A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SELF-EFFICACY OF ELEMENTARY

READING SPECIALISTS TO ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS

by

Virginia McKinney Shank

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SELF-EFFICACY OF ELEMENTARY

READING SPECIALISTS TO ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS

by Virginia McKinney Shank

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

APPROVED BY:

Lucinda Spaulding, PhD, Committee Chair

Sherrita Rogers, EdD, Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of reading specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. The construct of self-efficacy and Bandura's social cognitive theory provided the theoretical framework for the central research question and three sub-questions: (a) What are literacy specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy in instructing elementary students with mental health needs? (b) What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to low feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs? (c) What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to high feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs? (d) What are the experiences of elementary literacy specialists who support and mentor general classroom teachers to effectively teach struggling readers with mental health needs? Data was collected through online surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. Data was analyzed using Moustakas's research design in which data is transcribed, coded, assigned themes, and grouped by theme. The findings from this study demonstrate that reading specialists noted an increase in mental health needs among elementary students and reported low self-efficacy to address both the emotional and academic needs of struggling readers. Participants shared that a lack of training, the pressure of a literacy specialist's role, and students' attitudes and behaviors contributed to feelings of ineffectiveness and low self-efficacy. In contrast, building relationships with students and setting high expectations for student progress led to feelings of high self-efficacy in their dual roles as instructors and mentors.

Keywords: achievement gaps, literacy specialists, student mental health, teacher self-efficacy, trauma

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Betty Cooper McKinney, who taught me to write and believed that I could achieve this dream. As Wilbur of *Charlotte's Web* reflects, "It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer." My mom is both.

Acknowledgments

To my grandmother, Virginia Thomas Cooper, who inspired me to be a teacher.

To my parents, Jim and Betty McKinney, who have encouraged me every step of my life.

To my husband, Tim Shank, for supporting me through this journey.

To my daughter, Caroline Shank, for believing in me and being a light on the darkest days.

To my dissertation chair, Dr. Cindi Spaulding, thank you for motivating me to pursue my doctoral degree and for sharing your time, guidance, and wisdom. I could not have done it without you! To my dissertation committee member, Dr. Sherrita Rogers, thank you for sharing your expertise and support throughout this process.

To Dr. Miranda Arnold, thank you for helping me to finish well and serving as my editor.

To Shawn Ruiz, I can't think of anyone I would rather walk through this challenging process with than you. To my Liberty University "family", thank you for asking questions, listening, providing helpful feedback, and caring about my progress.

To Tom Jennings and my Sylvan "family," thank you for being there as I first fell in love with teaching reading to Title I students. To Diane Stratton, Caitlin Pugh, and my R.S. Payne Elementary "family," thank you for the privilege of serving with you.

To my 12 research participants, your daily determination to help your students succeed is the heart of this study. I am immensely grateful for you.

All glory to God and my Savior, Jesus Christ, without whom none of this would have been possible. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." - Ephesians 3:20-21

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Educator Preparation Provider (EPP)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Individual Education Program (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

International Literacy Association (ILA)

International Reading Association (IRA)

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Self-determination Theory (SDT)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Subjective Task-value (STV)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES)

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Research into changes in American classrooms shows a shift in teacher responsibility in that teachers are now expected to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students (Caemmerer & Hajovsky, 2022; Katz et al., 2020). However, there is no standardized teacher training available on a national scale that can guide teachers trying to fulfill this new role. The percentage of students who have mental health needs or who have been affected by trauma in P-12 American classrooms is growing, and these students struggle to meet national proficiency standards in reading (Denton et al., 2021; Jordan et al., 2019). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of reading specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. Within this research study, mental health needs are defined as emotional or psychological needs due to anxiety, depression, or trauma (Brunelle et al., 2020). This chapter provides historical background, social context, and theoretical context for this study's research problem. The study's significance, research questions, and appropriate definitions for future readers are included.

Background

As mental health needs of students rise (Crandall et al., 2019; Duong et al., 2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022) and literacy achievement test scores decline (Mullins & Panlilio, 2021; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023; O'Neal et al., 2023), educators must examine the prevalence, previous initiatives, and research theories related to achievement gaps for struggling readers with emotional issues. This historical background reviews American educational reform efforts to eliminate achievement gaps and leverage the role of literacy specialists. The social context of this section examines the current educational climate and

students' academic and emotional needs. The theoretical context considers three educational psychology theories to explore the motivation and self-efficacy of students and teachers.

Historical Context

The United States Constitution does not address the federal government's involvement in education, and the Reserved Powers Clause of the Constitution's Tenth Amendment gives the power of educational oversight to state governments (Egalite et al., 2017). The federal government began to assume a larger role in American education during the 1960s through desegregation and President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty (Smith, 2020). President Johnson viewed education, social welfare, and civil rights as the tools needed to end generational poverty and crime. In 1965, Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which allotted federal funds to improve educational resources and instructional quality across American schools. These federal Title I funds paid for literacy specialists who provided remedial reading instruction to struggling readers outside their classrooms in small group settings (Marsicek, 2022).

A Nation at Risk report was published in 1983, which ranked American students as academically behind their global counterparts (Egalite et al., 2017). ESEA was reauthorized in 1994 as part of Improving America's Schools Act, which required states to hold all students to high academic standards, including at-risk struggling readers in Title I schools (Marsicek, 2022). Congress established a National Reading Panel in 1997 that identified best practices for reading instruction that included explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Castles et al., 2018). President George W. Bush passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 as another iteration of the reauthorization of ESEA with the goal of eliminating math and reading achievement gaps (Adler-Greene, 2019).

NCLB (2001) further expanded the federal government's presence in American education through national testing requirements and adequate yearly progress (AYP) accountability goals (El Moussaoui, 2017). NCLB also required teachers to demonstrate their knowledge of academic subjects through testing. States and districts received federal funding based on their percentage of highly qualified teachers and student performance on annual standardized testing. Reading First was one of several grants often used by schools to hire literacy coaches (Marsicek, 2022). Districts that failed to meet AYP standards in core academic subjects faced punitive measures including loss of funding, state control, or even school closures (Adler-Greene, 2019). Educators at the state and local levels appealed to the federal government for relief from NCLB regulations including the mandate that 100% of students would be proficient in reading and math by 2014 (Adler-Green, 2019). When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, it included a framework called Response to Intervention (RTI) to deliver quality literacy instruction to all students along a continuum of tiers based on the level of support needed (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). As a result, elementary reading specialists began to deliver literacy instruction to small groups within the general classroom and work in collaboration with classroom teachers (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012).

After taking office in 2009, President Barack Obama established Race to the Top, which offered competitive grants to states that implemented the educational reforms required by this program (Egalite et al., 2017). At this same time, Congress reached an impasse regarding the reauthorization of NCLB. President Obama responded to the pressure from state and local educators by granting waivers from some of the NCLB requirements. Within this educational climate, the International Literacy Association (ILA), which was formerly the International Reading Association (IRA), released standards in 2010 that gave clarity to the previously vague

roles of reading specialists and literacy coaches (Marsicek, 2022). These standards emphasized the need for literacy professional development and coaching; consequently, literacy specialists became responsible for student improvement and the development of teachers' reading instruction (Bean et al., 2018; Marsicek, 2022; Ulenski et al., 2019).

On December 10, 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a reauthorization of NCLB (2001). The changes in policy from NCLB to ESSA took effect in the 2017-2018 school year. According to El Moussaoui (2017), the main goal of ESSA is the success of "vulnerable children" (p. 408). Although both ESSA and NCLB were passed to close achievement gaps, ESSA significantly differs from NCLB in that it moves the power of educational oversight back to the state level (El Moussaoui, 2017). Bipartisan supporters of ESSA hope that it will strike the right balance between local control of education and equal opportunities for all students (Egalite et al., 2017).

The ILA 2017 standards further clarified the roles and duties of specialized literacy professionals which include reading/literacy specialists, reading/literacy coaches, and literacy coordinators/supervisors (Ippolito et al., 2019). The primary responsibility of reading/literacy specialists is to provide literacy instruction to struggling readers, while reading/literacy coaches are responsible for the literacy professional development of teachers. Reading/literacy coordinators are responsible to evaluate school and district needs and make decisions about school and district literacy curricula and assessments (ILA, 2018). In the Commonwealth of Virginia, Governor Ralph Northam created a Children's Cabinet in 2018 to focus on issues impacting children. The Cabinet concluded that there was a need to improve public education and increase equity and success for all students and recommended moving away from punitive school discipline and implementing "positive behavioral supports, restorative practices, and

trauma-informed instruction" in all public schools (Honsinger & Brown, 2019, p. 130).

Social Context

Despite federal and state reforms, American elementary students' reading achievement has not improved. Based on the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), higher percentages of fourth-grade students performed below the NAEP Basic level in 2022 than in 2019, and lower percentages of students performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level in 2022 than in 2019 (NCES, 2023). One key reason for this decline is the amount of literacy instruction and time in school that students missed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide school closures (Firestone & Cruz, 2022). In the current social and education climate, there is an emphasis on positive discipline approaches, restorative justice, culturally responsive teaching, and trauma-based instruction as strategies to engage and help struggling readers with emotional issues.

In today's American classrooms, there is an increase in students who have emotional or psychological issues related to trauma. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that are linked to symptoms of trauma include "emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, parental separation or divorce, mental illness in the household, household substance abuse, a criminal household member, emotional neglect, and physical neglect" (Rishel et al., 2019, p. 239). The 2016 National Survey of Children's Health states that almost half of American children reported at least one ACE, and 10% reported experiencing three or more ACEs (Brown et al., 2022, p. 662). Children of racial and ethnic minority groups comprised 61% of the children who had experienced at least one ACE, and 58% of the participants reporting an ACE were living below the federal poverty level. Stipp and Kilpatrick (2021) contended that the COVID-19 pandemic may prove to be an ACE for many children and young people in American schools

that will cross racial and socioeconomic divides.

In the aftermath of George Floyd's death and the Black Lives Matter protests, teachers are striving to deliver culturally responsive instruction to ensure that Latino, Black, Asian, and White students see their own cultures and the cultures of others presented in authentic and positive ways through classroom materials and assignments (Taylor & Wendt, 2023). Literacy specialists can aid teachers in this initiative by reviewing and purchasing culturally responsive texts and modeling their use for instruction (Blachowicz et al., 2010). The 2017 ILA standards include roles and responsibilities for a combined position of literacy specialist/coach, which means that a reading specialist can have responsibility for students, teacher development, implementing school and district literacy curricula and programs, engaging parents, and assisting administration (Bond, 2021; Kern & Bean, 2018; Parsons, 2018).

Amid these current initiatives, literacy specialists and classroom teachers are still expected to teach research-based reading skills and strategies, differentiate to meet each child's individual level, and prepare every student to pass state literacy tests that will determine school funding. Researchers have found that there is a discrepancy between the recommended schedules and roles of literacy specialists/coaches from the ILA 2017 standards and the reality of these positions in schools (Preznya et al., 2017; Ulenski et al., 2019). Reading specialists and even literacy coaches are typically devoting less than 30% of their time to the literacy development of teachers. This is a missed opportunity to impact the majority of elementary students and their families (Bond, 2021; Massey, 2018; Preznya et al., 2017; Ulenski et al., 2019). Struggling readers with emotional issues, their families, classroom teachers, principals, and even school district officials are all impacted by literacy specialists' self-efficacy to meet both the literacy and emotional needs of students. Little and Maunder (2021) summarize the quandary for today's

educators by stating, "Until schools are judged beyond their examination and assessment results, it is difficult for them to prioritize emotional well-being over academic achievement" (p. 58). Exploring the lived experiences and self-efficacy of elementary literacy specialists to help struggling readers with emotional issues will benefit district literacy coordinators and elementary school principals as they try to determine how literacy specialists can best be used to support struggling readers with emotional needs and their general classroom teachers.

Theoretical Context

Researchers who have explored the low literacy achievement of struggling readers with emotional issues or the low self-efficacy of their teachers have framed their studies with theories borrowed from psychology and applied to education. Each theory has contributed to educators' understanding of their students, the process of learning, and themselves. Three of the most prominent theories used to explore this topic are self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

Self-determination theory (SDT) was developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985) in their seminal work, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior.* The concept of intrinsic motivation contrasted the drive-based theories of behaviorism and described the motivation of people to complete a task without expecting any type of external reward or avoiding any type of negative consequence (Gagne & Deci, 2014). Proponents of SDT contend that people have a natural desire to grow and achieve and that intrinsic motivation is increased when three crucial psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Autonomy refers to a sense of control; competence is the assurance of having the needed skills for success; and relatedness describes healthy attachments to other people (Gagne & Deci, 2014). As SDT is applied to education, teachers are encouraged

to help their students build intrinsic motivation by providing positive feedback, offering choices, and avoiding the overuse of external rewards (Gagne & Deci, 2014). SDT has been used to ground studies of elementary students' motivation to read (Erickson, 2019).

This research adds to the body of existing literature by examining the lived experiences of literacy specialists who try to increase academic achievement for struggling readers with emotional issues. The literary specialists' shared experiences add insights into how they build intrinsic motivation for reluctant readers, meet the psychological needs of students, and model best practices for general classroom teachers. This study also adds to the body of literature on the types of experiences that increase or decrease teacher self-efficacy for working with low-achieving and challenging students.

Problem Statement

The problem is that elementary students struggling with mental health challenges are not meeting reading proficiency standards, and test scores continue to decrease (Camacho-Morles et al., 2021; Mullins & Panlilio, 2021; O'Neal et al., 2023). As emotional and psychological issues increase among students in American classrooms and around the world (Duong et al., 2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022), educators are reporting low self-efficacy in helping students with these mental health needs to increase their reading achievement (Berger et al., 2021). Existing research on this topic focuses mainly on special educators' experiences or adolescents' mental health challenges. The study seeks to narrow an identified gap in the literature regarding elementary reading specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy to help struggling readers with emotional and psychological needs. The population sample for this study are reading specialists who have taught reading for at least two years and have served at least one semester as specialists in public elementary schools that qualify in reading for Title I funds.

A review of the literature confirms the rising instances of mental health needs among students and reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures of 2020 exacerbated this trend (Bhogal et al., 2021). Students need support at school for their emotional and psychological difficulties (Bhogal et al., 2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Ma et al., 2021). Teachers must possess high self-efficacy—the belief in their capabilities—to address these needs and deliver meaningful literacy instruction. Educator self-efficacy can be affected by teacher preparation and personal characteristics (Cansiz & Cansiz, 2019; Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Kuronja et al., 2019). Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory will guide understanding of this topic. The reviewed literature discusses the prevalence of mental health issues in students, the importance of teacher self-efficacy, the instructional and leadership roles of reading specialists, professional development needs, and the role of resilience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of reading specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. Mental health needs are emotional or psychological needs due to depression, anxiety, or trauma. At this stage in the research, teacher self-efficacy is generally defined as an internal belief that they, as educators, can successfully prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact students' lives (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is described from theoretical, empirical, and practical perspectives. Exploring the lived experiences and self-efficacy of literacy specialists to meet the emotional and academic needs of struggling readers examines reading achievement gaps through

a unique perspective. Practices that lead to students' literacy success and increase teacher self-efficacy are shared to benefit students, their families, classroom teachers, literacy specialists/coaches, and school and district administrations.

Theoretical

This study is guided by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) and his construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). SCT recognizes that students learn by cognitively processing what they observe in their learning environment, such as the actions and consequences of other students' behaviors, which they combine with teacher modeling to determine future actions (Bandura, 1986). Struggling readers with emotional issues need models of emotional health, self-regulation, effective literacy strategies, and reading achievement to build their confidence and willingness to persist in challenging tasks (Clark & Andreasen, 2021; Cooper et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019). Literacy specialists have the dual role of serving as models not only to low-achieving readers with mental health challenges but also to their classroom teachers (Massey, 2018). Exploring the shared experiences and self-efficacy of reading specialists as they address the emotional and literacy needs of struggling readers and support classroom teachers adds to SCT's emphasis on observational learning, modeling, and the need for self-efficacy in students and teachers within elementary education settings.

Empirical

The increasing mental health needs of American students and the impact of social and emotional learning have been studied in recent literature (Burgin & Ray, 2021; Durlak et al., 2011; Katz et al., 2020). Also, numerous studies have been conducted on the low self-efficacy of educators to address students' mental health needs while delivering required academic content and preparing students for high-stakes standardized testing (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019;

McClain, 2021; Rodger et al., 2020). Many studies are focused on the mental health needs of adolescents, the experiences of school counselors or special education teachers in managing these needs (Denton et al., 2021), or school-based programs designed to improve students' emotional needs without addressing academic achievement (Arslan et al., 2022; Hirsch et al., 2022). This phenomenological research study fills a gap by exploring the shared experiences and self-efficacy of elementary literacy specialists who teach struggling readers with emotional issues. Since the participants of this study are not only teaching students diagnosed with reading disabilities or classified as emotionally disturbed, they also collaborate with and support general classroom teachers to increase these students' literacy achievement.

Practical

Based on funding, district policies, school principals' understanding, staffing shortages, and school schedules, literacy specialists are fulfilling a wide variety of roles in elementary schools that may not be the most beneficial to struggling readers (Bean et al., 2018; Bond, 2021). This study contributes to what is known about the real-world schedules, roles, and responsibilities of reading specialists in elementary schools (Parsons, 2018; Ulenski et al., 2019). Learning about these participants' shared experiences that boost or diminish their self-efficacy for increasing the academic achievement of struggling readers with emotional issues and coaching classroom teachers provides insights for district literacy coordinators, school principals, literacy coaches, and literacy specialists (Bond, 2021; Marsicek, 2022). Ultimately, this study provides information on instructional strategies and materials that would benefit struggling readers with emotional issues, the ongoing professional development needs of educators in today's elementary schools, and new areas of emphasis for educator program providers.

Research Questions

Bandura's (1977) SCT and construct of self-efficacy can be applied to adults, and this study explores reading specialists' self-efficacy to address the mental health needs of elementary struggling readers so that they can help these students reach reading proficiency levels. SCT and the concept of self-efficacy provide the theoretical framework for this study, which explores the relationship between reading specialists' self-efficacy and motivation to persist in meeting the needs of their students and mentoring classroom teachers (Bandura, 1986). Recent research based on these theories indicates that educators with high self-efficacy have confidence in their abilities to positively impact students, persevere when faced with students who present emotional needs or challenging behaviors, and model motivation and persistence to their students (Kuronja et al., 2019).

Central Research Question

What are literacy specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy in instructing elementary students with mental health needs?

Sub-question One

What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to low feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs?

Sub-question Two

What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to high feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs?

Sub-question Three

What are the experiences of elementary literacy specialists who support and mentor

general classroom teachers to effectively teach struggling readers with mental health needs?

Definitions

The following terms are pertinent to the research study and defined. They are used in literature that supports the phenomenon of literacy specialists' self-efficacy and experiences while teaching struggling readers with mental health needs. Terms that can be used interchangeably are noted as synonyms.

1. *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)* – Traumatic childhood events that negatively affect a person's well-being (Rishel et al., 2019).

2. *Literacy Specialist* – Synonymous with reading specialist; an educator with at least three years of experience teaching reading, who has earned a graduate degree and a state endorsement as a reading specialist (ILA, 2018). The primary responsibility of a literacy specialist is to instruct struggling readers. A secondary responsibility is to collaborate and coach other teachers of reading in the absence of a literacy coach.

3. *Literacy Coach* – Synonymous with reading coach; an experienced reading specialist who has responsibility for the literacy professional development of the school's literacy teachers including reading specialists and classroom teachers of reading. Coaches differ from specialists in that they do not have instructional responsibilities with students (ILA, 2018).

4. *Mental Health Issues* – Anxiety, depression, or any other symptoms of trauma or an adverse childhood experience (Brunelle et al., 2020).

5. *Self-efficacy* – The capability of people to make choices, act, and endure challenges for their own success (Bandura, 1977).

6. *Social and emotional learning* – Direct instruction of social and emotional competencies

to promote academic, emotional, social, and behavioral wellness and prevent negative or dangerous conduct (Durlak et al., 2011).

7. *Trauma* – Lasting mental, physical, emotional, or social harm due to an event or experience that negatively affects a person's ability to function (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Summary

Considering the low reading achievement of elementary students with emotional issues provides the background of the research problem for this study. Describing the historic and current roles of literacy specialists to reach this population of students clarifies the significance of this study. The purpose of this research is to explore the shared lived experiences and self-efficacy of literacy professionals who teach struggling readers with emotional issues. The central research question and three sub-questions, based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and self-efficacy construct (Bandura, 1997) guide the focus of this phenomenological study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the lived experiences and self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists as they addressed their students' emotional and psychological needs and served as mentors to general classroom teachers. This chapter provides a review of the research on this topic. In the first section, SCT and the construct of self-efficacy are discussed. Next is a synthesis of recent literature on the self-efficacy of reading specialists and the classroom teachers they mentor to address the mental health needs of students based on their educator preparation and personal characteristics. Following, the literature surrounding social and emotional learning and the need for professional development are reviewed. Finally, a gap in the literature on the need for additional research about the experiences and self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists to meet their students' emotional and psychological needs is identified.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is Albert Bandura's (1986) SCT and his construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). These psychological theories have significant implications for learning and help in understanding the importance of elementary reading specialists' feelings and attitudes about their ability to both meet the needs of their students and mentor classroom teachers to do the same. Students with emotional and psychological difficulties present unique challenges to teachers in elementary classrooms (Kuronja et al., 2022). Bandura's (1977) theories ground this study on educators' self-efficacy to meet their students' emotional and psychological needs.

The psychological theories of behaviorism and cognitivism primarily influenced

American education during the first half of the twentieth century. Behaviorists proposed that learning occurs when a stimulus is connected to a response, so educators should use reinforcement or punishment to encourage or limit student behavior (Schunk, 2020). Cognitivists agreed with the behaviorists' emphasis on the learning environment. However, these psychologists contended that each student must mentally process information, and this processing is influenced by the thoughts and perceptions of each learner (Schunk, 2020). Bandura (1986) challenged the tenets of behaviorism by developing a theoretical framework for learning to occur through the interplay among environmental, behavioral, and personal factors. His social learning theory developed into an increasingly cognitive approach, and he renamed it social cognitive theory (SCT) in his 1986 seminal work, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action.* SCT acknowledges the reciprocal relationships between the learning environment, behavior, and motivation within the classroom and the personal characteristics of students and teachers. One of the most significant personal characteristics he identified was self-efficacy, or people's capability to make choices, act, and endure challenges for their own success (Bandura, 1977). SCT was later applied to education (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994), and Bandura (1977) contended that self-efficacy predicted academic success because learners with high self-efficacy demonstrated the initiative to sustain effort on challenging tasks for extended periods.

The fundamental tenets of SCT and the construct of self-efficacy include both the observations and experiences of learners. SCT promotes observational learning and uses modeling for instruction (Bandura, 1986). This theory also acknowledges that the learners' values, goals, and expected outcomes directly affect their motivation and achievement (Bandura, 1977). A learner's self-efficacy may stem from several sources, including "performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, emotional arousal, and verbal persuasions" (Bandura,

1977, p. 195). Students have vicarious experiences by observing models of teachers or other learners who struggle, persevere, and ultimately succeed on a challenging task. In contrast, mastery experiences or performance accomplishments occur when students overcome a challenge. In addition, the emotional arousal of learners, the positive or negative feedback from teachers, or verbal persuasions, can either hinder or increase self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's principles of observational learning and modeling and his construct of self-efficacy are still crucial components of research-based instructional practices in classrooms today.

SCT and Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy provide the theoretical framework for this study exploring the role of reading specialists' self-efficacy as they work to meet the academic and emotional needs of struggling readers with mental health issues. SCT's emphasis on observational learning and modeling provides the lens for understanding the impact of reading specialists' self-efficacy when modeling emotional regulation to students and instructional practices to classroom teachers. Bandura's construct of self-efficacy is the basis for this study's research questions and the questions that were asked of participants in focus groups, interviews, and on a self-efficacy survey.

Recent research based on these theories shows that educators with high self-efficacy have confidence in their abilities to positively impact students, persevere when faced with students who present emotional needs or challenging behaviors, and model motivation and persistence to their students (Kuronja et al., 2019). SCT and the role of self-efficacy in learning lay the foundation for the impact of reading specialists' self-efficacy and modeling on their students' well-being, behavior, and achievement (Bandura, 1986). A minor theory that contributes to understanding the lived experiences of reading specialists is situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). These researchers have collaborated for

over forty years to describe the relationships between motivation, beliefs, situated values, goals, and outcomes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023). Eccles based her early work on Atkinson's (1964) theory of achievement motivation, and she and her colleagues later purported that a person's perceived self-competence and subjective task-value (STV) influence motivation to achieve and persist in a task or activity (Eccles et al., 1983). These researchers concluded that STV is determined by four elements, which include attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost. Attainment value refers to the personal value or importance that a person attributes to a task or activity. Intrinsic value relates to pleasure or enjoyment of the task while the utility value describes the usefulness of the activity (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023).

The relationship between this perceived competence for motivation and self-efficacy for teachers has been established in research literature (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023; ten Hagen et al., 2022; Wigfield et al., 2020). Therefore, the situated expectancy-value theory serves as a more modern theoretical framework in which to consider the perceived competence of reading specialists. It provides an additional lens with which to view their lived experiences in trying to maintain their own motivation to persist with challenging students, model motivation to struggling readers, and motivate classroom teachers to develop their own perceived competence to reach struggling readers with mental health needs. This theory contributes to the central research question, sub-question three, and questions used in both individual interviews and focus groups.

