when you suspect a student might have Dyslexia?

6. How have you seen Dyslexia affect the learning progress of your students?

Strongly Agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	

7. What challenges have you faced when working with dyslexic students?

8. What advice would you give to other teachers who are trying to identify dyslexia characteristics in their students?