Related Literature

The literature review presents a synthesis of research related to the self-efficacy of the elementary reading specialist to meet the emotional or psychological needs of struggling readers and to support general classroom teachers as they address the mental health needs of their

students. In addition, this survey of publications examines current research on the mental health needs of school-age children and adolescents, the demographics of at-risk populations for mental health disorders, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these students' emotional well-being. Finally, this literature review includes a synthesis of research on the need for school-based mental health supports, social and emotional learning, and the role of educator self-efficacy in meeting the academic, emotional, and psychological needs of students.

Academic Needs of Struggling Readers

Research does not provide a consensus on the best way to teach reading. The decades-long debate between proponents of phonics-based approaches versus those who promote whole-language instruction has been dubbed "the reading wars" (Castles et al., 2018, p. 6). In the 1990s, Lucy Calkins responded to these two opposing viewpoints by advocating for balanced literacy instruction, which emphasized the use of read alouds, shared reading, leveled readers, cueing systems for guessing unknown words, and dedicated time for students to read independently (Pondiscio, 2023). Guided reading is a key component of balanced literacy instruction in which teachers group students based on reading level and meet daily with these differentiated small groups to conduct shared readings and promote reading comprehension and students' love of stories (Pondiscio, 2023). The balanced literacy approach does not include systematic and explicit teaching of phonemic awareness or phonics, which was a recommendation of the National Reading Panel in 2000 (Shanahan, 2005).

Recent neuroscience has revealed the cognitive complexity of reading. The discovery that human brains look for patterns to make predictions and access prior knowledge (McTighe & Willis, 2019) has led to the current literacy movement away from balanced literacy and toward the science of reading approach (Pondiscio, 2023; Solari et al., 2020). The science of reading

applies cognitive science to the process of teaching reading, which typically includes an emphasis on systematic instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, morphology, vocabulary, and the use of mental models for reading comprehension (Duke et al., 2021; Shanahan, 2020; Solari et al., 2020).

According to a national survey conducted by the Education Week Research Center, general classroom and special education teachers who work with Grades K-2 students frequently use literacy programs, curricula, and textbooks that lack explicit and sequential phonics and decodable texts, despite the research base for these components (Schwartz, 2019). Currently, elementary teachers and reading specialists are encouraged and even required by state literacy laws to begin using curricula based on the science of reading (Pondiscio, 2023). Dewitz and Graves (2021) concur with Schwartz's (2019) observations about the disconnect between research and curricula and add that publishing companies are having more impact on the literacy practices of teaching reading comprehension strategies than scientific research on learning. Literacy programs based on the science of reading must adhere to several key tenets, including explicit phonemic awareness instruction (Castles et al., 2018), meaningful phonics interventions using multisensory techniques and active student engagement to aid memory (Henry et al., 2020), direct teaching of comprehension strategies (Duke et al., 2021), and time to read a wide variety of text (Castles et al., 2018).

Critics of the science of reading approach contend that an overemphasis on neuroscience could lead teachers to neglect proven pedagogical strategies for literacy instruction (Paige et al., 2021; Riley, 2021; Shanahan, 2020). Despite the ongoing debate about how best to teach literacy, neuroscience and balanced literacy approaches both indicate that reading and shared stories have the power to influence brain chemicals and human behavior (Langeberg, 2023).

Recent brain research has also led to new information about how learning occurs, how knowledge is stored and retrieved from memory, and how emotions impact cognitive processes (Brown et al., 2014; McTighe & Willis, 2019). The brain's amygdala sifts information to other parts of the brain based in part on a person's emotional state at the time the information is received (McTighe & Willis, 2019). Students in a positive emotional state receive information and the amygdala sends it to the prefrontal cortex region of the brain which handles advanced levels of cognition, executive functioning, and connections to stored memories (McTighe & Willis, 2019). In contrast, the amygdala of a stressed student does not relay information to the prefrontal cortex and the survival instincts of the lower brain take over resulting in fight, flight, or freeze responses (McTighe & Willis, 2019).

One hopeful finding from neuroscience for students with emotional or psychological issues is the concept of neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to adapt, change, and even heal neural pathways through learning and experiences (Brown et al., 2014; McTighe & Willis, 2019; Rossen, 2020). Although the full effect of trauma and mental health issues on the brain are still being investigated, it is clear that emotional and psychological difficulties can cause cognitive impairments (Rossen, 2020). Reading teachers need to understand the implications of neuroscience so it can inform their teaching and empower them to share with students how their brains work and grow (McTighe & Willis, 2019).

Mental Health Needs of Students

The prevalence of students with mental health needs in K-12 American classrooms is increasing (Duong et al., 2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022). The mental health needs of children and adolescents are categorized as internal or external, based on how students display their symptoms (Weist et al., 2018). Students who display their mental health symptoms externally are typically

oppositional and disruptive in the school environment so their needs cannot be ignored (Firestone & Cruz, 2022). However, students who remain quiet and withdrawn due to anxiety, depression, or trauma-related needs may not be identified or receive needed mental health services, especially during the crucial elementary years (Bhogal et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2018).

Mental health issues that begin in childhood and adolescence can have lifelong consequences. Researchers have concluded that when mental health needs are not addressed in childhood, they lead to more significant issues during adolescence and adulthood and are linked to substance abuse, social difficulties, criminal behavior, and suicide (Sanchez et al., 2018). The early onset of mental health disorders prompted the World Health Organization (2008) to predict that untreated anxiety and depression would be the leading cause of disability or death in children by 2020. Although depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress are prevalent across all geographic locations, genders, races, and socioeconomic levels, some students have an increased risk of mental health challenges.

Vulnerable Populations

In United States public schools, students in the same classroom differ by ethnicity, race, language, and socioeconomic status, presenting numerous and varied challenges to teachers. While student diversity is increasing, teacher diversity is not (Yuan, 2018). According to the NCES (2023), of the 3.8 million full-time and part-time public-school teachers during the 2020-2021 school year, 80% were White. In addition, most American teachers come from middle-class backgrounds and are native English speakers, which can lead to a cultural divide (Thomas et al., 2020).

Over the past several decades, numerous policies, or lack thereof, have allowed the issues

surrounding cultural diversity in American classrooms to be ignored or oversimplified. Despite the advances of the civil rights movement and desegregation, many Americans in the 1970s concluded that people of low socioeconomic status had personal traits or maintained values that caused them to remain in poverty (Homan et al., 2017). This conclusion placed the onus for change on disadvantaged people rather than government or schools. However, educational policies were challenged in the 1980s when research pointed out the glaring differences between students' home cultures and their school culture. Some researchers noted that students were encouraged to become part of the mainstream culture of school (Ebersole et al., 2016). This implied message devalued the cultural assets diverse students brought to the classroom.

The multicultural education movement led educators to revise curricula to be more inclusive of minority cultures and encouraged teachers to use multicultural literature (Gay, 2015). Multicultural education disabused the idea of diverse students as disadvantaged and positioned them as assets because of their diverse cultures. Critics of multicultural education claimed that its focus on cultural differences might create more division than unity (Kelly et al., 2021).

Some educators are more comfortable addressing global multiculturalism and international issues of injustice rather than focusing on inequity in American public schools (Lee, 2018). Despite numerous educational initiatives, there is a persistent "school underachievement of students from poor, urban, rural, and non-mainstream ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups" (Gay, 2015, p. 123).

Children and adolescents who live in poverty or who are members of a marginalized ethnic or racial group are at a greater risk of developing depression or an anxiety disorder than their White or more affluent peers (Bhogal et al., 2021; Brunelle et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz,

2022; Pannebakker et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2018). If these students are diagnosed with a mental health disorder, they are less likely to receive services than non-minority children or adolescents from middle-class homes. This discrepancy may be due to the financial cost of mental health services, which is even more significant for those who lack health insurance (Firestone & Cruz, 2022). Research also indicates that a lack of transportation and cultural stigma toward mental health services are additional barriers (Sanchez et al., 2018). Further, minority students in poverty diagnosed with learning disabilities may have the highest risk for mental health issues (Brunelle et al., 2020).

Impacts of Childhood Trauma

Trauma is characterized in multiple ways. Researchers in the fields of psychology and education often use a definition of trauma written by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

> Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (SAMHSA & Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2012, p. 2)

This definition gives a broad view of trauma that includes a variety of types and frequency of negative experiences (SAMHSA, 2020). Trauma also can be described as the result of any factor when a person does not have the internal resources or external support to cope with the negative event or events (Alvarez, 2017). This perspective highlights the fact that each person may respond to adverse experiences in different ways, so negative experiences like divorce or even the death of a parent could lead to severe trauma in one person and not in

another.

Trauma researchers have identified 10 adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that are linked to symptoms of trauma in children, teens, college students, and adults. These childhood experiences include "emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, parental separation or divorce, mental illness in the household, household substance abuse, a criminal household member, emotional neglect, and physical neglect" (Rishel et al., 2019, p. 239). The ACEs term has expanded to include school shootings, community violence, natural disasters, and homelessness. The 2016 National Survey of Children's Health stated that almost half of American children reported at least one ACE, and 10% reported experiencing three or more ACEs (Brown et al., 2022, p. 662).

Children of racial and ethnic minority groups comprised 61% of the children who had experienced at least one ACE. Fifty-eight percent of the participants reporting an ACE lived below the federal poverty level (Brown et al., 2022). Urban trauma is a term used to describe the racial trauma experienced by Blacks due to slavery, segregation, discrimination, and historic oppression (Brown et al., 2022). This trauma is consistently reinforced by the stress of poor housing conditions, generational poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and community violence. Honsinger and Brown (2019) add that dysfunctional coping patterns are often modeled and passed down through generations in communities experiencing this type of stress. Despite the prevalence of ACEs in urban communities, research shows increasing numbers of traumatized children across all races and socio-economic levels.

Teachers must be able to recognize the signs of trauma and the effects of ACEs to manage students in their classrooms or refer students for help. Researchers have discovered that repeated exposure to trauma produces physical changes in the brain. In traumatized students, the

amygdala, the part of the brain that senses danger and triggers the survival responses of fight, flight, or freeze, grows through overuse and leaves little to no room for executive function and planning (McClain, 2021, p. 6). This overstimulation of the amygdala results in overreactions to minor stressors that can present in classrooms as aggression, poor concentration, weak memory, difficulty in peer relationships, and distrust of teachers or those in authority. Teachers do not typically have access to this level of neurobiology and need guidance to determine how to respond appropriately to students affected by trauma (Little & Maunder, 2021).

Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Amid the growing concern about rising mental health challenges in school-age children and adolescents, the global COVID-19 pandemic brought on additional pressures and stressors. The pandemic reached the United States in 2020 and caused nationwide school closures and stay-at-home orders. Although many politicians and educators thought the digital divide was shrinking between races and income levels (De los Santos & Rosser, 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent switch to virtual learning disproved this theory and exposed digital inequities beyond access and affordability (Correia, 2020).

Digital gaps persist on a national scale and contribute to the educational achievement gaps for rural, minority, and economically disadvantaged learners. The integration and use of technology at home is largely based on the socioeconomic status of the family. Technology is used differently between income levels even when devices are provided to low-income families (Gonzalez-Betancor et al., 2021). Reza (2020) concurs and adds that many economically disadvantaged parents are willing to help but may lack the education or digital literacy skills to guide their children. Because students had to use technology at home to participate in virtual school during the pandemic, the disparity between advantaged and disadvantaged learners

broadened (Reza, 2020). Schwartzman (2020) identified the pressure and inequity of virtual education for students from low-income families by considering the challenges of multiple children in different grade levels trying to participate in virtual instruction using the family's one mobile phone. There is a connection between a lack of access to digital resources and fewer opportunities for advanced education. This opportunity gap impacts high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and ultimately the economic stability of American communities (Statti & Torres, 2020).

In addition to the achievement gaps that were exacerbated by the digital divide and virtual learning, mental health concerns increased during this time of isolation. Students experienced fear of the illness, worry about the spread of the virus, stress about family finances or loss of employment, social isolation from peers, and significant lifestyle changes that together constituted a traumatic event (Bhogal et al., 2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Ma et al., 2021). In national and international studies, researchers found increased trauma-related mental health needs in school-age children following the pandemic and more negative consequences of school closures on students from low socioeconomic families (Bhogal et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021). The disruption of regular sleep cycles and a significant increase in screen time during school closures were identified as contributing factors to the increase in mental health challenges in young people after COVID-19 (Ma et al., 2021). There is a need for additional research as students return to school and report feeling a lack of support from school personnel to address their mental health needs (Firestone & Cruz, 2022).

Need for School-Based Support

Elementary, middle, and high school students spend their waking hours attending school, which makes schools viable locations for mental health screenings and service delivery (Brunelle

et al., 2020; Duong et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2018). In 2017, Congress passed the Mental Health in Schools Act to provide school-based support for students and training for school staff (Duong et al., 2021). One benefit of school-based mental health services is that it helps eliminate barriers to access that low socioeconomic students and their families may face related to transportation, insurance, and funding (Bhogal et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2018). In addition, researchers found that schools are the most common mental health service settings for students with mild, moderate, and even significant mental health needs (Duong et al., 2021). However, despite legal mandates and the popularity of school-based mental health services, more consensus is needed in the research about the appropriateness of schools being the primary sources of mental health support for students.

Although educators are in positions to notice early signs of depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress, reading specialists and general classroom teachers typically have not been trained to screen for mental health issues or deliver mental health interventions (Brunelle et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Sanchez et al., 2018; Weist et al., 2018). Even special educators need additional professional development to provide appropriate mental health services to the students with emotional and behavioral disorders assigned to their caseloads (Hirsch et al., 2022). Results from a study of young people needing mental health support at school indicate that only two percent of students received services from school counselors or mental health professionals, which leaves 98% of students being served only by teachers (Sanchez et al., 2018). Since classroom teachers and reading specialists have primary instructional responsibilities, addressing students' mental health needs requires educators to move outside their expertise (Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Weist et al., 2018). Regardless of the curriculum or programs, teachers are being asked to add a significant responsibility to their primary duties, and researchers are

eager to gather educators' perspectives on their role in mental health screening, prevention education, and intervention services (Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Sanchez et al., 2018; Weist et al., 2018).

Motivational Needs of Struggling Readers

Literacy specialists have the challenge of motivating struggling readers to continue to put forth effort in the complex task of reading, so understanding Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs can provide guidance in helping students with unmet needs. Abraham Maslow was a leading psychologist in human motivation who contended that human needs can be divided into levels of organization beginning with basic physiological needs and encompassing safety needs, the need for love and belonging, esteem needs, and the highest level of self-actualization needs. He believed that the lower levels of needs, like the need for food, must be satisfied for humans to be motivated to pursue meeting higher levels of needs such as meeting one's full potential or self-actualization. Achievement in school is part of the third level of esteem needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs model. Therefore, students must feel that their need for survival, safety, and love/belonging are at least partially met in order to have the capability to work toward academic goals (Smith & Quick, 2023). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs model and its application for struggling readers with mental health needs will influence my study's first sub-question regarding the experiences of reading specialists in motivating struggling readers with emotional or psychological issues to improve their academic performance.

The motivation of struggling readers to persevere during literacy instruction can be impacted by implied messages or the hidden curriculum of their educational experience or literacy curricula. A hidden curriculum is defined as the social norms that are embedded in curricula or expectations of behavior that reflect the experience of the dominant cultural group

(Thomas & Dyches, 2019). Literacy teachers have expressed concern about the implied message of connecting perseverance with academic success because it does not consider the grit of marginalized cultural groups who are not testing as well as their White middle-class peers (Handsman, 2021). Literacy specialists often serve students in Title I schools who are from racially marginalized groups and/or live in poverty, and these students will not be motivated to read if they cannot relate to the stories and nonfiction texts that are included in the curriculum. Thomas and Dyches (2019) analyzed a level of Heinemann's Leveled Literacy Intervention curriculum, which is widely used by reading specialists in public schools with small groups of struggling readers, to see how racial diversity was depicted. Thomas and Dyches discovered that in the majority of fictional books, the main characters of racial and ethnic minority groups were "portrayed as thieves, misfits, dropouts, drug addicts, fatherless children abandoned by their mothers, and hopelessly lacking a will to live" (p. 611). In contrast, the informational texts were comprised of the accomplishments of White inventors or explorers who were positioned as "successful, ethical, and heroic" (p. 611). Therefore, literacy specialists must consider how best to teach literacy based on research, what curricula will motivate struggling readers, and how to meet the mental health needs of students in order to improve their achievement.

School-based Approaches

Educators can make a positive difference for students with emotional or psychological difficulties by implementing evidence-based approaches that consider their needs beyond academics or behavior (McTighe & Willis, 2019). Rossen (2020) recommends that teachers need to respect students' identities, have meaningful and welcoming interactions with them, and make their classrooms places where it is safe to take risks, make mistakes, and share about their lives. Three popular school-based approaches to promote psychological safety for students and

teachers are trauma-informed instruction, culturally responsive teaching, (Rossen, 2020) and bibliotherapy (Langeberg, 2020).

Trauma-informed Instruction

P-12 schools and institutions of higher education are implementing trauma-informed approaches to address the increasing prevalence of traumatized students and the lack of teacher knowledge about trauma. Since trauma-informed curricula and standardized teacher training for educational settings are scarce, educators are borrowing theoretical frameworks and resources from the psychology field to deliver trauma-informed care (Sonsteng-Person & Loomis, 2021). SAMHSA states that "any setting is 'trauma informed' if the people there realize how widespread trauma is, recognize signs and symptoms, respond by integrating knowledge into practice, and resist doing further harm'" (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Based on this definition, Honsinger and Brown (2019) identify three characteristics of schools that are based on trauma-informed pedagogy: the creation of safe learning environments, a commitment to build relationships with students, and the support and teaching of emotional regulation skills.

Trauma can diminish a child's sense of trust and safety, so trauma-informed learning environments must include core values of student choice, trustworthiness, confidence building, and collaboration (Altieri et al., 2021; Stephens, 2020). Honsinger and Brown (2019) agree that trauma-sensitive classrooms should include positive messaging through classroom signs, calm lighting and music, and a safe space to calm down in times of crisis. Safe learning environments in trauma-informed schools should extend beyond one teacher or classroom to involve the entire school. School administrators who understand the complicated work that teachers must do with traumatized students will provide the support and resources needed for a trauma-sensitive

environment and foster collaboration between classroom teachers, special education teachers, school counselors, psychologists, and social workers (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Venet, 2019). This support structure within a school should be available to both traumatized and neurotypical students.

Trauma-informed Programs

Trauma-informed programs provide a support structure within schools that benefit both traumatized and neurotypical students (Honsinger & Brown, 2019). Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is a framework of interventions used in trauma-informed schools. In this model, students who need more intensive support can receive higher-tiered services to support their academic, behavioral, or emotional needs. These higher tiers may include collaboration with outside agencies of mental health professionals and social workers who can also serve students' families (Honsinger & Brown, 2019). Teachers in trauma-informed environments make referrals and serve as the connection between students and their families with the support and resources they need, so educators must be able to trust these outside professionals to provide beneficial services even when the details cannot be shared (Stephens, 2020; Venet, 2019). Traumatized families may distrust authority figures and feel wary of school involvement, but a caring teacher in a safe learning environment can be an agent of change in student and family perceptions of schools (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Robertson et al., 2021; Stephens, 2020).

Through the use of trauma-sensitive practices in classrooms, teachers can build connections and foster relationships with their students. These practices include greeting students by name, holding group meetings or discussions to learn about students' interests or concerns, using cooperative learning to foster peer connections, and allowing student collaboration to take

care of classroom chores and solve problems (Honsinger & Brown, 2019). The use of trauma-

informed approaches such as Child-Teacher Relationship Training (CTRT) and Trust-Based

Relational Intervention (TBRI) should help educators build strong enough relationships with

students that they can model and explicitly teach emotional regulation skills. CTRT is an

intervention based on Child-Parent Relationship Therapy (CPRT) (Opiola et al, 2020). School

counselors who are familiar with CPRT can assist in supporting teachers as they learn these

techniques for building relationships with students. The primary tenets of CTRT are rooted in

play therapy and are designed to help teachers become more aware and more responsive to their

students' individual needs.

TBRI is a similar program that is used in American classrooms and school districts. TRBI

was developed at the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development at Texas Christian University

to support adoptive and foster families (Stipp & Kilpatrick, 2021). This educator training

consists of multiple sessions in which teachers learn about complex trauma and attachment

theory. Teachers are asked to role play classroom scenarios with partners throughout the program

and reflect on their styles of caregiving and attachment (Stipp & Kilpatrick, 2021). Subsequently,

teachers are asked to design lessons to address a specific skill or behavior in a trauma-informed

way. Classroom teachers need to understand the importance and effects of secure and insecure

attachments between children and caregivers to aid in their connections with students (Stipp &

Kilpatrick, 2021) and fully consider their own attachment styles and how that may affect their

responses to students' classroom behaviors and difficulties (Robertson et al., 2021).

The ARC framework is an evidence-based model that teachers and caregivers can use to

increase self-regulation in students (Rishel et al., 2019). In the ARC framework, teachers instruct

students about the biological results of stress and what may be happening inside their minds and

bodies when faced with stressors. Teachers guide students to recognize and name what they are experiencing to eventually express their feelings and experiences with another trusted person or caregiver. Students who increase their self-regulation skills tend to have more academic and social engagement and success, so they need explicit instruction surrounding stress management (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Rishel et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2021). Honsinger and Brown (2019) suggest that teachers can find and use themes of emotional regulation in curriculum and literature and also recommend the incorporation of activities and materials to help students relax. These include yoga, brain breaks, mindfulness, sensory fidget toys, deep breathing, coloring, emotional ratings, and muscle relaxation.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach derived from multicultural education that often is paired with trauma-informed strategies (Rossen, 2020). Culturally responsive teaching embeds the concepts of social justice, equality, and a positive view of diversity within classroom teaching and has shown positive impacts on student achievement (Gay, 2015). Culturally responsive teaching should be a holistic mindset of using the culture of minority students to teach academic and citizenship skills more effectively while connecting new information to students' prior academic knowledge and cultural life experiences (Gay, 2015; Kelly et al., 2021). Well-meaning educators can make stereotypical generalizations about specific ethnic groups or children of poverty unless they intentionally focus on the individual needs and interests of each student. In addition to being student-focused, culturally responsive teachers display several similar attributes regardless of their assigned grade levels or school settings.

A common practice is to create a welcoming learning environment in which students of all ethnicities and socioeconomic levels feel that they belong (Gay, 2015; Muniz, 2020). These

teachers strive to remove obstacles for parents, encourage family participation through effective communication and inclusive attitudes, and incorporate literature and instructional materials that allow students to see themselves and authentic depictions of other cultures (Gay, 2015; Muniz, 2020). A final characteristic of culturally responsive teachers is their belief that all students can succeed. Wachira and Mburu (2019) contend that teachers in the field often have difficulty implementing culturally responsive teaching due to the pressure of standardized testing. Pre-service teachers may find that urban schools with children of poverty may have an increased emphasis on test preparation due to historically lower performance.

A significant finding from the research literature indicates that the cultures of students and teachers do not have to match for instruction to be culturally responsive. However, the cultural mismatch between White middle-class female teachers and minority students of poverty can impede building strong relationships quickly (Stephens, 2020). Neither students nor teachers can separate themselves from their own cultures, so the true goal of culturally responsive teaching is to build scaffolds that students can use to travel successfully between home and school cultures (Gay, 2015; Muniz, 2020).

To empower students to navigate cultures, preservice teachers must have meaningful training before leading diverse classrooms. Several professional education organizations have created standards that educator preparation provider (EPP) programs must meet regarding culturally responsive teaching. These organizations include the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education or NCATE (Mvududu, 2009), the National Board for Professional Teaching or NBPTS, and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment Support Consortium or INTASC (Ebersole et al., 2016).

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is a term used to describe the use of reading and discussing literature as a non-pharmaceutical and low-cost strategy to address mental health problems in children, adolescents, and adults (Langeberg, 2023; Monroy-Fraustro et al., 2021; Sevinç, 2019). Cognitive researchers discovered that reading and listening to stories activated the portions of the brain related to trust and human connection, and it can create a bond between people in groups such as teachers and a classroom of students (Langeberg, 2023). Developmental bibliotherapy often is used by school counselors and teachers as they use literature to address students' problems, promote positive behavior, and eliminate negative behavior (Sevinç, 2019). Common topics that are addressed through literature in schools are bullying, grief, loneliness, peer relationships, and moving (Sevinç, 2019). Langeberg (2023) concludes that the use of bibliotherapy in schools is an approach that aligns naturally with social and emotional learning (SEL), another approach to meet the mental health needs of students.

Social and Emotional Learning

Lawmakers and school administrators are seeking ways to introduce multitiered systems of support (MTSS) by integrating them with existing school programs, such as PBIS (Weist et al., 2018). Even strong proponents of school-based mental health services acknowledge that schools require additional funding, and school personnel need training to meet the mental health needs of students (Brunelle et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Sanchez et al., 2018; Weist et al., 2018). One of the hallmarks of PBIS is the use of MTSS so that all students' needs are met. Weist et al. (2018) defined tier one supports as preventative strategies given to students in general classrooms. Tier two strategies and supports are given to students who have been identified as being at risk, and tier three supports are reserved for individual students with more significant needs (Weist et al., 2018). Embedding SEL within academic curricula is a tier-one

intervention that educators use to support the emotional health of all students (Weist et al., 2018). Some school districts have adopted a social and emotional curriculum complete with print and online resources for teachers and students (Todd et al., 2022). These schoolwide approaches acknowledge educational stakeholders as influencers on students' mental health. These caring adults can provide instruction and resources in social and emotional skills for all students and use it as a springboard for deeper involvement or interventions with students demonstrating psychological needs or behavioral issues related to their mental health (Martin et al., 2021).

SEL curricula are typically based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) guide and its five characteristics of self-management or self-regulation, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Thierry et al., 2022; Todd et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019). The goal of SEL curricula is to empower teachers to create a safe learning environment in which to explicitly teach students the skills needed to manage their emotions and behaviors (Thierry et al., 2022) and to increase students' engagement at school and desire to learn (Yang et al., 2019). Teachers who implement SEL curricula model self-management to students by guiding students who are emotionally escalated to regulate their emotions before determining the consequences of misbehavior (Todd et al., 2022).

Benefits to Students

SEL programs have proven to be beneficial for students across all grade levels. Even preschool students who were taught with an SEL curriculum developed higher levels of "emotional knowledge and competence" when compared to preschoolers who attended a typical Head Start class without explicit SEL instruction (Yang et al., 2019, p. 51). Researchers contend that social and emotional instruction helps to prevent depression and negative behavior issues

(Pannebakker et al., 2019) and promote healthy peer relationships and less aggressive behavior (Kim et al., 2021). In the school setting, the use of SEL curricula has been linked to academic improvement and fewer disciplinary office referrals or suspensions (Durlak et al., 2011; Todd et al., 2022). Studies on the long-term effects of SEL instruction show that students benefit into adolescence and adulthood by having positive emotional relationships, job success, and better mental health (Thierry et al., 2022; Todd et al., 2022). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds or students with low academic achievement demonstrate the most growth from SEL programs (Pannebakker et al., 2019; Todd et al., 2022). Teachers in urban schools report that the most successful SEL curricula also address students' concerns about poverty and racism (Martin et al., 2021).

Benefits to Teachers

Implementing SEL curricula also benefits teachers. Educators who teach SEL curricula learn about brain functions and how to manage their emotions and regulate their stress using the skills and strategies they are teaching to students (Asirit et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021; Todd et al., 2022). The stress of teaching can negatively affect teachers' health and results in high turnover in schools and attrition (Asirit et al., 2022). Even before the added challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost half of American educators were leaving the field of education within their first five years in classrooms (Kim et al., 2021; Olson Stewart et al., 2021). According to Vicente de Vera Garcia and Gabari Gambarte (2019), compassion fatigue or the emotional exhaustion associated with caring professions like education is one cause of teacher burnout. Teacher burnout has also been connected to the effort of managing student misbehavior while trying to meet students' academic and emotional needs, so SEL instruction can improve a school's climate and the mental health needs of both students and teachers (Asirit et al., 2022;

Kim et al., 2021; Todd et al., 2022).

Criticisms of Social and Emotional Learning

Despite the apparent benefits of SEL, educators report that it can be difficult to implement an SEL curriculum with fidelity due to having limited time in their schedules, a lack of training, and a lack of confidence (Martin et al., 2021; Thierry et al., 2022; Todd et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019). Some educational stakeholders purport that SEL programs distract from the academic purposes of school (Effrem & Robbins, 2019), and do not have strong evidence of long-term outcomes for students (Pannebakker et al., 2019). There is also concern over the use of assessments within SEL programs, the potential for psychological manipulation of children without parental knowledge or consent, and violations of student privacy (Effrem & Robbins, 2019). A final concern is related to the role of teachers in implementing SEL curricula and administering assessments. Effrem and Robbins claim that educators' lack of training and experience could result in harm to students with mental health despite their good intentions. Without intensive training and oversight, teachers could misinterpret SEL curricula assessments or mishandle confidential information related to their student's mental health (Effrem & Robbins, 2019).

Teacher Self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is considered one of the critical factors that determine how educators will instruct, manage their classrooms, make instructional decisions, and interact with a diverse student population (Clark & Andreasen, 2021; Cooper et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019). However, teacher self-efficacy is not synonymous with natural talent. Rather, it is an internal belief that teachers can successfully prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact students' lives (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et

al., 2019). For example, elementary teachers reported high self-efficacy when working with students who exhibited positive classroom behaviors but lower self-efficacy when faced with challenging behaviors from students (Kuronja et al., 2019; Sawyer et al., 2022). General education teachers typically have high self-efficacy related to instructional content while special educators report high self-efficacy in meeting students' needs (Ruppar et al., 2020). As schools seek to provide the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, general education teachers are faced with a higher percentage of students with social/emotional, behavioral, or learning difficulties. Teacher self-efficacy can vary depending on the characteristics of students they are teaching. Teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to also have a willingness to teach a wide range of diverse students. This leads to a strong relationship between self-efficacy and inclusion efficacy (Özokcu, 2017).

Regardless of the instructional setting, teachers with high self-efficacy behave differently from those with low self-efficacy, and these differences make an impact on students. Many studies have been conducted to determine if teacher gender or years of teaching experience have causal relationships with self-efficacy levels. The research literature is filled with contradictory information regarding whether pre-service teachers have lower or higher self-efficacy for inclusion than experienced teachers. The majority of studies claim that female teachers have higher self-efficacy for teaching students with disabilities (Shaukat et al., 2019), but Van Mieghem et al. (2022) provide evidence of higher self-efficacy in male teachers for inclusion. Regardless of gender or experience, Yakut (2021) contends that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to recommend placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms whereas teachers with low self-efficacy tend to push for external settings.

Teachers of inclusive classrooms who have high self-efficacy have been described as

using more innovative methods of instruction and classroom management (Özokcu, 2017). High self-efficacy is a characteristic of both general educators and special educators who persist beyond obstacles to meet students' needs and reach those who lack motivation or struggle academically. Sawyer et al. (2022) add that teachers with high self-efficacy use evidence-based approaches and can embed learning for all students within daily classroom procedures and routines. Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy spend less time on academics, use less effective instructional strategies, and do not invest as much time assisting students with learning needs (Özokcu, 2017). Levels of self-efficacy also have been linked to positive or negative consequences for teachers. According to Shaukat et al. (2019), teachers who have low self-efficacy report more stress, poorer health, and less attainment of personal goals than teachers with high self-efficacy. This lack of job satisfaction can lead to teacher burnout and attrition. The United States is currently facing a teacher shortage, and pre-service teachers are being hired and entering the workforce before completing supervised student teaching experiences. As veteran teachers retire, inexperienced teachers are put in classrooms with struggling students without the benefit of strong mentors. Jordan et al. (2019) suggest that these consequences of teacher attrition not only hurt students but contribute to low self-efficacy.

Teachers with high self-efficacy express personal fulfillment in their careers and remain committed to teaching despite its challenges. Levels of teacher self-efficacy can benefit or negatively influence teachers and students. Teachers with high self-efficacy are known for setting high goals for students (Browarnik et al., 2017) and being less critical of their mistakes (Shaukat et al., 2019). This positive classroom environment builds strong relationships between teachers and their students, which leads to increased student motivation and academic achievement (Özokcu, 2017). Jordan et al. (2019) concur that teacher self-efficacy and student

achievement are connected. Students with and without disabilities are affected either positively or negatively by teachers' self-efficacy for inclusion.

In contrast to students with only learning needs, there is a debate surrounding an educator's role when dealing with students' mental health. Some researchers support that teachers are trusted figures who should play a crucial role in students' healing (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019). Other researchers contend that teachers are not responsible for mental health services and only should connect students in need with trained counselors and recommend services available within a school, district, or community (Effrem & Robbins, 2019; Stephens, 2020; Venet, 2019). Both pre-service teachers and teachers in the field have expressed concerns about their competence to avoid triggering students with mental health issues while providing equitable treatment to all students in their classrooms (McClain, 2021).

This concern or hesitancy to address the mental health needs of students can hold educators back from implementing research-based practices and serving as role models of mental health to their students (Asirit et al., 2022). Elementary pre-service teachers report higher levels of self-efficacy during their college preparation and student teaching than after one year in the teaching field (Clark & Andreasen, 2021). This decrease in self-efficacy among novice teachers may factor into high attrition rates and the current national teacher shortage (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Characteristics of teachers with low self-efficacy differ greatly from those of teachers with high self-efficacy, so the research literature has contributed recommendations to help create or maintain high levels of self-efficacy for inclusion in pre-service and in-service educators. Consequently, educational researchers are trying to determine the factors influencing teacher self-efficacy, including teacher characteristics, educator preparation and professional

development, and school-based mentoring.

Teacher Characteristics

Teachers' personal characteristics that impact self-efficacy include racial identity, gender, and resilience. Although secondary teachers report more experience working with students who suffer from anxiety or depression, teachers of all grade levels acknowledge having low self-efficacy to handle trauma-related needs (Firestone & Cruz, 2022; McClain, 2021). Elementary teachers often try to manage these students' emotional reactions and responses with behavioral strategies such as praising, ignoring, or using negative reinforcement. Unfortunately, these strategies have not consistently benefited students with mental health issues (Firestone & Cruz, 2022). Recent research reveals that teachers of racial and ethnic minority groups have lower self-efficacy for meeting students' mental health needs (Brunelle et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022) and implementing an SEL curriculum with fidelity (Thierry et al., 2022) than their non-minority counterparts. Teachers in rural areas also report lower self-efficacy for implementing programs or curricula designed to address students' mental health needs (Zolkoski et al., 2020).

Robertson et al. (2021) conclude that creating safe learning spaces, building strong relationships between teachers and students, and teaching emotional self-regulation not only benefits students but also assist teachers in understanding their own ACEs since research shows that teachers have higher prevalence rates of ACEs than the general population (p. 64). ACES in teachers have a negative association with classroom environments and put them at an even higher risk of experiencing secondary trauma from their work with students affected by trauma.

Berger et al. (2021) conducted studies on teachers who taught traumatized students and found that these educators reported emotional issues, compassion fatigue, and symptoms of secondary trauma from repeated exposures to student trauma. Secondary trauma describes the

physical, emotional, and psychological effects that can occur when a person witnesses a traumatic event or notices the effects of trauma on another person (Stephens, 2020). Secondary trauma is especially prevalent among urban teachers because they are often new teachers faced with less funding for resources, large classes, and a wide variety of racial, academic, economic, and emotional diversity in students (Opiola et al., 2020). Brown et al. (2022) agree that urban teachers are at risk and recommend that they connect with school counselors and psychologists to manage their feelings of stress.

Resource teachers, like those who teach physical education or art, may be another vulnerable group because of their isolation within elementary schools or small secondary schools (Altieri et al., 2021). These educators are often the only adults in the building teaching their content, and they may work in school areas that are separate from other staff members. These teachers need to actively develop relationships with school administration, faculty, and staff to combat isolation and burnout. Regardless of their role, all teachers need to develop a balance between their school life and their home life (Altieri et al., 2021). Teachers also need time to debrief with counselors or other supportive colleagues after hearing about student trauma or working through negative emotions and misbehaviors with traumatized students. Strong support from administration seems to help teachers carry fewer emotional burdens related to students' behavior or needs (Berger et al., 2021).

Teacher Resilience

One characteristic that is closely linked with self-efficacy is resilience. Emotional and psychological resilience is the ability to rebound from stressful situations, solve problems, and persevere in the face of great challenges (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Olson Stewart et al., 2021). Researchers have identified resilience as one of the primary characteristics of educators

who remain in the field of education and avoid burnout due to compassion fatigue or secondary trauma (Olson Stewart et al., 2021; Stephens, 2020; Vicente de Vera Garcia & Gabari Gambarte, 2019). Since teaching is a helping profession in which educators spend most of each day serving others, burnout is common and a phenomenon that pre-service teachers worry about before entering the field (Williams et al., 2022). Psychological resilience is positively correlated to teacher self-efficacy, and pre-service teachers with both resilience and self-efficacy report the most positive attitudes toward the teaching profession (Kavgaci, 2022).

Although there is a current push to build teacher resilience, some researchers are concerned about the movement as it seems to put the burden of developing resilience on the teachers themselves (Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022). There is an implication that teachers who are struggling are partly to blame for not being strong enough to bounce back from stressful situations associated with teaching. Critics of the resilience movement purport that support from school leaders and colleagues builds teacher resilience and that the emphasis should be on teacher wellness (Karagozoglu & Ozan, 2022; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022).

One way to develop teacher wellness and resilience, regardless of personal background or grit, is mindfulness training (Neumann & Tillott, 2022). The goal of mindfulness training for educators is to promote self-awareness and teach strategies for coping with stress (Aslan Gördesli & Aydin Sünbül, 2021; Neumann & Tillott, 2022). Mindfulness training ultimately benefits students by training teachers to respond to students calmly, sensitively, and with compassion (Aslan Gördesli & Aydin Sünbül, 2021). Teachers who have support systems, pay attention to their health, and practice self-care are more likely to have resilience and model emotional and psychological health to their students (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019).

Teacher Preparation

Despite the research on the need for high teacher self-efficacy, problems still exist in teacher preparation and within classrooms that prevent some educators from acquiring or maintaining high levels of self-efficacy. EPPs instruct pre-service teachers in classroom management techniques that reward good behavior and punish misbehavior, which may be too simplistic for students in crisis (Firestone & Cruz, 2022). It is not unusual for EPP programs to have only one course in exceptionalities for general education teachers. This course may focus only on academic differences and not address emotional or psychological needs (Swindlehurst & Berry, 2021). EPPs continue to evaluate pre-service teachers on their content and skills through national assessments. However, these do not measure candidates' readiness to teach students with mental health needs (Jordan et al., 2019).

Teachers in the field who manage the needs of traumatized students are advising colleges and universities to include trauma-informed strategies as part of their teacher preparation programs (Berger et al., 2021; Opiola et al., 2020). Pre-service teachers can benefit from the opportunity to apply their new knowledge in field experiences with students who display trauma-related mental health needs (McClain, 2021). Without this type of preparation, novice teachers may not recognize signs of mental health or misinterpret the behaviors of students with emotional or psychological issues (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Teachers without clear structure and training who are required to deal with traumatized students report secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout (Stephens, 2020). Considering student trauma when planning instruction techniques and behavior management requires a mindset shift. Brown et al. (2022) report that administrators and teachers encounter obstacles when trying to shift from traditional approaches.

Researchers propose an increase in pre-service teacher training and professional

development for in-service educators to boost teachers' self-efficacy in addressing students'

mental health needs (Martin et al., 2021; Zolkoski et al., 2020). Others support the idea of

bringing in outside experts or consultants to manage the implementation of research-based

strategies like trauma-informed instruction and SEL (Effrem & Robbins, 2019; Martin et al.,

2021; Pannebakker et al., 2019). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to implement a

new curriculum that focuses on emotional regulation, collaborate with consultants and other

mental health providers, and implement schoolwide programs or curricula with fidelity (Kim et

al., 2021; Thierry et al., 2022; Zolkoski et al., 2020).

Literacy Specialist Preparation

The EPP programs for teachers seeking literacy specialist graduate degrees often

emphasize that these specialists will have both instructional and leadership responsibilities

within their schools (Dagen & Bean, 2020; ILA, 2018; Nilsson, 2020). In the ILA's (2018)

standards for literacy professionals, reading specialists are required to demonstrate evidence of

Standard 5 related to learners and the literacy environment and Standard 6 related to professional

learning and leadership. Although most colleges and universities offer a course on leadership to

these candidates, they typically can only observe and participate in literacy instruction during

their final internship experiences. This lack of practice in school leadership and presentation of

professional development to colleagues can result in low self-efficacy for coaching classroom

teachers to meet struggling readers' needs, even without the presence of mental health issues

(Ulenski et al., 2019).

Reading specialist candidates are trained in the science of reading, which addresses the

neurological processes of reading and the cognitive load of decoding text and reading for

meaning (Hudson et al., 2021; Schwartz, 2019; Solari et al., 2020). Recent research on pre-

service training for literacy specialists finds that this training frequently does not address the cognitive impact of trauma or mental health issues (Martin et al., 2021; Zolkoski et al., 2020). Therefore, specialists potentially enter the field without a clear understanding of how students' emotional and psychological health will impact their literacy instruction and the classrooms where they will collaboratively teach. This lack of understanding and training often leads to low self-efficacy (Ulenski et al., 2019).

Since reading specialists often deliver literacy instruction to small groups within the general elementary classroom, they are positioned to collaborate and coach novice elementary classroom teachers on best practices for reading instruction and other topics that may affect the learning environment (Dagen & Bean, 2020). In practice, reading specialists and literacy coaches often are asked to cover classes, fulfill administrative roles, or teach so many groups that they are not available to provide teacher support (Ortmann et al., 2020; Ulenski et al., 2019). This situation is most prevalent in urban schools where teacher shortages and teacher turnover are most critical (McVey & Trinidad, 2019). When the mental health needs of students prevent elementary literacy specialists from being successful in their instructional roles, their self-efficacy will suffer and prevent them from fulfilling their leadership responsibilities to mentor classroom teachers and boost their self-efficacy (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Kuronja et al., 2019; Sawyer et al., 2022).

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

Educators are trained to meet the academic needs of students in their classrooms. However, in the face of students with increasing emotional and psychological needs, teachers are tasked with providing support at school without formal training in psychology or counseling (Brunelle et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018). Researchers have explored the recent increase in

mental health needs among students, the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures, and the need for school support (Bhogal et al.,2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Ma et al., 2021). Teachers must possess high self-efficacy, the belief in their capabilities, to address these needs appropriately. Educator self-efficacy can be affected by teacher preparation and personal characteristics (Cansiz & Cansiz, 2019; Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Kuronja et al., 2019). Using the SCT to guide in understanding this topic, the reviewed literature discussed the prevalence of mental health issues in students, the need for school-based supports, social and emotional learning curricula, the importance of teacher self-efficacy, the role of mentors, and the professional development needs of teachers to support students' emotional and psychological health.

A gap exists in the literature relating to the role of the elementary reading specialist in addressing students' emotional and psychological needs and serving as mentors in this area for general classroom teachers. Recent literature supports teachers' crucial role in creating safe and supportive classrooms (Brunelle et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018; Weist et al., 2018). Although teacher self-efficacy for addressing mental health needs has been studied primarily at the secondary level and among special educators, few studies have explored this topic at the elementary level from the perspective of reading specialists. By examining the self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists, graduate teacher educators can better understand the preparation required for specialist candidates to meet the mental health needs of their future students and serve as a mentor to their colleagues in establishing a positive learning environment.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of reading specialists who taught struggling readers with mental health needs. Teacher self-efficacy is an internal belief that educators can successfully prepare their students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact their students' lives (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019). This chapter includes descriptions of the study's methods, including research design, research questions, setting and participants, the researcher's positionality and philosophical assumptions, and the role of the researcher. This chapter concludes with a detailed explanation of this qualitative study's procedures, data collection approaches, data analysis strategies, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

Qualitative research studies emphasize human experience that cannot be measured or defined quantitatively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenon of this study is teacher self-efficacy, which is an internal belief and perception that is not visible and cannot be thoroughly evaluated by an outside observer (Bandura, 1997). I chose to explore the self-efficacy of literacy specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. My study fits the qualitative research design because I wanted to examine the shared lived experiences of my participants in their own words.

This qualitative study is a phenomenology because of my interest in the participants' descriptions of their own experiences, the study's emphasis on the singular idea of self-efficacy, and my desire to interview participants to explore the common themes they share (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) wrote the seminal work on transcendental phenomenology, and

his qualitative research design includes using participants' firsthand accounts to find the "essence" of human experiences (p. 13). My goal was to present the participants' voices rather than my interpretation of the data I gathered from these educators; therefore, a transcendental phenomenology was the most appropriate research design for this study.

The history of phenomenology includes Edmund Husserl (1970), a German mathematician, who provided the written philosophical foundation for this research design. Clark Moustakas (1994) is credited with applying the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology to the field of psychology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In his work, Moustakas (1994) promotes the use of epoché which encourages researchers not to doubt all reality but to set aside their presuppositions so they can view the phenomenon and participants' responses with fresh eyes.

Moustakas (1994) provides a clear methodology for a transcendental phenomenological study, including using bracketing, open-ended questions, considering each participant's statement as significant, finding themes, and presenting how participants experienced the phenomenon. I used the epoché process to bracket out my own experiences as a literacy specialist and any preconceived ideas about self-efficacy and students with mental health issues. This allowed me to use only what the participating educators shared to provide a rich textural and structural description of their shared lived experience, which aligns with Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology research design.

Research Questions

Bandura's (1977) SCT and construct of self-efficacy can be applied to adults, and the study explored reading specialists' self-efficacy to address the mental health needs of elementary struggling readers so that these students reach reading proficiency levels. SCT and the concept of self-efficacy provided the theoretical framework for this study, which explored the premise that

reading specialists' self-efficacy can affect their motivation to persist in meeting the needs of their students and mentoring classroom teachers (Bandura, 1986). Recent research based on these theories has shown that educators with high self-efficacy have confidence in their abilities to positively impact students, persevere when faced with students who present emotional needs or challenging behaviors, and model motivation and persistence to their students (Kuronja et al., 2019).

Central Research Question

What are literacy specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy in instructing elementary students with mental health needs?

Sub-question One

What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to low feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs?

Sub-question Two

What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to low feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs?

Sub-question Three

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

Setting and Participants

Educators receive training to meet the academic needs of students in their classrooms; however, with the increasing number of students with emotional and psychological needs,

educators are tasked with providing support at school without formal training in psychology or counseling (Brunelle et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018). Teacher self-efficacy for addressing mental health needs has been studied at the secondary level and among special educators, but few studies have explored this topic at the elementary level or among literacy specialists.

Setting

The participants of a phenomenological study do not have to be at the same site, but they must have experienced the same phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). My study participants were certified reading specialists who taught in public elementary schools which received Title I funds for reading in the United States. Including participants who were graduates of various colleges or universities and taught in different settings broadened the scope of their shared lived experiences in working with struggling readers with mental health issues. Literacy specialists fulfill several roles, depending on the school district, so having broad parameters for the research setting demonstrated the complexity of my participants' roles and their dual instructional and leadership responsibilities. I conducted virtual interviews through Microsoft Teams with my participants. Since I live in central Virginia, my convenience and snowball sampling techniques resulted in a population concentrated in the eastern region of the United States.

Participants

My sample size for this transcendental phenomenology is 12 literacy specialists (Creswell & Poth, 2018) who had instructional responsibilities for struggling readers in elementary schools. I wanted to have a diverse sample that included male and female specialists of different races/ethnicities, who taught in a variety of school settings. All study participants earned bachelor's degrees, state teaching certificates, and taught reading daily to be eligible for the advanced degree of a reading or literacy specialist. In the commonwealth of Virginia,

specialist candidates must earn a master's degree in education and pass the Praxis Reading Specialist exam to add the reading specialist endorsement to their teaching licenses. Each participant was employed in an American public school that received Title I funds for reading, and participants were serving in at least their second semester as an elementary literacy specialist. Participants provided informed consent and had the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 155). See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Table 1

Literacy Specialist Participant Demographics

Specialist participant	Age	Race	Years as a classroom teacher	School setting
Audrey	35–44	White	6–9	Rural
Barbara	55–65	White	30–34	Rural
Candace	35–44	White	10–14	Urban
Hope	25–34	White	0–5	Rural
Jamie	45–54	White	6–9	Suburban
Kristi	25–34	White	10–14	Suburban
Laura	35–44	White	15–19	Suburban
Maggie	45–54	White	0–5	Suburban
Monica	25–34	Black	10–14	Suburban
Rachel	45–54	White	0–5	Urban
Sheri	45–54	White	10–14	Urban
Stacy	55–65	White	20–25	Rural

Recruitment Plan

The sample pool for this study is literacy specialists who completed at least one full semester in the role of an elementary reading specialist before the start of the research study. These specialists served in American public elementary schools that received Title I funds for

reading. Although there is flexibility in the number of participants that phenomenological researchers recruit, a typical sample size for this research design is 10 to 15 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is crucial to capture multiple voices to discover the essence of these specialists' lived experiences (Guest et al., 2013). Therefore, my goal was to have a diverse representation of gender, race and ethnicity, and school settings including urban, rural, and suburban Title I elementary schools to capture many perspectives and increase the transferability of my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used maximum variation sampling and continued collecting and analyzing data until I reached the point of saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which occurs when the researcher's analysis of data does not result in new perspectives, codes, or themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I recruited literacy specialists for my study using convenience and snowball sampling within my personal and professional networks. I attempted to broaden my scope by sending my recruitment email to the Piedmont Area Reading Council, Virginia State Reading Association, and ILA to share with their members, but they did not have a system in place to share my request. I emailed potential participants directly and included my recruitment letter and a link to a Microsoft Form. This form began with an informed consent section (see Appendix B) in which these adult educators acknowledged that they were participating willingly and could leave the study at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For those who consented to participate, they completed a demographic questionnaire, which collected personal demographic data, information on school setting, and classroom teaching experience prior to becoming literacy specialists. It concluded by asking participants to list dates and times for individual interviews. This demographic questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

Researcher Positionality

My positionality as a researcher includes my philosophies, beliefs, interpretative framework, and worldview. The interpretative framework that I chose correlates with my goals, reflects my theoretical perspective, and influences my research methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following section details my interpretative framework, philosophical assumptions, and role as the researcher.

Interpretive Framework

Social constructivism is the interpretative framework that appealed the most to me as a researcher because my goal was to conduct a phenomenology that explored the lived experiences of my participants. I did not begin with a theory; instead, I used open-ended questions to gather my participants' personal viewpoints and experiences, which followed the social constructivist framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My background and life experiences affected my role as the researcher; each participant brought their individual perspectives and interpretations of their experiences to the research study. My interpretive framework of social constructivism (Bandura, 1986), the construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), and situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020) aligned with Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological research design and influenced my philosophical assumptions. Following Moustakas's (1994) constructivist design, I viewed my study participants as co-researchers as their experiences and words described the phenomenon rather than my interpretation of what they shared.

Philosophical Assumptions

My faith in Christ and biblical worldview impacted my positionality as a researcher. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers often share their experiences and beliefs within qualitative studies. My research included gathering data from interviews, and my

worldview determined how I viewed my study's participants. I know that my participants and their students with mental health needs were made in the image of God and that despite having a sin nature, they are loved by God. This belief caused me to value their experiences and accurately present their words and perspectives from a position of love and compassion. As a Christian, I felt called to help and serve others, so I wanted my dissertation research to be meaningful and contribute to helping teachers meet the needs of their students. My philosophical values can be further divided into ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions are philosophical beliefs about reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although some interpretive frameworks, such as postpositivism, contend that there is only one reality, most qualitative researchers assert that there are "multiple realities" as evidenced by the different views of their study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35). The idea of multiple realities refers to the variety of perspectives and experiences of participants who encounter the same problem or phenomenon. My ontological position was that each participant has an individual interpretation of reality based on their knowledge, relationships, and experiences. I worked with my study subjects to uncover their versions of reality as they related to my research topic.

Epistemological Assumption

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), epistemological assumptions are philosophical beliefs about how reality is known or the nature of knowledge. My epistemological assumption is that knowledge is gained through the "firsthand accounts" of the participants being studied (p. 21). This determined my data collection methods and led me to immerse myself in the participants' stories and perspectives.

Axiological Assumption

The "role" of moral values, past experiences, demographics, and beliefs of the researcher are the axiological assumptions of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). It is almost impossible to be a truly objective researcher, so I shared my positionality as a female Christian educator within my research. Because I served students who struggled with social and emotional skills in an urban elementary school, I needed to remove my potential bias toward teacher characteristics or instructional strategies that I believed to be most effective. I needed to set aside my own thoughts, experiences, and worldview to clearly listen, understand, and accurately relay the experiences of my research subjects. One strategy that I used to complete this bracketing of my own experiences and opinions was to pilot my data collection questions by answering them myself before using them with study participants. This allowed me to tell my own story, be fully conscious of how my experiences shaped my answers, and then set them aside to focus only on my participants' responses.

Researcher's Role

As the researcher, I was the human instrument in my study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My teaching experience, graduate and doctoral studies, and position at an EPP contributed to my dissertation focus and goals. I served as an elementary classroom teacher in public and private schools for six years before working at a supplemental tutoring learning center. During my years at this center, I administered assessments and developed learning plans for students who struggled academically. I also led after-school programs in local Title I schools to reteach reading and math skills to remedial elementary students. I became certified as a reading specialist and served for three years in this role at a Title I urban elementary school. As a literacy specialist, I was asked to serve as a mentor teacher to novice elementary teachers in our school.

My role as the director of student teaching at a university in central Virginia did not put me in a position of authority over my study participants because they were professionals working in the education field. Therefore, I selected a transcendental phenomenological research design and disclosed my position at the university and previous classroom experience as part of the epoché process (Moustakas, 1994). I had experts review my planned interview questions, data collection, and data analysis procedures to ensure no bias.

Procedures

There were many steps needed to complete this qualitative study accurately. The procedures section includes the permissions given by the International Review Board (IRB) and student participants before data was collected. See Appendix A for IRB approval. The researcher also included information about how participants were chosen and informed before joining the study. Detailed explanations of data collection methods, data analysis strategies, and triangulation are presented for readers to consider replicating the study.

Data Collection Plan

The research approach of phenomenology seeks to understand the core of a phenomenon by exploring the perceptions of people who have experienced the chosen phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative data is best collected through specific approaches, including individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations, documents, and media materials (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For my transcendental phenomenological study, I collected data using a teacher sense of efficacy survey, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. I first sent out a Microsoft Form to gather informed consent from potential participants. I set up branching so that those who gave consent were able to immediately complete a demographic questionnaire and educator self-efficacy survey regarding instruction, student engagement, and classroom

management. The demographic questionnaire is included in Appendix C. My second approach was to conduct individual interviews. I shared my own identity as an elementary educator and reading specialist to put each participant at ease and build rapport. I used the survey results to help me personalize the interview questions and gained every person's unique perspective related to their instruction of struggling readers with mental health needs. Finally, I facilitated three focus groups with four to five participants to explore deeply the themes that emerged from the self-efficacy survey and individual interviews.

Surveys/Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires typically are not used to collect data in phenomenological studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018), but the inclusion of a self-efficacy scale added valuable data about how participants described their own efficacy. This additional information shed light on participants' personal characteristics that were not consistently shared in interviews. The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) as an adaptation of Gibson and Dembo's (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES). The TSES (see Figure 1) is designed to evaluate three measures of teacher efficacy: instruction, student engagement, and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This instrument includes 24 questions with a 9-point Likert scale classification that includes (1) nothing, (2-3) very little, (4-6) some influence, (7-8) quite a bit, to (9) a great deal (Shaukat et al., 2019). The reliability for Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's TSES is 0.94, which represents a highly reliable measure of teacher efficacy (Callaway, 2017). This free instrument has open access, so no permissions were needed to administer it for this study (see Appendix D).

Questions 1, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 21 on the TSES describe situations related to students displaying negative emotions or low motivation. Questions 3, 5, 7, 8, 13, 16, and 19 focus on

student behavior and classroom management. The remaining questions (2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, and 24) relate to instruction and students' academic needs. Each of these questions provided data on the central research question related to reading specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs. Participants' responses to each question described feelings of high self-efficacy for sub-question 1 or feelings of low self-efficacy for sub-question 2. Each of the 24 questions on the TSES provided data for sub-question 3 regarding reading specialists' self-efficacy for supporting and mentoring classroom teachers as they addressed the academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

Figure 1

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale Long Form

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help you gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by choosing a number from this scale.

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	

8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews are the primary data collection approach for phenomenology

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me

to ask planned open-ended questions, explore areas of high and low self-efficacy based on

survey results, and dig deeper with clarifying questions based on participants' responses to

interview questions. Researchers must build rapport with participants in the early stages of the

interview so that participants will be open to discussing their perspectives on sensitive topics

(McGrath et al., 2019). One of the benefits of a qualitative individual interview is that

participants are free to express their feelings about their experiences without fear of being

misunderstood or judged, as opposed to answering survey questions or speaking within a group

(Dunwoodie et al., 2023). My study included interviews with elementary literacy specialists serving in at least their second semester in an American public elementary school that received Title I funds for reading. I asked these educators to describe their experiences addressing their elementary students' academic, emotional, and psychological needs. See Table 2 for open-ended interview questions. Using non-verbal cues such as nodding to encourage interview subjects to share deeply is one tool that I used to get the most out of the interview (Dunwoodie et al., 2023). I used Microsoft Teams video calls with all participants.

Before the interviews, I gathered informed consent, demographic information from my study participants, and their responses to a teacher self-efficacy survey using a Microsoft Form. This online demographic survey was a tool to gather their preferred method and mode of contact, years of full-time teaching experience, years of experience as a reading specialist, and types of elementary school settings in which they have served. I began each interview session by briefly sharing that I have also lived the experience of being an elementary reading specialist and attempted to increase reading achievement for struggling readers with mental health needs. I then used the epoché process to assure participants that my employment at a university, my experiences as a teacher, or my opinions about the topic should not be considered in their responses (Moustakas, 1994). I then defined self-efficacy as an internal belief that they, as educators, can successfully prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact students' lives (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019). I also informed participants that emotional, psychological, and mental health needs are terms used interchangeably to describe students who lack emotional regulation on a consistent enough basis to affect their learning (see Appendix E). My first interview question has a broad scope that helped the participants become comfortable and provided a foundation for the subsequent

questions that aligned with my study's research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2015).

Table 2

Open-ended Interview Questions

Question Number	Question
1	Tell me about why you became a teacher? (Grand tour question)
2	Please describe your path toward becoming a reading specialist. (Bean & Kern, 2018)
3	Please describe your path toward becoming a reading specialist. (Bean & Kern, 2018)
4	Tell me about your school and your current instructional duties. (Prezyna et al., 2017)
5	Tell me about the struggling readers that you have found most challenging because of their emotional or psychological issues. RQ (Kim et al., 2021)
6	Describe a time when a student's emotional issues affected your reading instructional time and how you addressed it. RQ
7	Describe what it looks like and how you feel when you have high teacher self-efficacy. SQ2 (lack of confidence in your ability to engage, teach, and positively impact your students)
8	How would you describe your personal self-efficacy for addressing the emotional or psychological needs of the struggling readers that you serve? RQ
9	Describe your challenges when working with students with mental health issues in different instructional settings, such as a separate classroom or within the general classroom). SQ1
10	Describe successful practices or strategies you have used when working with students with mental health needs. SQ2
11	What undergraduate pre-service experiences did you have that prepared you to work with struggling readers with mental health needs? SQ2
12	What experiences did you have as a classroom teacher that prepared you to work with struggling readers with mental health needs? SQ2
13	What experiences did you have during your graduate work to be a literacy

Question Number	Question
	specialist that prepared you to work with struggling readers with mental health needs? SQ2
14	What professional development or coaching did you receive that led to feelings of high self-efficacy for working with students with emotional or psychological needs? SQ2 (Hirsch et al., 2022)
15	What experiences influenced your answer selections regarding _____(the lowest rated factor for efficacy) on the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Survey? SQ1
16	Tell me about any school-wide programs, classroom curricula, or literature that you have used to promote students' emotional health. RQ (Weist et al., 2018)
17	What does teacher resilience mean to you and how do you build it? SQ2 (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019)
18	Please describe how you collaborate with other school professionals to address students' emotional or psychological needs. SQ3 (Todd et al., 2022)
19	Describe a time when you provided coaching, modeling, or support for a general classroom teacher who was managing a struggling reader presenting emotional or psychological issues. Do you feel that it was a success or failure? Please explain. SQ3
20	How do you balance addressing students' mental health needs with meeting their academic needs? SQ2
21	What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with struggling readers that present emotional or psychological issues? RQ

My first three questions helped the participant begin sharing and set the stage for the rest of the interview questions. Questions 4, 5, 8, 16, and 21 align with the central research question and guided participants to share their experiences meeting the needs of students with emotional or psychological issues. Questions 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 20 focus on sub-question 2 regarding teacher self-efficacy and what experiences helped participants grow their self-efficacy for addressing the mental health needs of students. Questions 7, 9, and 15 correspond with sub-question 1 related to low teacher self-efficacy and what experiences decreased participants' self-efficacy for managing their students' emotional or psychological needs within the general

elementary classroom. Questions 18-19 gave participants the opportunity to describe their work

as collaborators and mentors to classroom teachers of students with mental health issues, and this

question corresponds to sub-question 3.

Focus Groups

Focus groups often are used in qualitative research to deepen a researcher's

understanding of the themes collected through individual interviews (Gill et al., 2008).

Moustakas (1994) recommends conducting multiple individual interviews, and Creswell and

Poth (2018) offer focus groups to accomplish follow-up interviews more efficiently. Prior to the

focus group, I sent each participant a transcript of our interview for member checking. In a focus

group, my study's participants heard each other's responses, and their subsequent discussion

confirmed themes from individual interviews and survey responses and clarified areas of

inconsistency. See Table 3 for open-ended focus group questions. Questions 2 and 3 are

questions that I used to expand my understanding of themes that emerged through analysis of the

individual interviews and survey responses (Gill et al., 2008). I moderated three focus groups of

four to five participants that included all 12 literacy specialists for my study. Each focus group

was hosted on Microsoft Teams, and I began by setting an expectation of confidentiality (see

Appendix F). I held focus groups after my analysis of participants' self-efficacy survey responses

and individual interviews. I considered the number and characteristics of participants when

establishing the focus groups, as this could have affected participants' comfort levels and

participation (Gill et al., 2008).

Table 3

Open-ended Focus Group Questions

Question Number	Question
1	What is a literacy specialist's role in addressing the emotional, psychological, or mental health needs of struggling readers? RQ
2	Several of you mentioned the theme of feeling ineffective due to lack of student progress as an experience that led to feelings of low self-efficacy. Why do you think this is a defeating experience? SQ1
3	Several of you mentioned the theme of building relationships with students as an experience that led to feelings of high self-efficacy for managing struggling readers' mental health needs. Why do think this is an encouraging experience? SQ2
4	What graduate training for literacy specialists do you wish you had been given to better address the emotional or psychological needs of students? RQ (Swindlehurst & Berry, 2021)
5	What professional development training do you think would benefit you in your current role to meet the mental health needs of your students? RQ
6	Is there a relationship between students' mental health issues and teacher burnout or teachers leaving the classroom? Why or why not? RQ (Asirit et al., 2022).
7	What else would you like to add about your experiences as reading specialists who serve elementary struggling readers with emotional, psychological, or mental health needs? RQ
8	Do you have any questions for me related to this study or how this data is being used?

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is not a single linear event but rather a continuous cycle of data collection, reflection, and analysis, which leads to the need for more data to support or negate the emerging hypotheses or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I conducted a transcendental phenomenology, so Moustakas's (1994) steps for data analysis were followed. Moustakas recommends that the researcher complete the epoché process to reveal personal

biases and experiences so they can be put aside before interviewing study participants. Moustakas's second step is transcendental-phenomenological reduction in which the researcher examines each experience with the phenomenon to provide a textural description of the experience and the participant's perception of the experience.

Participants' responses to the TSES provided quantitative data on their perceptions of their efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) provide directions for scoring this instrument (see Appendix D) that include conducting a factor analysis on teacher efficacy in student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. I divided participants' responses into these three efficacy areas based on the specified questions for each efficacy type. I then calculated an unweighted mean score for each factor that was analyzed by participant and by high, moderate, and low scoring trends across participants (see Appendix G). Moustakas (1994) positions participants as coresearchers and their answers to the TSES determined which efficacy factor I asked about in question 15 of the individual interviews. Moustakas's imaginative variation flows from this reduction process to assist in providing a structural description of the essence of self-efficacy, the phenomenon of this study.

Each interview and focus group were recorded so the videos could be rewatched, and the audio recordings were transcribed using Microsoft Teams. I watched each video multiple times while reading the transcript and made manual corrections for accuracy (see Appendix H). I uploaded the interview transcripts, demographic survey results, TSES results, and focus group transcriptions (see Appendix I) into Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software for storage, and began Moustakas's (1994) process of "horizonalization" by selecting relevant statements from participant responses (p. 95). I did not use the software for interpretation of the meaning of the data, but rather, for storage and organization of data (see Appendix J). I kept a research log,

made notes as I interviewed each participant, and kept records of any changes I made to the

questions, along with my impressions in reflexive notes (see Appendix K).

Once interviews, survey responses, and focus groups were conducted, recorded, and

transcribed, I read the transcriptions at least three times in their entirety and made notes to

capture my overall impressions before analyzing for patterns. I then read the transcriptions again

to consider the significance of each phrase to describe the phenomenon being studied

(Moustakas, 1994). Once the phrases were chosen and duplicates were removed, each word or

phrase was assigned a code based on meaning (see Appendix L). After all data were coded in this

way, the codes were examined for patterns and grouped into themes (Moustakas, 1994) for each

participant as well as across participants for the central research question, sub-question 1, sub-

question 2, and sub-question 3. Moustakas (1994) contends that this depiction of what the

phenomenon is (a textural description) and how it is experienced (a structural description) should

be combined to determine the true essence of the phenomenon (p. 122).

Once each data set was analyzed individually, the data was synthesized by combining the

themes that were identified for each research question across all data collection forms (see

Appendix M). In a transcendental phenomenology, it is crucial that the researcher allowed the

data and participants' voices to be heard without adding interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). The

use of multiple data collection approaches allowed a triangulation of data that strengthened the

study's findings. Moustakas urges researchers to create "a composite textural-structural

description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-

structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a

whole" (p. 122). To describe the essence of the phenomenon, I looked for patterns across the

codes and themes of the interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions and synthesized the

textural and structural descriptions of literacy specialists' self-efficacy and experiences in addressing the mental health needs of students. Moustakas also recommends using this study summary to look for limitations and areas for further study. My data is presented in tables in addition to the written description of the shared lived experiences of my participants with the phenomenon. I was careful to keep documentation of any changes throughout the data collection and analysis process as well as my notes of reflection.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of quantitative research is evaluated by factors such as internal validity, external validity, reliability, and researcher neutrality. The nature of qualitative research requires different measures of trustworthiness that will yield information readers can use to determine the value of a qualitative study. Since the same underlying principles are needed, qualitative researchers have set forth the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

The credibility of a qualitative study is the relationship between research findings and reality, which is similar to the internal validity of a quantitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are numerous ways for qualitative researchers to demonstrate credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). I displayed credibility in my transcendental phenomenological study by using an established research design, triangulation, expert review, peer critique, member checks, and a thorough description of the phenomenon being studied.

I used Moustakas's (1994) qualitative research design, which informed my phenomenological study methods. Triangulation refers to the use of a variety of research sources or techniques to substantiate a study's rightness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I collected data from a

teacher self-efficacy survey, individual interviews, and focus groups to triangulate the perspectives and experiences shared by my participants. As a novice researcher, I conducted and presented research under the supervision of a dissertation chair and committee member, who provided expert reviews. As an employee of Liberty's School of Education, I was able to share my study with colleagues and leadership to gain peer critiques. I incorporated two member checks within my study. I gave participants the opportunity to approve my transcript of their individual interviews, and 12 of the 12 participants responded to this first member check to approve the transcript accuracy. They were given the themes that I derived from their self-efficacy survey responses, interviews, and focus group transcriptions to verify that I captured their viewpoints accurately, and 12 of the 12 participants completed this final member check and approved their pseudonyms (see Appendix N). The purpose of my study was to provide a rich description of the lived experiences of elementary literacy specialists, so my inclusion of their words and fidelity to their meanings was the ultimate measure of my study's credibility.

Transferability

The transferability of a qualitative research study is related to the external validity of a quantitative study in that it measures if the study's results could be generalized to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) contended that researchers must clearly define the parameters of their study so that readers can make an informed decision about how the findings can be applied in new situations. I highlighted the maximum variation of my participants across gender, race and ethnicity, and school settings to decrease my study's limitations. Participants were state-certified reading specialists who were serving in at least their second semester in this role within a public elementary school that received Title I funds for reading. The construct of teacher self-efficacy of elementary literacy specialists to address the mental health needs of

students was the phenomenon studied. The study's limitations were acknowledged along with recommendations for further study.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research and reliability in quantitative research both demonstrate whether the study can be accurately repeated. Qualitative researchers recognize that their findings are connected to their participants' life experiences or a phenomenon, which are not fixed variables. Therefore, it is not practical to expect another qualitative study to yield the same results within a different setting or with different participants, even if the methods and procedures are repeated with fidelity (Shenton, 2004). My study has the trustworthiness component of dependability through my detailed written explanation of my decision-making, methods, and procedures. The practice of documenting each step of the research process is a form of internal audit (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I created an audit trail in my appendices that includes survey results, interview and focus group transcripts, data analysis spreadsheets, a research log detailing all my steps, and my reflexive notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These artifacts serve to outline my steps in converting raw data into findings. As a Liberty doctoral student, I also had an external audit conducted by my dissertation chair and committee member as they evaluated my research design, methods, procedures, and findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability in a qualitative study is equivalent to objectivity in a quantitative study. Confirmability is an important element of trustworthiness as it emphasizes that a study's findings should reflect the participants' voices, perspectives, and experiences rather than those of the researcher. The strategies that I used to demonstrate confirmability included the epoché process, triangulation, and audit trails. One of the key components of Moustakas's (1994) transcendental

phenomenology research design is the use of the epoché process or bracketing the researcher's own organizations and experiences when gathering and collecting data. I mentioned previously that I began each individual interview by asking participants to disregard their presumptions about me, my position, or what they think I want to hear. Secondly, I established confirmability by triangulating the data using a teacher self-efficacy survey, individual interviews, and focus group sessions. Lastly, my study has confirmability through audit trails, or the documentation of my reflexive notes, methods, procedures, and decision-making for each stage of my research process (Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Considerations

There are many ethical considerations when conducting research with human subjects, including approvals, consent, and confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My study's participants are adults who were capable of giving informed consent. I worked to maintain confidentiality of my participants within the study.

Permissions

An expert review and permission from the dissertation chair were given before submitting for approval from the IRB. Once IRB approval was given, the researcher began collecting data for this phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The IRB approval letter is attached to Appendix A.

Other Participant Protections

I obtained IRB approval prior to beginning research. My study participants are adults and were informed of the purpose of my research, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from my study at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I had my study participants sign letters of informed consent (see Appendix B) and disclosed the potential risks and benefits.

The potential risks included loss of time and the possibility of emotional distress when sharing experiences that led to feelings of low teacher self-efficacy. One benefit was a feeling of emotional encouragement when participants shared experiences that led to feelings of high teacher self-efficacy. Hearing about the experiences of others in the focus groups could have led to a second benefit: the creation of a connection among participants that could lead to a future support system. I began each focus group by discussing the importance of confidentiality and establishing the expectation that nothing shared in the group could be discussed to protect all participants and their students (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I took several steps to protect the confidentiality of my study's participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used pseudonyms for each participant and any information they shared that included the name of their university, elementary school, or students. I stored survey results, transcripts of interviews, focus group transcripts, and my coding of this data on a password-protected device and used Dedoose as a data management tool. Any paper reflexive notes or paper journal responses were stored in a locked lateral file cabinet (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These steps ensured the confidentiality of the participants, documents, and location for my phenomenology.

Summary

The methodology for this study was drawn from Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenology research design. The central research question and sub-questions flowed from the phenomenon being studied, the self-efficacy of literacy specialists to meet the academic and mental health needs of struggling readers. Participants were chosen using convenience and snowball sampling, and data was collected using a self-efficacy survey, individual interviews, and focus groups. The novice researcher created open-ended interview and focus group questions

based on related literature to gather participants' perspectives and experiences. The data was analyzed using Moustakas's design of identifying significant statements, assigning codes to participants' relevant phrases, and grouping codes into themes. My role and philosophical assumptions were identified and set aside as much as possible to allow participants' voices to be heard. A description of the study's trustworthiness and ethical considerations concluded this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of reading specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. A total of 12 participants were selected to represent the perspectives of reading specialists who served in public elementary schools that received Title I funds for reading. This chapter presents the findings of this study, including descriptions of the 12 literacy specialists who participated, findings in the form of a table, narrative themes, outlier data, and research question responses.

Participants

This study included educators who served as reading specialists in public elementary schools that qualified for Title I funds for reading. This group of co-researchers consisted of 12 females who fit the parameters of this study and gave their consent to participate. Each participant met state guidelines to be a literacy specialist and spent at least 51% of their day providing instruction to struggling readers. Some participants had additional administrative or coaching responsibilities, and others had only instructional duties. The participants resided in the eastern region of the United States including the states of New York, North Carolina, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. These educators represented a wide range of ages. Three out of the 12 participants were 25-34 years old, three participants were in the 35-44 age group, four participants were between 45 and 54 years old, and two participants were in their mid-50s to early 60s. One participant became a reading specialist directly from college with 0 years of experience as a classroom teacher and one participant had thirty years of experience teaching in a general elementary classroom before becoming a literacy specialist. Eleven of the 12 participants

were White, and one participant was Black. Pseudonyms were selected using a random name generator and assigned to each participant based on gender and cultural identity. Demographic information for each participant is listed in Table 1 in Chapter Three.

Audrey

Audrey is a 35–44-year-old White educator who works in a rural elementary school in a county school district in Virginia. She is the oldest child in her immediate and extended family and enjoyed working with children in daycare centers as a high school student. Classroom management is one of Audrey's strengths and she feels that her undergraduate field experience in low-income schools in North Carolina helped to prepare her in this area. Audrey taught for nine years in an elementary classroom before becoming a literacy specialist. In her current role, Audrey pulls small groups of struggling readers from kindergarten through fifth grade for 30-minute instructional sessions each day. Audrey has experience working with struggling readers who also have emotional issues that impact learning. As she shared,

> I have a little girl who gets very emotional and she, out of nowhere, all of a sudden, just starts crying and I'm like oh, my. Ok, let's see what's going on. So, I pulled the little girl over and I asked her what's going on. And she was just saying how she missed her parents. And we talked about how, you know, you'd be going home soon, and the day is almost over halfway there. Give her a hug. Just trying to let her know that it's OK and she's safe and give her the love she needs. But also try and make it quickly, you know transfer back into OK, how can we get her to continue with her learning?

Barbara

Barbara, a 55–65-year-old White educator, serves as a reading specialist in a rural elementary school in Virginia. She wanted to be a teacher from childhood and taught for 30

years before becoming a literacy specialist. Her role is fully instructional, and she pulls small

groups of struggling readers from kindergarten through fifth grade each day. Her school district

employs literacy coaches who visit her rural school several times each week to provide support

to classroom teachers. Barbara's decades of experience in both private and public schools give

her a unique perspective on how students, families, and the profession of teaching have changed

in recent years. She explained,

> You know, you can't really give up on these kids, because I honestly don't think any
>
> student wants to misbehave. There's a deeper need somewhere and if we can sort of
>
> figure that out, it helps us really to understand it, because we're not at a place anymore
>
> where kids come in and sit down and listen to the teacher and if there's an issue, you call
>
> the parent and then it's done. Do you know what I mean? We're not living in that kind of
>
> a society anymore, and so I think a lot of it is really trying to understand what is getting
>
> in the way here, and, and can we figure out ways to help that student?

Candace

Candace did not plan to teach. She grew up watching her mother, an elementary school

teacher, spend innumerable hours working outside the classroom. A 35–44-year-old White

educator, Candace shared that she was a struggling reader in elementary school in comparison to

her older sister, who found reading easy. During college, she felt the "inevitable call" to teach

and after graduation began teaching upper elementary students in an urban school in Virginia.

When she moved to first grade, Candace began to love reading and watching the progress that

her students were making, so she became a literacy specialist after 12 years in the elementary

classroom. Each day, she pulls small groups of fourth and fifth graders who are not reading on

grade level. Since she has stayed at the same urban school her entire career, she is concerned

about the impact of the school's staffing challenges on students and shared the following:

> Yeah, my school's like a revolving door. So, it's just hard to keep them [teachers]. They
> have support, but it's not enough for some of them. And you know, this year we're
> dealing with not even having certified teachers be classroom teachers, and they have no
> clue what they got themselves into. Luckily some of ours have, with the mentoring and
> with the help from our coaches, have been somewhat successful. But we have several that
> have not, and it's like, these kids now have wasted a whole year and we're still catching
> up. We're still gonna catch up, you know? And it's just, I think it's like that everywhere,
> that's what education is right now and that's the sad part that we're kind of in this boat.

Hope

A White educator in her mid to late 20s, Hope developed a particular interest in trauma and special education while pursuing her undergraduate elementary education degree. She conducted trauma research and took additional special education courses to learn more about how traumatic events affect students. Her interest in this area stemmed from her childhood as she grew up with brothers who experienced trauma before being adopted by her parents. Hope has both instructional and coaching responsibilities, and her school uses an RTI approach in which Tier 1 is whole class instruction, Tier 2 is small group targeted instruction, and Tier 3 is more individualized instruction given from one to three students (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Hope delivers Tier 3 reading intervention daily, attends student support meetings, attends professional learning community (PLC) meetings with K-2 teams, leads literacy nights, and oversees two paraprofessionals who service Tier 2 students. When asked about the response of general education teachers to her coaching, she replied,

> When I have to deal with teachers who may, maybe there's some pushback, especially

with a lot of Virginia Literacy Act changes, it's a tough time to be a reading specialist and it's a tough time to be a young reading specialist because there are all of these changes that we're expected to communicate to our staff.

Jamie

Jamie, a White educator in her late 40s to early 50s, was born in Canada and traveled to Australia to earn her credentials as a high school English or history teacher. The recession in Canada made it difficult for her to find a job, so she traveled to Abu Dhabi and taught elementary school there. She later married a U.S. Marine and traveled around the United States before becoming a reading specialist in a large suburban school district in Virginia. Jamie reported that 75–80% of her school's students are English language learners (ELLs) and that staff turnover is high. Jamie has primarily instructional duties with students in kindergarten through fifth grades, but she also serves as a formal mentor to other teachers including a Jamaican teacher who is part of a program designed to assist with school staffing. She often shares the following scenario with new teachers to help them understand the importance of structure:

> I always say to the teachers, imagine that you got up in the morning and your car didn't work. There was another car for you to take, but then your card didn't work, and you couldn't have coffee. You had to have tea instead. You're gonna be fine, right? You're an adult, you can handle this, but will it impact your day? Of course, it's change. So, if you have students that come in every day, and you don't have things in place or systems in place for them, there's nothing for them to sort of count on as being consistent.

Kristi

Kristi is a 25–35-year-old White educator, who was raised in a family of educators. Currently, she serves as a reading specialist in a Title I elementary school in North Carolina. She graduated from college with degrees in both elementary education and special education (mild to moderate disabilities K-12), earned her reading specialist's certification, and began her career as a middle school special education teacher. Kristi worked as a general education classroom teacher before assisting with the opening of a new suburban elementary school in North Carolina. Her administration noticed her leadership skills and love of teaching reading, so they promoted her to a literacy specialist position. In her current role, Kristi spends 80% of her time pulling small groups of struggling readers for 20–45 minutes. The rest of her time is devoted to coaching the teams of second and third-grade teachers to faithfully implement reading curricula and analyze testing data. When asked about her experiences with struggling readers who also present emotional issues, Kristi explained,

> So, I've had students that come into my reading groups that I pull out and, I've noticed social emotional things going on that's preventing them from reaching the content that I'm trying to get across. I feel like it's definitely a team role when we're trying to reach these students. Being able to go back to the classroom teacher, we have those conversations and work together to figure out what's going on and how can we help this student.

Laura

Laura, a White educator in her late 30s to early 40s, taught for 16 years before becoming a reading specialist in a suburban elementary school in Virginia. She took additional English and psychology classes as an undergraduate but always was passionate about reading. Laura's role is fully instructional since her district employs literacy coaches who visit schools and support

teachers several times a week. She pulls groups of students from kindergarten through fifth grade who have been identified as needing reading support through PALS testing. When asked why she became a teacher, Laura shared,

> So ever since I was little, it was something I knew I always wanted to do. I always loved kids. My mom actually babysat when I was a little girl, so I was surrounded by kids. I just always loved children and I just knew that I wanted to be able to make a difference in their lives. And one thing I always love is just seeing that spark, and just watching when things you know, just click. So, it's just something I always wanted to do ever since I was little.

Maggie

Maggie went to college to be an accountant, but her mother-in-law influenced Maggie to consider teaching when she and her husband were expecting their first child. Maggie is a White educator in the 45–54-year-old age range. She never wanted to be a classroom teacher, so she began her educational career as a literacy specialist in a New York high school. She eventually changed her focus to the elementary and primary levels to work with struggling readers. Maggie currently serves kindergarten, first-, and second-grade students at a suburban Title I school. Her time is divided evenly between instructional duties and providing data analysis and curriculum support to administration, staff, and faculty. Unlike most participants, Maggie pushes into her students' general classrooms to provide support to struggling readers. She estimates that only one-third of her caseload is pulled out and taught in small groups. When asked about moving from high school to elementary school, Maggie shared the following:

> Well, it's interesting because starting out I worked with mostly freshmen and you think, why? Why can they not read? How are they in ninth grade and not being able to read?

Then from there, I transferred to a pre-K to five building, and I was like, oh, so this is

why. There are just so many factors as to how they can get through without reading.

Monica

Monica is a Black educator in her late 20s to early 30s. After eight years of teaching Pre-K students in both public and private settings, she began teaching kindergarten and had the opportunity to train as a literacy specialist. She became passionate about the science of reading and training teachers to provide the foundational literacy skills that students need. Monica currently serves in both instructional and coaching roles in a suburban Title I elementary school in North Carolina. She spends most of her day pulling small groups of kindergarten and first graders who are not meeting reading benchmarks. She attends PLC meetings and coaches the kindergarten and first-grade teachers as well. Monica shared how her childhood experiences help her meet the needs of her students.

> Personally, I think over time I've learned to adjust and adapt to what students need and having an eye and an ear for that. And just my experience, my background, personally coming from a single family home, knowing what it's like to deal with certain traumas, certain experiences, I'm able to love and care for children in a way that they need it. And I'm able to relate to them in a real way versus having that empathy like I really have walked in the shoes of some of their experiences that they may have had.

Rachel

Rachel majored in art history in college and fell in love with teaching during her job as an education director of a museum. This 45–54-year-old White educator became a certified teacher and taught third grade for four years before being offered a job as a reading specialist. Rachel accepted the job and then worked to gain her state certification. She currently serves as a literacy

specialist in an urban school in Virginia and pulls small groups of second and third graders for reading instruction. She does not have any coaching responsibilities, but she is required to spend part of her school day as a reading and math tutor to fourth graders as part of the Virginia governor's All-In Tutoring initiative. When asked about the relationship between students' mental health issues and teacher burnout, Rachel shared the following:

> Just the behaviors that come from them having issues in their home life and things like that. I've never seen such behaviors before. I've never had kindergarteners cussing me out before. I've never had, you know, kids looking me right in the face and telling me, no, I'm not going to do that. You can't make me do that. Teachers, and I'm talking more classroom teachers, because I don't have to experience, you know, 20 or 18 or however many coming at me at one time. Not that they're all that way, but in the city, it's tough.

Sheri

Sheri is also a White educator in her late 40s to early 50s who serves as a literacy specialist and coach in an urban school in Virginia. Sheri's mother, grandmother, and aunts were all educators, and her mother homeschooled her in phonics for two years when Sheri was having difficulty learning to read from the whole language approach that was used in her school. Sheri's own experience and her years teaching Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade motivated her to learn more about reading and become a specialist. Sheri spends most of her time in classrooms observing reading instruction and coaching teachers. Sheri's administrator relies on her to lead the school's mentoring program, and she also has assisted with eligibility meetings for students being considered for special education services. She pulls small groups of struggling readers who need remediation and plans the literacy instruction of another reading specialist and Title I assistant. Sheri shared her thoughts on the role of a reading specialist:

I think the reading specialist job is unique because it gives the students an extra person, an extra support person, an extra layer of support, and as you build that relationship, you can support the teacher but also the student.

Stacy

Stacy is a 55–64-year-old White educator who taught elementary students in public and private schools for 21 years. She knew as early as her middle school years she wanted to be a teacher and stated, "teaching just became a natural part of my personality; it just flowed out of me." Through a program in southwest Virginia, Stacy was chosen to earn her master's degree as a reading specialist with the agreement to serve for a specific number of years in that community. In her rural school, Stacy has primarily instructional duties for struggling readers in kindergarten, third, fourth, and fifth grades. She attends monthly PLC meetings with teachers to share reading data. When asked how she was prepared to address the mental health needs of struggling readers, Stacy reflected on what she learned as a classroom teacher,

I was very successful with teaching my third graders reading in small groups and I say that because probably eight of those eighteen kids had experienced trauma of some sort, and so we again, just be explicit, systematic instruction, you know, they need to know what to expect. That's what I learned. If they didn't know exactly what to expect when they came to my classroom, I was in trouble. So were they because it was gonna trigger them and even with that in place, it still was a challenge. But what I learned was they [students] need structure, they need explicit and systematic instruction.

Results

This study was guided by the central research question: What are literacy specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy in instructing elementary students with mental health needs?

The study findings are presented through analysis based on Moustakas' (1994) process which includes transcendental-phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of the textual and structural descriptions. After completing an online survey, individual interviews, and a focus group, four primary themes with subthemes (see Table 4) were identified through analysis and triangulation of data. The primary themes include the increasing mental health needs of elementary students, the effect of building relationships that promotes high teacher self-efficacy, the effect of feeling ineffective that promotes low teacher self-efficacy, and the role of a literacy specialist as a coach/mentor.

Table 4

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
The Increasing Mental Health Needs of Elementary Students	Reading Specialists' Lived Experiences Collaboration and Communication Lack of Teacher Training
The Effect of Building Relationships that Promotes High Self-Efficacy	High Expectations Social and emotional Learning
The Effect of Feeling Ineffective that Promotes Low Self-Efficacy	Lack of Student Progress Responsibility of Reading Specialist Role
The Role of a Reading Specialist as a Coach/Mentor	The Need for Teacher Resilience Spec. Recommendations for Teacher Prep

The Increasing Mental Health Needs of Elementary Students

Teachers noticed the increase in mental health needs of American students, even in elementary and primary schools. All 12 of the participants acknowledged an increase in the number of students with emotional issues and the severity of the behaviors that resulted within

elementary classrooms. As Barbara stated in her focus group, "I remember a long time ago you might have one student that had issues, but now there could be like four in one class." In her focus group, Laura drew a possible connection to COVID and school closures when she stated the following:

> Everything hits back on COVID, but you know, especially the year or two years after, when we were kind of back to normal, I felt like it was really bad, like especially in our school. We had a behavior person come in to help and to help certain teachers that had kids that had some serious issues. A lot of people say, well, these kids were home for so long and had no discipline or, you know, got to play video games and do whatever they want. So, I don't know if that's still the case, but it just seems like a trend.

Across all focus groups and individual interviews, the codes of managing students with emotional or mental health appeared 98 times (see Appendix L). During her focus group, Maggie summarized her thoughts on this theme by sharing,

> We're an inclusive district and I feel so many times with kids and what they're dealing with and the trauma that they've had, that even our counselors could feel at a loss of what to do and how to help them so. You know, we just keep trying, but I feel like so many things are just unprecedented and across the country and the world these days that it's, you know, we're just all, we're all just figuring it out as we go.

Although there was not a consensus among participants on the cause of the increasing mental health needs of elementary students, addressing students' emotional needs while remediating literacy was a regular occurrence and the primary theme of reading specialists' lived experiences. Specialists identified collaboration and communication with stakeholders as the best way to compensate for their lack of formal training in managing children's mental health issues.

Lived Experiences of Reading Specialists

Elementary reading specialists typically teach struggling readers individually or within a small group by pushing into a general classroom or pulling out a student or small group to serve in a separate area. Three of the 12 participants, Kristi, Laura, and Rachel expressed that they managed less severe behaviors as reading specialists than as general classroom teachers. Within their individual interviews, however, 100% of these specialists were able to recount personal experiences with struggling readers whose emotional issues impacted their ability to learn to read. Audrey explained the variety of circumstances that impact some of her students:

I had a child who was taken from her home because of abuse, and you know it was very hard. She didn't talk and it was very hard to reach her, to try and help the reading. I had kids that I'd have to sit under a table with and read with them because of behavior. I've seen a lot of the emotional backgrounds, whether their parents are, you know, have used drugs or I've been in conferences where the parents come in high. So, I can see how it affects those kids and it definitely changes how you have to instruct them and how you find that happy medium of helping them understand. OK, this is important, we need to do this, but I also am here for you – for what you're going through.

Hope also taught students who are survivors of abuse and reflected on how a student's emotional issues can prevent learning, even when working on an individual basis.

I had a first-grade student who came in and began sharing with me about the day before when she did not come to school. Her mom had choked her and beat her with a belt, and CPS [child protective services] came and talked to her, and so then from there, she was ready to begin instruction. You know, after I listened to her and talked to her, that's the first 5 minutes of her 15 minutes. And then we're starting instruction and then she misses

one sound and is on the floor hiding under the table crying. She's already being pulled

one-on-one because of other behavior issues that she's displayed in the past, but still,

learning is not taking place for more than two minutes of the 15 minutes because in the

beginning she's trauma dumping, telling stories that deserve to be heard. But then after

the story is listened to, then we're displaying reactive behavior and learning is not taking

place.

Specialists also shared that mental health issues are not limited to those who experience

abuse or trauma. Sometimes, the specialists and classroom teachers were not able to determine

what caused a student to escalate emotionally or shut down, which made it difficult to predict

and prevent. Candace expressed this frustration in the following statement:

The smallest thing sets them off and then you are derailed from what you were trying to

accomplish in the first place, and it's just hard to get them back. It could be, you know, a

word that they just know they know, but they can't figure it out at the moment, or it could

be somebody who has said something to another kid, but they hear it, you know. It just

can be the smallest little thing and it's just hard to understand why they've gone from

reading with you, being confident, and working hard to snap, and it's 20 feet back now.

You know that we have to reel them back in to get them to continue.

Collaboration and Communication with Stakeholders

All 12 participants expressed clearly that they could not address the mental health needs

of students without support from other stakeholders: parents, classroom teachers, administration,

and guidance counselors. This need for collaboration and communication was coded 32 times

across interviews and focus groups (see appendix L). Jaime shared in her focus group that

sometimes classroom teachers expect literacy specialists to be able to "fix" the literacy, behavior,

and emotional challenges that a struggling reader is facing, but it "takes a village and everyone coming together" to help address students' needs. In some instances, specialists also mentioned seeking related services and collaborating with professionals from the community who were embedded in their elementary schools, such as school resource officers, social workers, and school-based counseling services like Day Treatment. Monica shared with her focus group the value of communication when she notices a student displaying emotional issues. "I collaborate with their classroom teacher. I call parents and ask if anything has changed at home, ask those hard questions, and have those tough conversations with family and administrators."

While communication and collaboration between professionals are needed, it is not a full solution to the problem of emotional issues impeding learning. Even when students are presenting significant mental health issues, Sheri pointed out that school districts in Virginia cannot mandate counseling. It is ultimately up to each student's parents to follow through on the recommendations of the guidance counselor unless the student is a threat to themselves or others and requires in-patient care. Monica replied that school districts in North Carolina can require students to receive counseling services. Educators need to help students learn regardless of the emotional services they are receiving, so classroom teachers and specialists need to reach out for support. As Kristi added, "For me, being able to talk to colleagues, social workers, and guidance counselors, who have a lot more experience than me, and getting some tips and tricks has been helpful."

Lack of Teacher Training

When asked about their undergraduate or graduate preparation to address the emotional needs of struggling readers, 11 of the 12 participants responded that they either did not receive any preparation, or it was not adequate. Rachel elaborated, "No, they don't teach how to address

emotional issues in school. So, I've learned mostly by watching people, getting thrown in, and a few PD [professional development] sessions." Three of the 12 participants, Audrey, Jaime, and Stacy explained that they did not think this type of preparation was possible as part of a college or university program because it had to be learned in the classroom. Stacy summarized this point of view: "There's no way to learn that except to experience it." Five other participants, Maggie, Kristi, Hope, Candace, and Barbara felt that pre-service elementary teachers should take courses traditionally only offered to candidates seeking a special education endorsement. These participants shared that additional courses and trainings in psychology or special education aided them in addressing the mental health needs of the struggling readers they serve. In her interview, Hope emphasized this point by adding that additional special education classes "should be required of every classroom teacher."

Participants noted that they may have learned strategies for addressing the mental health needs of struggling readers through professional development training provided by public school districts. Trauma-informed instruction and managing behavior were popular topics in books for teachers and speakers at educational conferences, so these opportunities had been helpful. Eleven of the 12 participants mentioned either participating in a book club or hearing a speaker on this topic. Maggie shared she has benefitted from professional development offered in her New York school district:

> We had a training on PINES, the program for inclusion and neurodiversity education, and took their courses for two years. They give you strategies and ideas and information on students with those different kinds of challenges. And they have office hours, so you can set up like a Zoom meeting and just kind of fill them in on what's going on with a student, and they would also offer suggestions and things.

Participants from Virginia in Maggie's focus group were not familiar with PINES. Barbara

shared that she would gain more from professional development trainings if the sessions were led

by other educators. She explained,

> For professional development, it would be nice to have somebody that has actually been a
>
> teacher and dealt with these things. We had somebody come for a faculty meeting and,
>
> you know, some of his basic information was good, but he'd never been in the classroom
>
> or had more than a handful of kids at one time. So that's, that's kinda hard. If you have a
>
> student like the kindergarten teacher has that can be screaming and a runner, and she has
>
> the rest of her class, what does she do? Should she go run after the one, you know, and
>
> leave everybody else? It would be really nice if we had educators giving advice on some
>
> things.

The Effect of Feeling Ineffective That Promotes Low Teacher Self-efficacy

When asked to describe low teacher self-efficacy, all 12 participants referenced feeling

ineffective or unproductive during instruction. Four of the 12 participants shared that feeling

ineffective was not always directly related to student performance. Jamie stated in her interview

that her self-efficacy was lower when she did not feel fully prepared or was implementing a new

program. In her interview, Kristi expressed that outside stress may also have led to lower self-

efficacy: "When I'm thinking or stressing or worried about other things, I'd be a little bit more

down, maybe not as engaged with my students' behaviors and mannerisms." In her focus group,

Audrey stated that she had the privilege of focusing fully on instruction, but other specialists had

so many additional responsibilities that it made it difficult to feel effective in their primary role

with students. Hope reflected on how a school environment and lack of parental support lowered

her self-efficacy:

This Title I school is in a very impoverished and drug-heavy community, and a lot of times we deal with apathy from parents. I think that can be one of the things that is incredibly frustrating. When we're trying to help these kids and parents won't come in for meetings or make awful comments about the school system or specific teachers. Those things can be frustrating and defeating.

Based on participants' responses to interview questions and the TSES, these reading specialists felt ultimately responsible for students' reading success or failure. They expressed feelings of personal failure when students did not make the expected progress or when their improvement was still far from meeting grade-level expectations. The expectations of colleagues and administrators that specialists could get all students reading on grade level compounded specialists' fears that they were not doing their jobs well and lowered their self-efficacy.

Lack of Student Progress

Participants commented through interviews and focus groups that their self-efficacy was tied to their students' improvement in reading. Laura's self-efficacy was low when she was not keeping her instructional pace, because she wanted her students to receive meaningful instruction within the short timeframe that they had together. Laura explained,

A lot of the kids that I see are very easily distracted, and we can't always get through everything that we need to get through. Or there might be one particular kid that throws everybody off, and that can be discouraging, especially when you only have a small window of time. You kind of feel in a way, like not really a failure, but kind of like, okay, did I get anywhere today? Did they get anything out of this lesson?

Maggie shared in her focus group that she tried to "celebrate every small success," but she did feel discouraged when her students did not progress. Stacy concurred and added,

You almost feel like a failure in a sense, if the child is not making progress. Is there

something more there that we can't seem to help them with? I think no matter what you

do you feel defeated because that child's not progressing and that's our job.

Three specialists, Maggie, Jamie, and Candace expressed concerns about the disconnect

between improvement for struggling readers and perceived success in the current culture of high-

stakes testing. Maggie recounted her feelings surrounding state testing: "when our assessments

are over, and you feel like they rocked it and then you get the actual scores it's not exactly where

you want it to be right away. It's not something that's gonna happen overnight." Jamie described

her work with an ELL in third grade who did not know his letters and grew to reading consonant,

vowel, and consonant (CVC) words by the end of the year. She said that she felt effective in the

"small picture," but despite her student's growth, he would not pass his reading standards of

learning (SOL) test so it would be seen as a "ding on data" for her school and district. Candace

found it defeating when one of her students reached an academic plateau and his best efforts did

not get him reading on grade level or able to succeed on benchmark assessments.

He works so hard, and he knows he struggles, but even with him working that hard I see

him just shut down because he can't do it. That's the piece that really sucks about

education is that no matter the strategy, no matter the skill, no matter the time that you

put in with these kids, there are just some things they're not gonna get. And they're not

gonna get quickly, you know? And it's just heartbreaking.

Responsibility of the Reading Specialist's Role

Reading specialists are the literacy experts in schools and the participants felt responsible

for remediating the struggling readers they serve. Kristi described the role of a reading specialist

as a "huge responsibility," and Maggie added that classroom teachers "look to you as the

specialist to really make a difference and make a difference quickly." Audrey summarized this

shared feeling:

> We're supposed to help those that are not getting it in the classroom, and I think that
>
> when we are not doing that, we feel like we are not doing our job. I think we're harder on
>
> ourselves than some others may be, but we just want our students to succeed.

Despite this strong sense of responsibility, 75% ($n = 9$) of participants gave themselves

their lowest self-efficacy ratings on the TSES for questions related to student engagement and

motivation. When asked how much they could do to motivate students who show low interest in

schoolwork, the mean score was only 6.67. The lowest mean score of 6.25 was given in response

to a question related to helping students think critically. Question 14 asked participants how

much they could do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing, and two

participants gave themselves a rating of 5 out of 9, with a total mean score of 7.08 for that

question. Based on the TSES, these literacy leaders in urban schools who are tasked with

remediating struggling readers only felt that they have "some influence" on increasing a failing

student's understanding.

A final area that contributed to low self-efficacy for participants was losing instructional

time due to staffing shortages or additional duties. During one week of this study, both Rachel

and Sheri had to cancel their instructional groups for several days while they served as

substitutes for classroom or resource teachers. Three additional participants missed instruction

for at least one day to prepare for parent events, assist administration, or prepare for

presentations to faculty. Kristi shared in her focus group that her school lost more than one

literacy specialist this year because they were pulled by administration to substitute or asked to

become a permanent replacement for a classroom teacher. In her interview, Candace explained

how these practices affect her view of her role:

> I don't think it's specific to my school, but I feel that we're not specialized enough, if that
> makes sense. Meaning special enough because our time doesn't seem as valuable as
> somebody else's time, so we have to fight for what we are asking for and for the kids that
> we are working with.

The Effect of Building Relationships That Promotes High Teacher Self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy was defined for participants as an internal belief that they, as educators, can successfully prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact students' lives (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019). The essence of what high teacher self-efficacy looks like and feels like was explained as the participants reflected on this experience in their classrooms. Audrey responded, "When all the kids are in the same place and they are just working hard and understanding the concepts, that's probably when I'm at my highest." Monica added that part of high teacher self-efficacy for her was watching her students enjoy learning. She stated, "So a day like that definitely looks fun. It can be loud with a lot of hands-on activities, but we're up and we're moving, and students are having fun while they learn." Sheri agreed with the importance of student engagement and adds its connection to attendance and high teacher self-efficacy. She elaborated, "I'm feeling effective like the students are making gains. They're engaged. They're not bored. They're excited to come to school, so my attendance is up because they wanna be there and learn." In her interview, Stacy shared how her students' progress impacted her feelings about herself: "My students doing what I'm asking them to do and making progress. I can feel good about myself. I'm making a difference and know when this is getting rough, I can get up and I can do this."

Building and maintaining strong relationships with students was the most prevalent

theme in participants' responses to both individual interview and focus group questions with a total of 38 codes (see Appendix L). Although this phrase was not included in any question, 12 of 12 participants stated building relationships as the most important piece in addressing the emotional needs of struggling readers. In her focus group, Kristi highlighted the benefits of specialists building strong relationships with students:

> I mean the whole reason they're coming to us is because they are struggling with reading. And, when they come to us, they're working on really hard material for them and having those relationships built up first, I feel like it helps them have that confidence that they could try, and not be afraid to fail in front of me and be willing to try for me, I think that definitely makes a big difference. Otherwise, I feel like if you didn't have that relationship, they would just shut down and not want to even attempt to work with us.

Barbara agreed that there is a direct connection between relationships with students and their willingness put forth the effort to improve their reading skills. She emphasized that specialists must be intentional about building relationships due to their limited time with students:

> It's a shorter time, so I feel like you really have to work harder at building the relationships in order for them to feel secure to work. I think it is important for these kids that have issues that we do build a good positive relationship with them so that they'll be able to learn when they're with us and participate in our lessons.

Participants were quick to point out that building strong relationships with students with emotional issues does not mean lowering standards. A key aspect of maintaining these relationships is setting high expectations, which demonstrates to students that their teachers believe they can succeed. In addition to establishing high expectations for academic

improvement, specialists were getting to know their students as people. Through intentional

conversations participants discovered their students' interests and used these social and

emotional connections to increase their motivation to tackle the challenging process of reading.

Building strong relationships through high expectations and social emotional learning builds

trust and boosts teacher self-efficacy.

High Expectations

Building relationships with students does not mean excusing them from doing their work

or lowering teacher expectations for academic progress. Considering both interview and focus

group responses, 9 of 12 participants included setting high expectations as one of the strategies

they used to help students improve their reading skills while maintaining a strong relationship.

Audrey summarized the balance between setting high expectations and building strong

relationships:

> Holding high expectations, I think that's very important because they know that this is
>
> what you expect. So even if you know they're having trouble, they know that I feel that
>
> they can get to that point. And having conversations with them just talking to them about
>
> their life. How was their day? What did you do over the weekend? You know anything to
>
> have them talking and feeling good about themselves. I say hi to them in the hallway,
>
> using their name, and hugs, I love hugs. If they're absent, I let them know that they are
>
> valued as students in my group and say Oh, I'm so glad you're back. I missed you so
>
> much.

On the TSES (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), participants rated their self-

efficacy highest in response to two questions related to setting expectations and establishing

structure in the classroom. Statement 5 asks, "To what extent can you make your expectations

clear about student behavior?" and statement 8 asks, "How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?" Participants responded by selecting from a range of scores to represent their level of self-efficacy for each question with one corresponding to "nothing" and nine corresponding to "a great deal." The mean scores for both questions 5 and 8 were 8.42, which indicated high efficacy in this area of classroom management. The lowest score of 7 for each question was chosen by Rachel for question 5 and Candace for question 8. Both of these specialists taught in urban settings.

Social and Emotional Learning

SEL represents the concept of educators meeting the needs of the whole child as a person, rather than focusing solely on addressing the academic needs of students. Jamie explained, "If you have a relationship, then you know them [students] by name and by need. You know them as individuals and kids know if you're faking." Hope echoed this sentiment by explaining how she differentiated her expectations based on the needs of each student: "We do a lot of goal setting in my room. Some students' goals are just purely academic, this is what I want to learn today. Then for some kiddos, we've got behavior goals." SEL is a tier-one intervention designed to help all students with emotional regulations and prevent escalated emotional issues. Some districts have adopted schoolwide plans that include curricula and resources (Todd et al., 2022).

When asked about social and emotional resources at their schools, participants had a wide variety of responses. In interviews, four participants, Candace, Rachel, Maggie, and Sheri, mentioned that their school districts use Second Step as a schoolwide social and emotional program. However, the resources are only given to classroom teachers, and reading specialists do not have access to the training or materials. Sheri added that her school invited a speaker to present on SEL at a faculty meeting and she learned the following information that could be

applied to her small groups of readers: "He talked about the antecedent and that sometimes just by identifying the triggers we can eliminate some of the issues that are going on in our small groups by not allowing it to get to that point." Laura's school used Second Step for a time, but it was only implemented by the guidance counselor at the time of her interview. Candace also described the new addition of a Restorative Academy for elementary students who needed to be removed from their school to receive restorative counseling for behavior at this academy for a grading period. After nine weeks, the students were evaluated and either transitioned back to their schools or remained for further counseling.

Three participants, Audrey, Barbara, and Hope explained that their schools had social and emotional programs, but they were unaware of the name as it was only used by the guidance counselors. Two participants from rural schools, Stacy and Barbara, did not think their schools were currently implementing social and emotional programs. Jaime's school used the Leader in Me program, and Monica's school used Conscious Discipline. Monica was the only participant who had access to the program materials and used them consistently. She also had the highest overall self-efficacy rating on the TSES. She explained about the resources that she used with her students:

> Schubert is a star and there are a lot of social stories I can share with my students. Our team created a recording of the books and acted out the characters. So, changing the voices kind of helps the students relate to when they're really upset and need to use their big voices, the Schubert puppet will as well. There are fidget toys, just something for them to manipulate with their hands in case they are a little nervous or sad, or depending on how they're feeling that day. So, they're not blurting out or running around the classroom, to get that extra energy out that they may have from the trauma or experience

that they had, like, last night or a month ago.

The Role of a Reading Specialist as a Coach/Mentor

Reading specialists are the literacy leaders in elementary schools, so they serve as resources for colleagues and administration on best practices in literacy instruction. As leaders, participants were often asked to mentor new teachers or informally help classroom teachers who may have been struggling with instruction or classroom management. Literacy specialists needed self-efficacy and confidence to serve as models and coaches to others. On the TSES, 67% ($n = 8$) of participants rated their efficacy on instructional strategies as higher than student engagement, but slightly lower than their efficacy for classroom management. Question 17 asked participants about their efficacy in adjusting lessons to the proper level for individual students, and this had the highest mean score for instructional strategies of 7.67. The lowest efficacy ratings of 6.5 were given in response to questions about assessments and challenging capable students.

Exactly 50% of participants had formal coaching or mentoring duties as part of their literacy specialist positions in elementary schools. The other six participants collaborated informally with classroom teachers and grade-level teams to discuss data, evaluate shared students, and provide suggestions and resources. When asked about the success or failure of their attempts to be instructional support to colleagues, each participant shared that success or failure depended on the personality of the classroom teachers and their receptivity to feedback and help. As Sheri explained,

> These new teachers don't have any grit. If we have eight new teachers, there might be two that are gonna dig their heels in and figure it out. Four of them are not gonna continue in education, because a lot of them don't understand the realities now. There are multiple issues going on at the same time. The kids have changed, and parents have more

leverage. My mentality is you keep going until you find what will work. You don't give

up, and that's what the kids [students] need.

In the midst of a national teacher shortage, school districts were trying to attract and

retain good teachers by providing mentoring programs. As reading specialists served as mentors,

they were discovering gaps in teacher preparation and the need to build resilience in new

teachers to face the increasing challenges in American classrooms.

The Need for Teacher Resilience

Participants referenced resilience 38 times across individual interviews and focus groups

(see Appendix L). Maggie defined resilience as "dealing with the hard stuff and finding your

way to get through it the next time." Kristi felt that new teachers benefited from a "positive

welcoming environment" in a school so that new teachers could feel comfortable sharing with

colleagues and mentors when they had a rough day to get support and advice. Candace pointed

out that new teachers should try a different school setting instead of leaving the education field

after a tough year. As a specialist in an urban school, Candace elaborated,

> You definitely have to know yourself enough to realize when you are not in a place that's
>
> going to build you up, that you've got to change. Just because you can't hack it at one
>
> school and you move to another doesn't mean you don't have resilience. We've seen it;
>
> we've seen a lot of our new teachers, and they move to another school and they're
>
> thriving. Not every school and every environment is built for every teacher.

Not only do new teachers need resilience, but the participants acknowledged that they

needed to continually build their own resilience to continue their work with struggling readers,

especially those with mental health needs. Barbara emphasized that "a lot of the kids we deal

with are the lowest [academically] and the most emotionally insecure." Monica shared how she

practiced self-care to prevent burnout:

> I remember my "why" and I stop to take time for myself, even if that's a mental day. I go
>
> to therapy; I have a circle of friends, sorority sisters that I'm able to communicate with.
>
> Hey, this is a struggle for me. What should I do? So just having people on your team to
>
> help support you and build you up during those times is very important, but also being
>
> able to identify I need a break to get myself together. It's not the kiddos, it's me.

Specialists' Recommendations for Teacher Preparation

The participants shared ideas they thought would benefit future classroom teachers and reading specialists in the face of increasing mental health needs of elementary students and the lack of formal preparation in addressing those needs. Rachel encouraged new teachers or specialists to talk regularly with their mentors and "never give up." Laura suggested being organized and trying to find a work-life balance. Hope warned new educators not to get caught up in a "culture of complaining", but to focus on the positives and lean on administration and colleagues for support. Stacy recommended that pre-service teachers should view "real-life scenarios and role-play solutions." Sheri added to that idea that pre-service teachers also needed to be aware of protocols surrounding students with mental health needs including not touching a child that is escalated and knowing when to bring in administration and make reports to Child Protective Services (CPS). Jamie reminded her focus group about the increasing ELL population and the trauma associated with immigration. She recommended that new teachers seek to learn how to "teach students from different backgrounds who speak different languages."

<div align="center">

Outlier Data and Findings

</div>

There was strong consensus among participants that teachers and literacy specialists need preparation and high self-efficacy to address both the academic and emotional or mental health

needs of students. Two participants shared viewpoints that differed significantly from the perspectives and experiences of the other reading specialists. Their thoughts are worthy of full consideration and may be related to their specific school settings.

One participant shared that she did not consistently serve students who displayed emotional or mental health needs in addition to literacy. In her individual interview Laura explained, "We pull them just because of reading. So generally, no, I have had some kids that might have some emotional, but generally, no, usually, it's just, you know, that they're struggling with reading. And that's it." In her focus group, another participant expressed apprehension about learning too much about meeting the mental health needs of students. She feared that increasing expertise in this area would allow administrators to lay yet another expectation on teachers or specialists. Jamie offered,

> I'll be honest, it would worry me if I was trained to a point where I was like, I don't
> know. Sometimes I worry like you, you want to be there to help everybody and to help
> them with learning everything. But I also I don't want, I don't want to be the school
> counselor too. I don't want there to be any kind of expectation that I can also help with
> that because I feel like sometimes in education right now it's a little bit, you wear a lot of
> different hats for everything.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this study was to answer the central research question and three sub-questions designed to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of reading specialists who taught struggling readers with mental health needs. Participants had the opportunity to rate their own self-efficacy through the TSES and verbally answered questions in individual interviews followed by focus groups with four or five other participants. Each research question aligned to

the themes and subthemes found within their responses.

Central Research Question

What are literacy specialists' lived experiences and self-efficacy in instructing elementary students with mental health needs? The literacy specialists' perspective was that they consistently saw elementary-level struggling readers whose emotional or mental health issues were impeding their reading progress. Despite their lack of training in addressing needs beyond literacy, these specialists served increasing numbers of students with emotional issues for limited sessions each day. They collaborated with others to address the needs of the whole child. Literacy specialists experienced times of both high and low teacher self-efficacy as they navigated their role in making a positive difference in the lives of their students. As Monica explained,

> I believe the literacy specialist's role is to meet the needs of all students. It does include, of course literacy, making sure you know that every child has the right to read, but also providing specific help in certain areas, whether it be social, emotional, or helping students talk about their feelings. Maybe before or after a lesson. Sometimes we feel like, you know, maybe that shouldn't be a part of it, but if we're meeting the needs of the whole child, we do have to take that into consideration.

Sub-question One

What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to low feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs? Reading specialists explained that their teacher self-efficacy was low when they felt ineffective, or their students did not make academic progress. Participants commented that they had a harder time using calm voices and regulating their own emotions when they felt

unproductive. Literacy specialists also shared that they felt a sense of personal failure when students' literacy skills, levels, and test scores were not improving. Audrey recounted the circumstances surrounding her own feelings of low self-efficacy:

> I think it's when I don't know how else to explain it to them, and that's when I get frustrated with myself. I feel like I am not helping them the way they need help, but I'm not sure how else to teach it to them. That's when I think I really struggle. I think that's when it's [teacher self-efficacy] really low, because I feel responsible to help these kids get to where they need to be and if I'm not doing that. I'm disappointed in myself like I need to find a way to change it and help them.

Sub-question Two

What instructional experiences and strategies do literacy specialists describe as contributing to high feelings of self-efficacy for helping struggling readers with mental health needs? Participants shared that setting high expectations for instruction, using strategies from SEL initiatives, and building strong relationships with students led to feelings of high teacher self-efficacy. Kristi elaborated on what high self-efficacy looks like in her classroom: "I have an upbeat temperament. My students are engaged, and I am moving quickly. My students are responding and we're seeing growth."

Specific strategies that participants found beneficial were having safe cool-down areas for students, giving students space and time to deescalate rather than forcing instructional responses, and expressing love through their calm demeanor, supportive presence, hugs, or verbal affirmations. Laura emphasized the value of intentionally building relationships:

> Let them know that you care about them, find something that you can connect with them or just find out their interests. I think if they know that you care, they know that they're

loved and that they can trust you. I think that is biggest start, and then it can just grow from there.

Sub-question Three

What are the experiences of elementary literacy specialists who support and mentor general classroom teachers to effectively teach struggling readers with mental health needs? Participants described varying degrees of coaching and mentoring responsibilities. Half of the participants had only instructional duties, and they typically were supported by literacy coaches at the school or district levels. The other six participants had daily responsibilities that included instructional planning for Title I instructional assistants, observing classroom teachers' literacy instruction, assisting with special education eligibility observations or testing, planning parental involvement events, delivering literacy training to faculty and staff, and fulfilling other duties as requested by their school administration. They agreed that new teachers or specialists must develop resilience to reach challenging students and remain in today's education field. The specialists also reflected on recommendations that they gave to classroom teachers or that they would like to have seen included in education preparation programs. Sheri offered the following advice:

> I think whatever training we add to the universities, the preparation, I think it needs to be scenario based and this is what has happened in a classroom. How would you deal with this? And these are the appropriate ways to deal with it, and these are the not so appropriate ways. Because these kids [new educators] don't understand and it is shocking their systems.

Summary

Elementary reading specialists ($N = 12$) in the eastern United States observed the

increasing frequency of emotional or mental health issues in the struggling readers they served. They felt responsible for addressing these needs that interfered with students' literacy learning. The participants acknowledged they had not received adequate formal preparation or professional development in managing mental health needs, so they relied on communication with stakeholders and collaboration with other professionals. Each participant noted seasons of low and high teacher self-efficacy and explained that setting high expectations, building strong relationships, and using strategies and resources related to social and emotional learning boosted their self-efficacy. Conversely, their self-efficacy waned on days when they felt ineffective and that they were not fulfilling their responsibilities due to a lack of student progress. While formal coaching and mentoring responsibilities varied among participants, each specialist was involved in supporting classroom teachers through attending PLC meetings, analyzing data, collaborating on how services will be offered, and sharing advice and materials to improve literacy practices. They identified a need for resilience to retain strong teachers in the field and offered recommendations for supporting and training this next generation of teachers and literacy specialists.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to explore the self-efficacy and

lived experiences of elementary reading specialists who taught struggling readers with mental

health needs. This chapter presents a summary of themes shared by 12 reading specialists who

taught in public elementary schools that received Title I funds for reading. The summary is

followed by a critical discussion of study findings, their potential impact on policy and practice,

and their relationship with the empirical and theoretical literature. The chapter further includes

delimitations, limitations, and recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with

a summary of the two most significant findings of this transcendental phenomenological study.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss critically the study's findings, beginning with a

summary of themes developed from the participants' responses to the TSES, individual

interviews, and focus groups. Next, several significant findings and their potential implications

for educational policy and practice in elementary schools are presented. The findings are

analyzed against the research literature to determine confirmation or contrast with the study's

theoretical and empirical frameworks. Finally, an explanation of delimitations and limitations

and recommendations for future research concludes this section.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Literacy specialists rated their teacher self-efficacy for student engagement, instructional

strategies, and classroom management on the TSES. These self-ratings and verbal responses to

individual interviews and focus group questions were analyzed and four major themes were

identified. The first theme shared by participants was that mental health needs were increasing in

elementary students. Each participant related stories of struggling readers whose emotional or mental health issues negatively affected their learning. Participants with decades of experience noted that the percentage of students with mental health and behavior issues in each elementary classroom was increasing to a degree that was challenging for classroom teachers to manage. Despite primarily working with students in small groups, these literacy specialists acknowledged that some students must be served individually as they cannot successfully work with even one or two additional students. Participants shared that part of the challenge was a lack of teacher preparation and professional development on how to address the severity of the mental health issues and subsequent behaviors they were encountering in students. These reading specialists found some success in communicating with stakeholders and collaborating with other professionals like guidance counselors, classroom teachers, social workers, behavior specialists, and school administration.

The second theme explores the connection between feeling ineffective and feelings of low self-efficacy. While the participants saw themselves as part of a team with the classroom teachers who delivered Tier 1 instruction, they expressed feeling additional pressure from other school personnel. The participants expressed that classroom teachers and administrators looked to them to solve the problems that struggling readers faced and to increase literacy test scores, so they felt it personally when students did not make academic progress.

The third theme examines the connection between building strong relationships with students and feelings of high teacher self-efficacy. Participants with high self-efficacy were committed to meeting the needs of the whole child and implementing strategies taken from SEL curricula and resources. The specialists did not lower their high expectations for struggling readers with emotional issues, but they were intentional about knowing their students well and

building trust.

The final theme drawn from participant data relates to the reading specialists' secondary role as coaches and mentors to elementary classroom teachers. These specialists agreed that new teachers were typically unprepared for the emotional issues and behavior they would face from elementary students in today's classrooms. They feared that teachers would continue to leave the field unless they developed resilience, or the ability to persist in challenging situations. To that end, specialists shared recommendations for pre-service teacher and specialist preparation as well as professional development that would be beneficial.

Theoretical Literature Discussion

The literature that provided a theoretical framework for this study consisted of Bandura's (1986) SCT and his construct of self-efficacy (1977). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and the minor theory of situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020) also relate to the self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists to address the mental health needs of struggling readers.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Construct of Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1986) SCT recognizes that students learn through observation and vicarious experiences, so teacher modeling has a strong impact on student learning and future actions. One way that students have vicarious experiences is by observing how teachers or other learners face and overcome difficulties on challenging tasks. Performance accomplishments or mastery experiences happen when students conquer challenges themselves (Bandura, 1986). Struggling readers with emotional issues need classroom teachers and literacy specialists who can model both effective reading practices and healthy emotional regulation, which builds their motivation and encourages them to keep trying even on complex and difficult activities like reading (Clark

& Andreasen, 2021; Cooper et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019).

Interestingly, adults also learn by watching others, and study participants noted that being in

classrooms and watching other teachers address students' emotional issues provided more

preparation than they received through undergraduate or graduate programs. As Rachel

explained, "They don't teach how to address emotional issues in school. So, I've learned mostly

by watching people."

Classroom teachers and literacy specialists have internal beliefs that they can make a

positive difference in their students' learning and lives, which Bandura (1977) defined as self-

efficacy. He described self-efficacy as a crucial characteristic that reflects a person's perceived

capability to make choices, act, and go through hardship for their own achievement. One of the

study's participants, Hope, reflected that reading specialists were typically only given access to

academic resources and training and that district leaders may have been missing the connection

between academic struggles, emotional issues, and behavioral problems: "Just like with the

professional development, I feel like academic deficits are viewed completely separately from

behavioral deficits." SCT's emphasis on observational learning and modeling provided the lens

for understanding the impact of reading specialists' self-efficacy on their work with struggling

readers and served as the basis for this study's central research question and sub-questions one

and two related to low and high teacher self-efficacy for instructing elementary students with

mental health needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

A common lived experience among the reading specialists in this study was working to

motivate struggling readers to keep practicing their reading skills, so literacy specialists could

benefit from understanding Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's model begins at the

lowest level of needs for survival and progresses to the highest level of self-actualization. This psychological theory helps teachers understand that students with unmet needs may be unmotivated to achieve academically. In her focus group, Barbara stated that "a lot of the kids we [reading specialists] deal with are the lowest [academically] and the most emotionally insecure." Sheri agreed and added that the struggling readers who qualify for Title I services are often some of the "most needy emotionally."

Maslow's (1943) second level encompasses the need for love and belonging, so, students whose physical or emotional needs are unmet likely will not be motivated to reach for the third level of esteem that includes success in school. On the TSES, the mean participant rating was 6.67 out of 9 for question 4, which asked teachers how much they can do to motivate a student who has low interest in schoolwork. Study participants noted that even young struggling readers were aware that they were behind in reading, which lowered their sense of belonging and prevented them from developing esteem and confidence in reading. Barbara concluded, "we really have to work harder at building the relationships in order for them to feel secure to work." The experiences of these participants are supported by Maslow's theory that a sense of being behind or not belonging can impede learning.

Eccles and Wigfield's Situated Expectancy-value Theory

The situated expectancy-value theory based on Atkinson's (1964) theory of achievement motivation describes the relationship between a person's perceived competence, motivation, and task outcome (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023). Research literature has established a connection between perceived competence for motivation and self-efficacy for teachers (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023; ten Hagen et al., 2022; Wigfield et al., 2020). This minor theory provided a contemporary lens through which to consider the central research question that explored the lived experiences

and self-efficacy of reading specialists who worked with struggling readers with mental health needs. This theory also contributed to sub-question 3 related to the role of reading specialists as coaches or mentors and their perception that teachers needed to develop resilience.

On the TSES, participants rated their self-efficacy as relatively low for managing students with challenging behaviors. Question 19 asked teachers, "How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?" and the mean score was 6.58 out of 9. Question 21 asked teachers how well they can respond to defiant students, and the mean score was 6.17. The low ratings of participants' self-efficacy indicated that the reading specialists did not have a strong perceived competence and were in danger of burnout due to losing motivation to continue working with students with emotional issues that led to difficult behaviors. This aligned with the situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023). When asked during the focus groups, participants drew a causal relationship between students' mental health issues and teacher burnout or attrition. Stacy summarized this position, "Depending upon your personality, your family life, and everything else, how much of that can you deal with on a daily basis before you burn out and just say I can't do this anymore?"

Empirical Literature Discussion

Twelve literacy specialists provided empirical evidence of their lived experiences and self-efficacy for addressing the emotional needs of struggling readers through the TSES and responses to individual interviews and focus group questions. This evidence confirmed much of the literature on this topic related to the mental health needs of elementary students, the importance of school-based support, characteristics of high teacher self-efficacy, and the risks of teacher burnout. Participant responses related to feelings of low self-efficacy extended the literature related to high-stakes testing and contradicted what other studies revealed about low

self-efficacy and school settings.

Elementary Students with Mental Health Needs

The central research question for this study explored the lived experiences and self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists as they motivated struggling readers who had emotional or psychological issues to improve their academic performance. Based on participant responses to interview and focus group questions, the study findings confirmed that the prevalence of students with mental health needs in K-12 American classrooms was increasing (Duong et al., 2021; Firestone & Cruz, 2022). All 12 participants described specific experiences with elementary students with mental health needs and said depression, anxiety, and trauma-related issues were impacting a higher percentage of their students than in previous years. Participants explained students with emotional issues displayed a wide range of behaviors including shutting down, refusing to comply with instructions, having emotional meltdowns and violent outbursts, destroying classrooms, and threatening harm to themselves or others.

Three reading specialists consistently used the term "trauma" when explaining why elementary students were displaying these emotions and behaviors. Participants explained that these students were facing the challenges of hunger, violence in the home, parental use of drugs, abuse, learning deficits, single-parent homes, absenteeism, and either homelessness or homes without running water. These situations matched closely with Rishel et al.'s (2019) definition of ACEs that constitute trauma, which include "emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, parental separation or divorce, mental illness in the household, household substance abuse, a criminal household member, emotional neglect, and physical neglect" (p. 239). As Rachel explained,

I have one child who won't even come to class. He starts throwing a fit when he sees me

coming. Some of them are hungry, and some of them don't know what they're going home to, or who they're going home to, or if they will be home by themselves.

The root cause for this increase in psychological issues in elementary students was beyond the scope of this study, but one participant, Laura, wondered if COVID-19 is at least partly to blame: "Everything hits back on COVID-19, especially years after, when we were kind of back to normal. I felt like it was really bad, and we needed a behavior person to help certain teachers that had kids with serious issues." Laura went on to share that so much time playing video games could have exacerbated the problem which fits with Ma et al.'s (2021) position that the significant increase in screen time during school closures contributed to the increase in mental health challenges in young people after COVID-19.

Reading Specialists' Response

Teachers are seen as trusted adults who are well-positioned to observe, support, and assist students with mental health challenges (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019). The vast majority (11 out of 12) reading specialists agreed that they should be part of addressing their students' academic and behavioral needs. This stands in contrast with those who feel teachers are unqualified and should refer all emotional issues to the school's guidance counselor (Effrem & Robbins, 2019; Stephens, 2020; Venet, 2019). One participant, Jaime, reminded her focus group that if teachers or specialists become trained to address emotional needs, then it could become part of the expectations for teachers. Despite this concern, most reading specialists were willing to help, but they reported that addressing emotional issues did take time away from their limited instructional sessions. Hope elaborated, "It feels like I'm spending an overwhelming amount of time focused on their mental health and a very short amount of time focused on their instruction."

Reading specialists in this study shared that emotional or mental health issues blocked student learning, a finding supported by Rossen's (2020) proposition that emotional difficulties cause cognitive impairments. None of the participants mentioned teaching students about how their brain responded to stress or the concept of neuroplasticity, which refers to the brain's ability to adapt and even heal neural pathways through learning and experiences (Brown et al., 2014; McTighe & Willis, 2019; Rossen, 2020). Only one participant, Monica, shared that she had access to any type of social and emotional learning resources that she implemented when struggling readers' emotional issues were preventing them from learning.

When asked about literacy curricula, all participants mentioned using programs that incorporated principles from the science of reading. The science of reading is based on neuroscience and literacy programs and must include explicit instruction in phonemic awareness (Castles et al., 2018), instruction in phonics through multisensory techniques and active student engagement to aid memory (Henry, 2020), direct teaching of comprehension strategies (Duke et al., 2021), and time to read a wide variety of texts (Castles et al., 2018). Participants mentioned attending training on how to implement these programs but did not mention the cognitive complexity of reading or the potential impact of students' emotions on their learning. The reading specialists seemed to know instinctively that they should not try to force students to continue reading or working once students had shut down or seemed to be escalating. This finding reinforced Little and Maunder's (2021) work that teachers do not have access to information on neurobiology and need guidance on responding appropriately to students affected by trauma.

Low Teacher Self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy has been linked to how teachers instruct, manage their classrooms,

make instructional decisions, and interact with a diverse student population (Clark & Andreasen, 2021; Cooper et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019). Teacher self-efficacy describes how teachers feel about their own ability to make a positive difference in the lives of students (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019). Perhaps because reading specialists and general classroom teachers are not trained to screen for mental health issues or deliver mental health interventions (Brunelle et al., 2020; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Sanchez et al., 2018; Weist et al., 2018), these populations report lower self-efficacy for meeting the needs of students than their colleagues who are certified in special education (Ruppar et al., 2020). Four participants, Barbara, Candace, Hope, and Kristi chose to take additional courses in special education and shared that those experiences were crucial in their preparation to address the mental health needs of struggling readers.

The reading specialist participants felt primarily responsible for helping students improve their reading skills and move their levels as close to grade level as possible. Therefore, the emphasis on passing state reading testing over reading improvement was defeating and led to low teacher self-efficacy. Wachira and Mburu (2019) contend that teachers in urban schools or those who work with children in poverty may feel additional pressure from the administration. These schools may also have an increased focus on test preparation due to historically lower performance. Sheri encouraged specialists to celebrate growth even if it was not enough for students to pass state tests: "Some of the students are not making as much traction, and that is tough, but you have to look at it differently and take even the small gains as progress."

Participants' responses did not confirm or diverge from the literature on the impact of cultural differences between teachers and students. Thomas et al. (2020) purported there is a cultural divide between predominantly White middle-class teachers and the students of racial and

ethnic minority groups they teach. Participants shared the demographics of their Title I elementary schools, which tended to have high percentages of students on free/reduced lunch and minority students who identified as Hispanic or Black. Thomas et al. (2020) also mentioned a cultural disconnect between teachers who are native English speakers and ELLs. Half of the study participants mentioned having high ELL populations within their schools and that they served these students within their Title I groups. Literacy specialists did not comment on having difficulties building relationships with students, despite their cultural differences. The participants also did not discuss the use of culturally responsive teaching, which is considered a trauma-informed instructional approach to reach students with emotional issues (Rossen, 2020). In an effort not to lead participants' answers, I did not specifically ask about culturally responsive teaching, so it is unclear whether participants are using this strategy with struggling readers with emotional issues. It is also possible that a more diverse group of participants would have mentioned culturally responsive teaching.

Study participants contradicted some of the research literature related to self-efficacy, race and ethnicity, and school settings. The only minority participant in this study was Monica, and her scores on the TSES were the highest in every area, compared to all other participants, yet there is literature showing that teachers of racial and ethnic minority groups have lower self-efficacy for meeting students' mental health needs (Brunelle et al., 2020 & Firestone & Cruz, 2022) and implementing an SEL curriculum with fidelity (Thierry et al., 2022) than their non-minority counterparts. Another contradiction between this study and the literature relates to school settings. Among the 12 participants, the teachers employed in urban settings reported the lowest self-efficacy across student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies as compared to their counterparts who taught in suburban or rural schools. This may

have been related to the challenging needs of the students they served. However, Zolkoski et al.

(2020) indicate that it is often teachers in rural areas that report lower self-efficacy for

implementing programs or curricula designed to address students' mental health needs.

High Teacher Self-efficacy

Educators who model motivation and persist beyond challenges to meet the needs of

students are described as having high teacher self-efficacy (Özokcu, 2017). Participants shared

that building strong relationships with students as people and caring about their interests and

perspectives boosted their feelings of teacher self-efficacy. Eight of the 12 participants expressed

that they wanted their rooms to be safe spaces, or they wanted students to feel safe with them.

This finding is supported by research literature that emphasizes the positive difference that

educators can make for students with emotional needs by being respectful and welcoming, and

making their classroom a safe space (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; McTighe & Willis, 2019;

Rossen, 2020). In addition to creating a safe environment, teachers with high self-efficacy

typically set high standards for themselves and their students (Browarnik et al., 2017), a finding

expressed by 75% of participants.

Participants also noted that communicating with students' parents and collaborating with

other professionals in the school increased their self-efficacy for working with struggling readers

with emotional issues. The literature provides a connection between trauma-sensitive

environments and cultures of collaboration between teachers, administration, counselors, and

social workers (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Venet, 2019). Levels of teacher self-efficacy can

positively or negatively impact students, and Jordan et al. (2019) suggested there is a link

between high teacher self-efficacy and student achievement. According to the TSES results,

participants rated their self-efficacy high for question six which relates to their belief that all

students can succeed. This question asked, "How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?" and the mean self-rating score was 7.42 which correlates to a narrative rating higher than "quite a lot."

Research literature offers SEL as a trauma-informed approach that can empower teachers to support the emotional health of their students. The goal of an SEL curriculum is to help educators explicitly teach students the skills needed to manage their emotions and behaviors (Thierry et al., 2022) and to increase students' engagement at school and desire to learn (Yang et al., 2019). Ten of the 12 participants were aware of school wide SEL curricula, but only Monica had access to her school's SEL training and resources, like puppets and social stories, to be able to use this program with her struggling readers. Sheri added, "The SEL program builds empathy, ways to calm down, and it's universal, so anybody can use it with the students, we should all be using the same language with them." The participants' responses and research literature confirmed that teachers with high self-efficacy have more personal fulfillment in their careers, remain committed to teaching despite its challenges, and serve as models of emotional regulation to their students (Browarnik et al., 2017).

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, some conservative politicians and parent advocacy groups, such as Parents Defending Education, are concerned about the implementation of social and emotional programs in public schools. They fear that it gives a forum for indoctrination, takes time away from learning, and puts teachers without training in the role of counselors (Weingarten, 2023). The Thomas B. Fordham Institute conducted a survey of 2,000 parents and found that the vast majority of parents supported the ideals of SEL, but Republican parents tended to respond negatively to the term social and emotional learning and were often combining it with critical race theory and gender identity issues (Tyner, 2021). One key finding

of this report was that most polled Democratic and Republican parents disagreed on the purpose

of public schools. Democratic parents were in support of more funding for public education and

for schools to take on larger roles in providing school-based mental health programs. Republican

parents expressed concern about public schools taking over the role of the family in teacher

about character and values (Tyner, 2021). This controversy may impact the continued use of

social and emotional programs and curricula in public elementary schools.

Teacher Resilience

Teaching can be stressful and even before the COVID-19 pandemic and the extra

challenges that fell on educators, almost 50% of American teachers were leaving the education

field within the first five years of their teaching career (Kim et al., 2021; Olson Stewart et al.,

2021). The effort of balancing students' academic and emotional needs while managing their

behaviors can lead to teacher burnout (Asirit et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021; Todd et al., 2022).

One characteristic that is closely linked with self-efficacy is resilience, which has been defined

as the ability to bounce back from stress and persist despite obstacles and challenges (Donahue-

Keegan et al., 2019; Olson Stewart et al., 2021). Reading specialists were viewed as literacy

leaders in their elementary schools, so participants often served as mentors to new teachers. They

expressed that new teachers needed to develop resilience and have additional training in the

realities of teaching in order to remain in the field of education. Laura shared advice about

finding a work-life balance based on her own experience:

> I think you've got to find that balance and really try to prioritize. It helps to be organized
>
> and have certain things ready, so if you are going to be out, you've got things planned.
>
> It's just all about balance and giving yourself grace. Learning that you've got to take care
>
> of yourself, that your classroom will always be there, and that's something that took a

while for me to figure out.

Laura's recommendations are supported by research. According to Altieri et al. (2021), teachers need to strike the right balance between school life and home life. He also suggested teachers seek out supportive colleagues who will listen so that educators can debrief about the negative emotions and behaviors they may have absorbed from traumatized students. Berger et al. (2021) concurred, adding that administrative support also plays a role in helping teachers manage their emotions and combat burnout. Stacy's question speaks to the isolation that even experienced educators can feel:

> Wouldn't it be great if teachers had a safe place to go to talk about this issue and to people who have been there, done that to offer support and throw around ideas? No judgments passed, wouldn't that be just amazing?

Reading specialists also shared that colleges and universities needed to present more realistic scenarios for student behavior. This idea is supported by Firestone and Cruz (2022) who point out that EPPs instruct pre-service teachers in classroom management techniques that reward good behavior and punish misbehavior, which may be too simplistic for students in crisis. Other research findings suggest that colleges and universities that prepare pre-service teachers should include trauma-informed strategies in addition to traditional techniques (Berger et al., 2021; Opiola et al., 2020). The research studies examined for this study did not emphasize the value of formal mentoring programs for new teachers, but all 12 participants shared that their school's mentoring program could promote resilience in new teachers. Kristi extends this finding by sharing, "I feel like that [teacher resilience] would definitely come from having a positive, welcoming environment in the school from staff, teamwork with your colleagues, and having a mentor program for new teachers."

Implications

Study findings, supported by extant literature, have implications for policy and practice. Implications for policy include recommendations for changes to policy at the federal, state, and local levels. Implications for practice include recommendations for elementary reading specialists, administrators, school district leaders, and EPPs.

Implications for Policy

The federal government continues to reauthorize ESEA which requires annual testing that is tied to school accreditation status, teacher accountability, and funding (Marsicek, 2022). Despite decades of federal programs to close academic achievement gaps, there is still a persistent "school underachievement of students from poor, urban, rural, and non-mainstream ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups" (Gay, 2015, p. 123). One implication of this study is that the current educational climate of measuring academic achievement by passing high-stakes testing is not making a positive difference for struggling readers, especially those who are members of historically marginalized groups. Reading specialists need to feel a measure of success when struggling readers improve so that they can persist in supporting these students to reach realistic goals. One recommendation to address this issue is to set an improvement standard on annual reading tests for students who are reading two or more levels below grade level in place of only having a pass or fail criteria. Recent changes to allow schools to gain recovery credit for students who pass after previously failing is a step in the right direction, but it still provides no encouragement or incentive for the continued remediation of struggling readers who may not pass an annual reading exam in elementary school. Alternative testing is currently available for students who qualify for special education, but students who qualify only for Tier 2 services must currently take and pass grade-level tests. This change would acknowledge the

developmental nature of reading, and its cognitive complexity, and encourage reading specialists

and struggling readers that improvement matters.

A second implication of this study is that reading specialists do not have enough

instructional time with students to build relationships, manage emotional needs and behaviors,

and boost reading achievement. If state policy changed to require all Tier 2 students to receive

services for a specific number of hours per week, then this intervention time would be protected.

There is a current law in Virginia about the amount of time students identified by PALS receive

services, but this is often provided by Title I instructional aides, who are also pulled to serve as

substitutes. If Title I services were not seen as optional but classified as parallel in importance to

special education, then reading specialists and Title I aides would not be pulled to substitute in

classes or take on administrative duties. Changing state policy related to Tier 2 instruction would

also allow reading specialists to pull students from in-school suspension or Day Treatment so

that they would not continually miss instruction due to behavior. Participants in this study shared

feelings of personal failure when their students did not make progress, yet they were forced to

cancel groups to meet other obligations. Kristi shared,

> After COVID, they [the school administration] were trying to figure out what our job
>
> duties were gonna be, and they just kept piling on all these things. We just sat down with
>
> the admin team and said, you know, our main focus should be working with these
>
> students. I still do have to cancel groups a lot because have PLs with my grade levels and
>
> that does require some extra planning. And then we also are helping out with our Special
>
> education department when they need observations done for IEP meetings. We are the
>
> ones in the classroom doing the observations, which is fine because we can observe the
>
> teachers as well, but it does pull away from the students and I'm always having to cancel

those groups, which is difficult.

Protecting instructional time would also ensure reading specialists are available to fulfill their mentoring and coaching responsibilities. Ortmann et al. (2020) and Ulenski et al. (2019) provide support for the national scope of this issue by explaining that reading specialists and literacy coaches are asked to cover classes, fulfill administrative roles, or teach so many groups that they are not available to provide teacher support. McVey and Trinidad (2019) add that this situation occurs most in urban schools where teacher shortages and teacher turnover are the most critical. This study's participants from urban schools consistently rated their self-efficacy lower than specialists in rural or suburban settings which further strengthened the need for support.

A final implication of this study is for policy at the local level. Local city council or county board members may not be fully aware of the mental health crisis impacting students at the elementary level. Perhaps hearing the "voices" of reading specialists through this study would motivate them to provide additional funding for elementary building substitutes and support staff to help classroom teachers and literacy specialists address students' emotional needs without sacrificing instructional time and academic progress.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study yield implications for practice specific to district literacy coordinators, elementary school administrators, reading specialists, and EPPs. District literacy coordinators oversee literacy curricula, literacy coaches, and reading specialists at all elementary schools within a public school district. One finding of this study is that experienced reading specialists are implementing the science of reading programs without being given the training or resources to educate their students about how their brains work and how their learning is affected by their emotions. Reading specialists are being trained in the science of reading processes for

decoding and reading comprehension (Hudson et al., 2021; Schwartz, 2019; Solari et al., 2020),

but they are not being trained in how to apply the neuroscience behind this reading approach to

student learning and emotional regulation. District literacy coordinators could also provide

reading specialists with training and materials for the SEL programs that are being used in their

district. Only one participant in North Carolina had access to an SEL curriculum, even though

nine other participants across New York and Virginia were aware that SEL programs were being

implemented at their schools. Participants served some of the most emotionally needy students

within small groups or individual sessions, so it made sense to give them access to materials to

make their jobs easier and benefit students. However, teachers may face backlash from parents

who are opposed to SEL programs and see them as part of a liberal agenda to indoctrinate

children (Weingarten, 2023).

A practical implication for elementary administrators is to collaborate with other

elementary administrators to form support groups for classroom teachers and literacy specialists.

These would be optional groups that would not focus on data or instruction but would provide

educators with an opportunity to share and get ideas in a safe, judgment-free zone. Group leaders

would need to be appointed to set norms of confidentiality and to shut down discussions about

school politics or complaints about specific people. The literature supports the premise that

educators need support systems and that this type of collaboration and communication may boost

self-efficacy (Berger et al., 2021; Honsinger & Brown, 2019). Four of the 12 study participants

messaged me after the focus groups to share how much they enjoyed having the opportunity to

talk with others who performed the same job and faced similar challenges.

A practical implication for EPPs is to increase coursework for elementary classroom

teachers on student exceptionalities that include learning challenges, mental health issues, and

trauma. Only four of the 12 study participants elected to take additional coursework in special education topics to better meet students' needs, which correlated to higher self-efficacy for inclusive classrooms and struggling readers with needs beyond literacy. The extant literature and lived experiences of the study participants confirmed the increasing number of students with mental health needs in general education elementary classrooms. According to Özokcu (2017), teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to also have a willingness to teach a wide range of diverse students, so there is a correlation between self-efficacy and inclusion efficacy.

Another practical implication involves district leadership, school administrators, reading specialists, and EPP faculty. A partnership could be formed between a college or university and an elementary school. This mutually beneficial arrangement may provide support for elementary students, classroom teachers, and literacy specialists and potentially improve the preparation of elementary pre-service teachers and reading specialist interns. The partnership would have to be approved by the district and school principal and then managed by the school's reading specialist and college reading professor. These literacy professionals could work together to schedule field experiences in which elementary pre-service teachers and reading specialist interns would conduct interactive read-alouds and mini-lessons on areas of need provided by the student's classroom teacher. This individualized instruction may benefit any struggling reader, but especially one with emotional needs. This could provide the pre-service teachers with exposure to some of the challenges that struggling readers face and the behaviors they may display while providing extra attention, love, and support for the elementary student. Pre-service teachers may benefit from the opportunity to apply their new knowledge in field experiences with students who display trauma-related mental health needs (McClain, 2021). Elementary reading specialist participants indicated that they learned the most about addressing the mental needs of struggling

readers through time spent with students in the classroom.

The Virginia Department of Education has grant applications available to encourage these types of partnerships through the formation of lab schools. Some university-school partnerships are considered professional development schools (PDS) with a focus on clinical practice, collaboration, reflection, and resources (Cosenza et al., 2023). None of the study participants referenced having a lab school or PDS in their district. Developing university-school partnerships and seeking grant funding for lab schools are actionable steps based on empirical data and research literature.

A final practical implication of this study is for reading specialists who serve struggling readers with mental health needs in elementary schools. Specialists need to advocate for the importance of their role, the value of the services they provide to students, and request building schedules that give them adequate time for literacy instruction. Hope referenced only having 15 minutes of instructional time, which included time walking from classrooms to the Title I room and back. None of the study participants had more than 30-45-minute sessions with students including travel time. Perhaps having weekly meetings with school administrators and monthly meetings with district literacy coordinators could provide specialists with the opportunity to discuss their successes and challenges and ask for any additional training or access to resources that they need.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study has both delimitations and limitations. The delimitations are intentional decisions to limit the study's parameters to allow for a deep and rich exploration of participants' experiences with the phenomenon of self-efficacy. The limitations are due to events or circumstances beyond the researcher's control. Both the delimitations and the limitations should

be considered when attempting to replicate or apply this study's results or findings.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study are related to both the selection criteria of participants and the settings in which they serve. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the self-efficacy and lived experiences of elementary reading specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. Therefore, maximum variation sampling was used to recruit 12 participants who are reading specialists with daily instructional duties to remediate struggling readers. This participant sample was also delimited by requiring that study participants have at least two years of experience teaching reading and fulfilling the role of reading specialists. Three participants had 0-5 years of classroom teaching experience before becoming reading specialists. Two participants served as elementary classroom teachers for 6-9 years while four participants taught for 10-14 years before becoming specialists. One participant taught for 15-19 years, another participant served for 20-25 in the general classroom, and one participant was a classroom teacher for 30 years prior to taking on the role of a reading specialist. The rationale for these delimitations was to ensure that each participant had common lived experiences as literacy leaders within their schools with a wide range of ages and years of experience.

Another delimitation of this study was the participants' school settings. Each participant was required to serve in an elementary public school that received Title I funds for reading. The reasoning behind this decision was that each participant needed to have the common experience of working with elementary students that qualified for Title I services across a variety of school settings: rural, suburban, and urban. The participants' settings spanned seven school districts in the states of New York ($n = 1$), North Carolina ($n = 1$), and Virginia ($n = 5$). Five participants

teach in suburban settings, four participants serve in rural settings, and three participants work in urban school settings. This variety in settings allows participants to share their different methods of delivering Tier 2 instruction and explain their responsibilities as reading specialists in school districts across the eastern region of the United States.

Limitations

The participants who responded, met the eligibility criteria, and consented to participate were all female, and 11 out of 12 reading specialists identified their race and ethnicity as White. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be transferrable to or represent the lived experiences, self-efficacy, or perspectives of male literacy specialists or reading specialists of racial and ethnic minority groups.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Future Research

</div>

In consideration of the study's delimitations and limitations, future research with elementary reading specialists should include male participants and participants of racial and ethnic minority groups. This would extend and balance the perspectives of this study's White female participants. Future research should explore the use of culturally responsive teaching with struggling readers with mental health issues, as culturally responsive teaching was highlighted in the literature as a trauma-informed instructional approach (Rossen, 2020). Since culturally responsive teaching practices were not mentioned by any participant, I do not know if these teaching strategies were being done routinely and not being considered a factor in self-efficacy, or if the teaching strategies were not being implemented. Future research could also explore the use of bibliotherapy by reading specialists as an alternative to an SEL curriculum, as it is a research-based strategy for addressing students' mental health needs (Langeberg, 2023; Monroy-Fraustro et al., 2021; Sevinç, 2019).

While most of my participants (n = 10) indicated that their role included addressing the emotional needs of students, a study with a larger population sample might find a larger number of specialists who feel that their responsibilities are only literacy. One participant, Stacy, shared that her background caused her to shut down in situations when the students were displaying their anger in physical ways like pushing chairs or knocking over desks. Delving more deeply into the correlation between the past trauma of specialists and their self-efficacy would be valuable in a future study. A final recommendation is to conduct a multiple case study that included an elementary reading specialist in a suburban school, one in a rural school, and one in an urban school.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to explore the lived experiences and self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists to address the mental health needs of struggling readers. Bandura's (1986) SCT, construct of self-efficacy (1977), and Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs provided the theoretical framework for this study. The minor theory of situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2023) was also used to explore the motivation of literacy specialists to persist with challenging students. A review of the extant literature was conducted and provided a research base for the study's central research question and three sub-questions centered on the self-efficacy of elementary reading specialists who served struggling readers with mental health needs. Twelve elementary reading specialists were recruited and provided empirical data through the TSES, individual interviews, and focus group questions which aligned to the research questions.

Data was organized, analyzed coded, and grouped by themes. Study findings were triangulated by considering survey data, participant quotes, and research literature. Theoretical

and empirical literature was discussed, and implications were made for both policy and practice. The most significant implication for policy is based on the study finding that elementary reading specialists' self-efficacy was lowered by the pressure and unrealistic expectation that their struggling readers with mental health issues would pass annual high-stakes testing as a result of their Tier 2 instruction. Therefore, a recommendation is made for federal policy to change to give schools a form of credit for student improvement on annual reading tests rather than only passing for students who qualify by testing at two or more years below grade level. The most significant implication for practice is to form a lab school between an EPP and an elementary school to pair a pre-service teacher or reading specialist intern with a struggling reader as a field experience under the management of the elementary reading specialist and college/university faculty. This may provide additional attention and support for struggling readers and improve teacher preparation to increase candidates' exposure to the needs and behaviors of struggling readers and develop their resilience. Monica summarized the essence of the reading specialists' heart behind their work with students when she concluded, "Some students come to school to learn, and then some come to school to be loved." When emotional issues are blocking a child from learning, then that is "a day to be loved."

References

Adler-Greene, L. (2019). Every student succeeds act: Are schools making sure every student succeeds? *Touro Law Review*, *35*(1), 11–23. https://digitalcommons.tourolaw.edu/lawreview/vol35/iss1/4

Altieri, V., Rooney, M., Bergholz, L., & McCarthy, J. (2021). Becoming a student of your students: Trauma-informed, culturally relevant practices for physical education teachers. *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, *92*(1), 8–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2021.1844539

Alvarez, A. (2017). "Seeing their eyes in the rearview mirror": Identifying and responding to students' challenging experiences. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *50*(1), 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2016.1250686

Arslan, G., Yıldırım, M., Zangeneh, M., & Ak, İ. (2022). Benefits of positive psychology-based story reading on adolescent mental health and well-being. *Child Indicators Research*, *15*(3), 781–793. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-021-09891-4

Asirit, L. B. L., Hua, J. H., & Mendoza, L. (2022). A closer look at neophyte teachers' instructional competence: A phenomenological study. *International Research Journal of Science, Technology, Education, & Management*, *2*(2), 11–25. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6975604

Aslan Gördesli, M., & Aydin Sünbül, Z. (2021). Positive characteristics in primary school teachers: The interactive roles of psychological capital and mindfulness in teaching. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, *8*(4), 55–66.

Atkinson, J. W. (1964). *An introduction to motivation*. Van Nostrand.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change.

Psychological Review, *84*(2), 191–215. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191Z

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Freeman.

Bean, R., & Lillenstein, J. (2012). Response to intervention and the changing roles of schoolwide personnel. *Reading Teacher*, *65*(7), 491–501. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01073

Bean, R. M., Dagen, A. S., Ippolito, J., & Kern, D. (2018). Principals' perspectives on the roles of specialized literacy professionals. *Elementary School Journal*, *119*(2), 327–350. https://doi.org/10.1086/700280

Bean, R. M., & Kern, D. (2018). Multiple roles of specialized literacy professionals: The ILA 2017 standards. *Reading Teacher*, *71*(5), 615–621. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1671

Berger, E., Bearsley, A., & Lever, M. (2021). Qualitative evaluation of teacher trauma knowledge and response in schools. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *30*(8), 1041–1057. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2020.1806976

Bhogal, A., Borg, B., Jovanovic, T., & Marusak, H. A. (2021). Are the kids really alright? Impact of COVID-19 on mental health in a majority Black American sample of schoolchildren. *Psychiatry Research*, *304*, 114146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2021.114146

Blachowicz, C. L. Z., Buhle, R., Ogle, D., Frost, S., Correa, A., & Kinner, J. D. (2010). Hit the ground running: Ten ideas for preparing and supporting urban literacy coaches. *Reading Teacher*, *63*(5), 348–359. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.63.5.1

Bond, N. (2021). Teacher leadership in an elementary school: A case study of instructional support specialists. *Education*, *141*(4), 201–213.

Browarnik, B., Bell, S. M., McCallum, R. S., Smyth, K., & Martin, M. (2017). Pre-Service teacher self-efficacy for teaching students with disabilities: What knowledge matters? *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 128–139.

Brown, E. C., Freedle, A., Hurless, N. L., Miller, R. D., Martin, C., & Paul, Z. A. (2022). Preparing teacher candidates for trauma-informed practices. *Urban Education*, *57*(4), 662–685. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920974084

Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L., III, & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Harvard University Press.

Burgin, E., & Ray, D. C. (2022). Child-centered play therapy and childhood depression: An effectiveness study. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *31*(sup1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-02198-6

Brunelle, K., Abdulle, S., & Gorey, K. M. (2020). Anxiety and depression among socioeconomically vulnerable students with learning disabilities: Exploratory meta-analysis. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *37*(4), 359–367. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-019-00631-w

Caemmerer, J. M., & Hajovsky, D. B. (2022). Reciprocal relations between children's social and academic skills throughout elementary school. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, *40*(6), 761–776. https://doi.org/10.1177/07342829221097186

Callaway, R. F. (2017). A correlational study of teacher efficacy and culturally responsive teaching techniques in a southeastern urban school district. *Journal of Organizational and Educational Leadership*, *2*(2). https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol2/iss2/3

Camacho-Morles, J., Slemp, G. R., Pekrun, R., Loderer, K., Hou, H., & Oades, L. G. (2021).

Activity achievement emotions and academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, *33*(3), 1051–1095. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09585-3

Cansiz, M., & Cansiz, N. (2019). How do sources of self-efficacy predict pre-service teachers' beliefs related to constructivist and traditional approaches to teaching and learning? *SAGE Open*, *9*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019885125

Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *19*(1), 5–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100618772271

Clark, S. K., & Andreasen, L. (2021). Exploring elementary teacher self-efficacy and teacher beliefs: are we preparing teachers to teach culturally diverse students? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *49*(1), 128–142. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2020.1777528

Cooper, R., Warren, L., Hogan-Chapman, A., & Mills, L. (2020). Pre-service teachers and their self-efficacy toward online teaching. *SRATE Journal*, *29*(2).

Correia, A. P. (2020). Healing the digital divide during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, *21*(1), 13–21.

Cosenza, M., Badiali, B., Burns, R. W., Coler, C., Goree, K., Polly, D., Stoicovy, D., & Zenkov, K. (2023). What it means to be a professional development school: The nine essentials. *PDS Partners: Bridging Research and Practice*, *18*(2), 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1108/PDSP-06-2023-0016

Crandall, A., Miller, J. R., Cheung, A., Novilla, L. K., Glade, R., Novilla, M. L. B., Magnusson, B. M., Leavitt, B. L., Barnes, M. D., & Hanson, C. L. (2019). ACEs and counter-ACEs: How positive and negative childhood experiences influence adult health. *Child Abuse &*

Neglect: The International Journal, *96*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104089

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Dagen, A. S., & Bean, R. M. (2020). *Best practices of literacy leaders: Keys to school improvement* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer.

De los Santos, G. E., & Rosser, W. (2021). COVID-19 shines a spotlight on the digital divide. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *53*(1), 22–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2021.1850117

Denton, C. A., Montroy, J. J., Zucker, T. A., & Cannon, G. (2021). Designing an intervention in reading and self-regulation for students with significant reading difficulties, including dyslexia. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *44*(3), 170–182. https://doi.org/10.1177/0731948719899479

Dewitz, P., & Graves, M. F. (2021). The science of reading: Four forces that modified, distorted, or ignored the research finding on reading comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *56*(1), S131–S144. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.389

Donahue-Keegan, D., Villegas-Reimers, E., & Cressey, J. M. (2019). Integrating social and emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education preparation programs. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *46*(4), 150–168. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26841580

Duke, N. K., Ward, A. E., & Pearson, P. D. (2021). The science of reading comprehension instruction. *Reading Teacher*, *74*(6), 663–672. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1993

Dunwoodie, K., Macaulay, L., & Newman, A. (2023). Qualitative interviewing in the field of work and organizational psychology: Benefits, challenges, and guidelines for researchers and reviewers. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *72*(2), 863–889. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12414

Duong, M. T., Bruns, E. J., Lee, K., Cox, S., Coifman, J., Mayworm, A., & Lyon, A. R. (2021). Rates of mental health service utilization by children and adolescents in schools and other common service settings: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *48*(3), 420–439. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-020-01080-9

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, *82*(1), 405–432. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564

Ebersole, M., Kanahele-Mossman, H., & Kawakami, A. (2016). Culturally responsive teaching: Examining teachers' understandings and perspectives. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *4*(2), 97–104. http://dx.doi.org/10.11114/jets.v4i2.1136

Eccles (Parsons), J. S., Adler, T. F., Futterman, R., Goff, S. B., Kaczala, C. M., Meece, J. L., & Midgley, C. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motives* (pp. 75–146). W. H. Freeman.

Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2023). Expectancy-value theory to situated expectancy-value theory: Reflections on the legacy of 40+ years of working together. *Motivation Science*, *9*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000275

Effrem, K., & Robbins, J. (2019). Social and emotional learning: K-12 education as new age

nanny state. White Paper No. 192. In *Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research*. Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research.

Egalite, A., Fusarelli, L., & Fusarelli, B. (2017). Will decentralization affect educational inequity? The Every Student Succeeds Act. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *53*(5), 757–781. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17735869

El Moussaoui, S. (2017). The Every Student Succeeds Act and its impact on vulnerable children. *Journal of Law & Education*, *46*(3), 407–413.

Erickson, J. D. (2019). Primary students' emic views of reading intervention: A qualitative case study of motivation. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, *68*(1), 86–107. https://doi.org/10.1177/2381336919870282

Firestone, A. R., & Cruz, R. A. (2022). "It's not easy, but it needs to be done": Educators' perceptions of preparedness to teach students with internalizing mental health needs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 1. https://doi.org/10.1177/00224871221121278

Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2014.) *The history of self-determination theory in psychology and management*, in Marylène Gagné (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Work Engagement, Motivation, and Self-Determination Theory*, Oxford Library of Psychology.

Gay, G. (2015). The what, why, and how of culturally responsive teaching: International mandates, challenges, and opportunities. *Multicultural Education Review*, *7*(3), 123–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2015.1072079

Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *76*, 569e582.

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, *204*(6), 291–

295. https://doi.org/10.1038/bdj.2008.192

González-Betancor, S. M., López-Puig, A. J., & Cardenal, M. E. (2021). Digital inequality at

home. The school as compensatory agent. *Computers & Education*, *168*.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104195

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Mitchell, M. (2013). *Sampling in qualitative research*. (Vols. 1-0).

SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374680

Handsman, E. (2021). From virtue to grit: Changes in character education narratives in the U.S.

from 1985 to 2016. *Qualitative Sociology*, *44*(2), 271–291.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-021-09475-2

Henry, E. (2020). A systematic multisensory phonics intervention for older struggling readers:

Action research study. *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*, *22*(1).

Hirsch, S. E., Griffith, C. A., Chow, J. C., Walker, A., & Walters, S. M. (2022). Professional

learning and development for special educators serving students with emotional and

behavioral disorders in self-contained settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, *48*(1), 62–76.

https://doi.org/10.1177/01987429221110838

Homan, P., Valentino, L., & Weed, E. (2017). Being and becoming poor: How cultural schemas

shape beliefs about poverty. *Social Forces*, *95*(3), 1023–1048.

https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sox007

Honsinger, C., & Brown, M. H. (2019). Preparing trauma-sensitive teachers: Strategies for

teacher educators. *Teacher Educators' Journal*, *12*, 129–152.

Hudson, A. K., Moore, K. A., Han, B., Wee Koh, P., Binks-Cantrell, E., & Malatesha Joshi, R.

(2021). Elementary teachers' knowledge of foundational literacy skills: A critical piece of

the puzzle in the science of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *56*(1), S287–S315.

https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.408

Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology.*
Northwestern University Press.

International Literacy Association. (2018). Standards for the preparation of literacy professionals
2017. Newark.

Ippolito, J., Bean, R. M., Kern, D., & Dagen, A. S. (2019). Specialists, coaches, coordinators, oh
my!: Looking back and looking forward on the roles and responsibilities of specialized
literacy professionals. *Massachusetts Reading Association Primer, 47*(2), 19-28.

Johnson, T. M., King-Sears, M. E., & Miller, A. D. (2022). High school co-teaching partners'
self-efficacy, personal compatibility, and active involvement in instruction. *Learning
Disability Quarterly*, *45*(2), 96–107. https://doi.org/10.1177/0731948720919811

Jordan, R. L. P., Garwood, J., & Trathen, W. (2019). Assessing general education and special
education majors' self-efficacy for teaching reading. *Learning Disabilities Research &
Practice (Wiley-Blackwell)*, *34*(4), 185–193. https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12207

Karagozoglu, A. A., & Ozan, M. B. (2022). The relationship between empowering leadership,
self-efficacy and organizational resilience. *International Online Journal of Educational
Sciences*, *14*(5), 1235–1254. https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2022.05.008

Katz, J., Knight, V., Mercer, S. H., & Skinner, S. Y. (2020). Effects of a universal school-based
mental health program on the self-concept, coping skills, and perceptions of social
support of students with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Autism & Developmental
Disorders*, *50*(11), 4069–4084. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04472-w

Kavgaci, H. (2022). The relationship between psychological resilience, teachers' self-efficacy
and attitudes towards teaching profession: A path analysis. *International Journal of*

Progressive Education, *18*(3), 278–296. https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2022.439.18

Kelly, L. B., Wakefield, W., Caires-Hurley, J., Kganetso, L. W., Moses, L., & Baca, E. (2021). What is culturally informed literacy instruction? A review of research in P-5 contexts. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *53*(1), 75–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X20986602

Kern, D., & Bean, R. M. (2018). ILA 2017 standards: Key notions, challenges, and opportunities for middle and high school classroom teachers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *62*(1), 89-94. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.875

Kim, S., Crooks, C. V., Bax, K., & Shokoohi, M. (2021). Impact of trauma-informed training and mindfulness-based social and emotional learning program on teacher attitudes and burnout: A mixed-methods study. *School Mental Health*, *13*(1), 55–68. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-020-09406-6

Kuronja, M., Čagran, B., & Krajnc, M. S. (2019). Teachers' sense of efficacy in their work with pupils with learning, emotional and behavioral difficulties. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, *24*(1), 36–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2018.1530499

Langeberg, M. E. (2023). Bibliotherapy: A systematic research review with social and emotional learning applications. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, *51*(4), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.33600/IRCJ.51.4.2023.32

Lee, D. A. (2018). Closing the gap and exploring the intersections between internationalization and multiculturalism. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, *2018*(160), 63–73. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20311

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Little, S., & Maunder, R. E. (2021). Why we should train teachers on the impact of childhood

trauma on classroom behaviour. *Educational & Child Psychology*, *38*(1), 54–61.

Ma, L., Mazidi, M., Li, K., Li, Y., Chen, S., Kirwan, R., Zhou, H., Yan, N., Rahman, A., Wang, W., & Wang, Y. (2021). Prevalence of mental health problems among children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 293*, 78–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.06.021

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2015). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Marsicek, T. B. (2022). Literacy experts as classroom teachers. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, *34*(4), 369–394. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/mwer/vol34/iss4/3

Martin, A., Martin, S., Homayoonfar, S., Albertson, J., & Eppler-Wolff, N. (2022). Teachers' acceptance of a psychodynamically based schoolwide mental health consultation program. *Contemporary School Psychology*, *26*(4), 469–480. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-021-00362-9

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*, 370-396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

Massey, S. L. (2018). Leadership in reading. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, *46*(2), 49–54.

McClain, M. P. (2021). Teacher candidates' perceptions of preparedness of teaching students who experience trauma. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, *10*(1), 5–23.

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002-1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

McTighe, J., & Willis, J. (2019). *Upgrade your teaching: Understanding by design meets*

neuroscience. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McVey, K. P., & Trinidad, J. (2019). Nuance in the noise: The complex reality of teacher

    shortages. In *Bellwether Education Partners*. Bellwether Education Partners.

Monroy-Fraustro, Maldonado-Castellanos, I., Aboites-Molina, M., Rodríguez, S., Sueiras, P.,

    Altamirano-Bustamante, N. F., de Hoyos-Bermea, A., & Altamirano-Bustamante, M. M.

    (2021). Bibliotherapy as a non-pharmaceutical intervention to enhance mental health in

    response to the COVID-19 pandemic: A mixed-methods systematic review and bioethical

    meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *9*, 629872.

    https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.629872

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mullins, C. A., & Panlilio, C. C. (2021). Exploring the mediating effect of academic engagement

    on math and reading achievement for students who have experienced maltreatment. *Child*

    Abuse & Neglect, 117, 1. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105048

Muniz, J. (2020). *Culturally responsive teaching: A reflection guide.* New America.

Mvududu, N. (2009). Culturally responsive teaching: The Bible tells me so. *International*

    Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal, *5*(1).

    https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/icctej/vol5/iss1/5/

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Condition of education. U.S. Department of

    Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from

    https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/

Neumann, M. M., & Tillott, S. (2022). Why should teachers cultivate resilience through

    mindfulness? *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, *32*(1), 3–14.

    https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2021.23

Nilsson, N. L. (2020). Examining literacy specialist candidates' self-efficacy beliefs in leadership competencies before and after internships in schools. *Reading Horizons*, *59*(1), 70–92. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol59/iss1/5

Oldfield, J., & Ainsworth, S. (2022). Decentring the "resilient teacher": exploring interactions between individuals and their social ecologies. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *52*(4), 409–430. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2021.2011139

Olson Stewart, K., Rotheram-Fuller, E., & Liou, D. D. (2021). Beginning teacher support model: Elementary teachers' resilience and retention in Arizona. *International Journal of Modern Education Studies*, *5*(1), 49–74. https://doi.org/10.51383/ijonmes.2021.75

O'Neal, C. R., Myering, K. Babaturk, L., Gosnell, N., & Weinberg, H. (2022). The moderating role of emotional engagement on the relation of anger regulation with later achievement in elementary school. *School Psychology International*, *44*(1), 23-47. https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343221116297

Opiola, K. K., Alston, D. M., & Copeland-Kamp, B. L. (2020). The effectiveness of training and supervising urban elementary school teachers in child–teacher relationship training: A trauma-informed approach. *Professional School Counseling*, *23*(1_part_2), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19899181

Ortmann, L. L., Brodeur, K., & Massey, S. L. (2020). The learner profiles of novice literacy coaches. *Reading Horizons*, *59*(2), 59–83. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol59/iss2/5

Özokcu, O. (2017). Investigating the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and efficacy for inclusion. *Online Submission*, *2*(6), 234–252. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1133784

Paige, D. D., Young, C., Rasinski, T. V., Rupley, W. H., Nichols, W. D., & Valerio, M. (2021). Teaching reading is more than a science: It's also an art. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *56*(1), S339–S350. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.388

Pannebakker, F. D., van Genugten, L., Diekstra, R. F. W., Gravesteijn, C., Fekkes, M., Kuiper, R., & Kocken, P. L. (2019). A social gradient in the effects of the Skills for Life program on self-efficacy and mental wellbeing of adolescent students. *Journal of School Health*, *89*(7), 587–595. https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12779

Parsons, A. W. (2018). Becoming a literacy specialist: Developing identities. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *57*(4), 387–407. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2018.1493554

Pondiscio, R. (2023). Getting reading right: At long last, schools nationwide are changing how they teach kids to read. All it will take is for a generation of teachers to forget everything they believe about literacy. *Commentary, 156*(4), 32–37.

Prezyna, D. M., Garrison, M. J., Lockte, H. A., & Gold, C. P. (2017). Principal leadership and reading specialist role understanding in the era of test-based accountability policies. *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, *12*(2), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.22230/ijepl.2017v12n2a686

Reza, F. (2020). COVID-19 and disparities in education: Collective responsibility can address inequities. *Knowledge Cultures*, *8*(3), 68–75. https://doi.org/10.22381/KC83202010

Riley, B. (2020). Drawing on reading science without starting a war. *Educational Leadership*, *77*(5), 16–22.

Rishel, C. W., Tabone, J. K., Hartnett, H. P., & Szafran, K. F. (2019). Trauma-informed elementary schools: Evaluation of school-based early intervention for young children. *Children & Schools*, *41*(4), 239–248. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdz017

Robertson, H., Goodall, K., & Kay, D. (2021). Teachers' attitudes toward trauma-informed

practice: Associations with attachment and adverse childhood experiences

(ACEs). *Psychology of Education Review*, *45*(2), 62–74.

https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsper.2021.45.2.62

Rodger, S., Bird, R., Hibbert, K., Johnson, A. M., Specht, J., & Wathen, C. N. (2020). Initial

teacher education and trauma and violence informed care in the classroom: Preliminary

results from an online teacher education course. *Psychology in the Schools*, *57*(12),

1798–1814. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22373

Rossen, E. (2020). *Supporting and educating traumatized students: A guide for school-based

professionals* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Ruppar, A. L., Knight, V. F., McQueston, J. A., & Jeglum, S. R. (2020). Involvement and

progress in the general curriculum: A grounded theory of the process. *Remedial and

Special Education*, *41*(3), 152–164. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932518806045

Sanchez, A. L., Cornacchio, D., Poznanski, B., Golik, A. M., Chou, T., & Corner, J. S. (2018).

The effectiveness of school based mental health services for elementary-aged children: A

meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*,

57(3), 153–165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.11.022

Sawyer, B. E., O'Connell, A., Bhaktha, N., Justice, L. M., Santoro, J. R., & Rhoad Drogalis, A.

(2022). Does teachers' self-efficacy vary for different children? A study of early

childhood special educators. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *42*(1), 50–63.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121420906528

Schunk, D. H. (2020). *Learning theories: An educational perspective* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Schwartz, S. (2019). Popular reading materials stray from cognitive science. *Education

Week, *39*(15), 19–22.

Schwartzman, R. (2020). Performing pandemic pedagogy. *Communication Education*, *69*(4), 502–517. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2020.1804602

Sevinç, G. (2019). Healing mental health through reading: Bibliotherapy. *Current Approaches in Psychiatry / Psikiyatride Guncel Yaklasimlar*, *11*(4), 483–495. https://doi.org/10.18863/pgy.474083

Shanahan, T. (2005). The national reading panel report. Practical advice for teachers. Learning Point Associates.

Shanahan, T. (2020). What constitutes a science of reading instruction? *Reading Research Quarterly*, *55*, S235–S247. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.349

Shaukat, S., Vishnumolakala, V. R., & Al Bustami, G. (2019). The impact of teachers' characteristics on their self-efficacy and job satisfaction: A perspective from teachers engaging students with disabilities. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, *19*(1), 68–76. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12425

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*(2), 63–75. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Smith, J. A., & Quick, M. (2023). Changing teacher perceptions and actions through trauma-responsive professional development. *Journal of Organizational and Educational Leadership, 8*(3), 1-26. https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol8/iss3/2

Smith, S. (2020). *Windows into the history & philosophy of education*. Kendall Hunt.

Solari, E. J., Terry, N. P., Gaab, N., Hogan, T. P., Nelson, N. J., Pentimonti, J. M., Petscher, Y., & Sayko, S. (2020). Translational science: A road map for the science of reading.

Reading Research Quarterly, *55*, S347–S360. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.357

Sonsteng-Person, M., & Loomis, A. M. (2021). The role of trauma-informed training in helping Los Angeles teachers manage the effects of student exposure to violence and trauma. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, *14*(2), 189–199. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-021-00340-6

Statti, A., & Torres, K. (2020). The forgotten minority: Exploring deficiencies in access to education and technology in rural America. *Peabody Journal of Education (0161956X)*, *95*(2), 173–182. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2020.1745608

Stephens, D. W. (2020). Trauma-informed pedagogy for the religious and theological higher education classroom. *Religions, 11*(9), 449. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/rel11090449

Stipp, B., & Kilpatrick, L. (2021). Trust-based relational intervention as a trauma-informed teaching approach. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, *13*(1), 67–82.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). *Recognizing and treating child traumatic stress*. https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/recognizing-and-treating-child-traumatic-stress

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, & Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative (2012). SAMHSA's working definition of trauma and guidance for trauma-informed approach. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Swindlehurst, K. A., & Berry, A. B. (2021). Developing pre-service teachers' skills in post-secondary transition through applied practice. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *40*(1),

24–32.

Taylor, S., & Wendt, J. (2023). The relationship between multicultural efficacy and culturally

    responsive classroom management self-efficacy. *Journal for Multicultural Education*,

    17(1), 31–42. https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-01-2022-0006

ten Hagen, I., Lauermann, F., Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2022). Can I teach this student?: A

    multilevel analysis of the links between teachers' perceived effectiveness, interest-

    supportive teaching, and student interest in math and reading. *Contemporary Educational*

    Psychology, *69*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2022.102059

Thierry, K. L., Vincent, R. L., & Norris, K. (2022). Teacher-level predictors of the fidelity of

    implementation of a social and emotional learning curriculum. *Early Education and*

    Development, *33*(1), 92–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2020.1849896

Thomas, D., & Dyches, J. (2019). The hidden curriculum of reading intervention: A critical

    content analysis of Fountas & Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Intervention. *Journal of*

    Curriculum Studies, *51*(5), 601–618. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1616116

Thomas, C. L., Tancock, S. M., Zygmunt, E. M., & Sutter, N. (2020). Effects of a community-

    engaged teacher preparation program on the culturally relevant teaching self-efficacy of

    preservice teachers. *Journal of Negro Education*, *89*(2), 122–135.

Todd, C., Smothers, M., & Colson, T. (2022). Implementing SEL in the classroom: A

    practitioner perspective. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and*

    Ideas, *95*(1), 18–25.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: capturing an elusive

    construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *17*, 783e805.

Tyner, A. (2021). How to sell SEL: Parents and the politics of social and emotional learning.

Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Ulenski, A., Gill, M. G., & Kelley, M. J. (2019). Developing and validating the elementary literacy coach self-efficacy survey. *Teacher Educator*, *54*(3), 225–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2019.1590487

US Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach. https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing.* Left Coast Press.

Van Mieghem, A., Struyf, E., & Verschueren, K. (2022). The relevance of sources of support for teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards students with special educational needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *37*(1), 28–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2020.1829866

Venet, A. S. (2019). Role-clarity and boundaries for trauma-informed teachers. *Educational Considerations*, *44*(2). https://doi.org/10.4148/0146-9282.2175

Vicente de Vera García, M. I., & Gabari Gambarte, M. I. (2019). Relationships between the dimensions of resilience and burnout in primary school teachers. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, *12*(2), 189–196. https://www.iejee.com/index.php/IEJEE/article/view/914

Wachira, P., & Mburu, J. (2019). Culturally responsive mathematics teaching and constructivism: Preparing teachers for diverse classrooms. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, *14*(1). https://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2016-0023

Weingarten, R. (2023). Defending public education: Reclaiming our schools' promise and

purpose. *American Educator*, *47*(2), 3–9.

Weist, M. D., Eber, L., Horner, R., Splett, J., Putnam, S., Perales, K., Fairchild, A., & Hoover, S. (2018). Improving multitiered systems of support for students with "internalizing" emotional/behavioral problems. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *20*(3), 172–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717753832

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2020). 35 years of research on students' subjective task values and motivation: A look back and a look forward. In A. J. Elliot (Ed.), *Advances in motivation science.* (Vol. 7, pp. 161–198). Elsevier Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.adms.2019.05.002

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., & Möller, J. (2020). How dimensional comparisons help to understand linkages between expectancies, values, performance, and choice. *Educational Psychology Review*, *32*(3), 657–680. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09524-2

Williams, E. P., Tingle, E., Morhun, J., Vos, S., Murray, K., Gereluk, D., & Russell-Mayhew, S. (2022). "Teacher burnout is one of my greatest fears": Interrupting a narrative on fire. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *45*(2), 428–453. https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.v45i2.4919

World Health Organization. (2008). *The global burden of disease: 2004 update*. World Health Organization.

Yang, W., Datu, J. A. D., Lin, X., Lau, M. M., & Li, H. (2019). Can early childhood curriculum enhance social and emotional competence in low-income children? A meta-analysis of the educational effects. *Early Education & Development*, *30*(1), 36–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2018.1539557

Yakut, A. D. (2021). Students with specific learning disabilities in inclusive settings: A study of

teachers' self-efficacy. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice (Wiley-Blackwell)*, *36*(2), 136–144. https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12241

Yuan, H. (2018). Preparing teachers for diversity: A literature review and implications from community-based teacher education. *Higher Education Studies*, *8*(1), 9–17. https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v8n1p9

Zimmerman, B. J., & Bandura, A. (1994). Impact of self-regulatory influences on writing course attainment. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*(4), 845–862. https://doi.org/10.2307/1163397

Zolkoski, S. M., Aguilera, S. E., West, E. M., Miller, G. J., Holm, J. M., Sass, S. M., & Stocks, E. L. (2020). Teacher perceptions of skills, knowledge, and resources needed to promote social and emotional learning in rural classrooms. *Rural Educator*, *41*(3), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v41i3.1098

Appendix A

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 8, 2024

Virginia Shank
Lucinda Spaulding

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-910 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SELF-EFFICACY OF ELEMENTARY READING SPECIALISTS TO ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Dear Virginia Shank, Lucinda Spaulding,

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

Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of the Self-Efficacy of Elementary Reading Specialists to Address the Mental Health Needs of Students

Principal Investigator: Virginia Shank, 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 a certified literacy specialist serving in at least your second year in the role in an American public elementary school. 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 experiences and self-efficacy of reading specialists who teach struggling readers with mental health needs. Educators with high self-efficacy have an internal belief that they can make a positive difference in their students' lives.

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:

1.   Complete a Microsoft form to share both demographic information and your responses to the Teachers Sense of Self-Efficacy survey which will take no more than 30 minutes.

2.   Participate in a virtual, video-and audio-recorded interview that will take 45 minutes to 1 hour.

3.   Review the transcript of your recorded interview and developed themes to confirm accuracy and your agreement which will take 15 to 30 minutes.

4.   Participate in a virtual, video-and audio-recorded focus group that will take no more than 1 hour.

Total time for your participation in this study will be no more than 3 hours.

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 include additional research on the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy for reaching students with mental health needs. Another benefit of this study is that it will fill a gap in the educational literature by capturing the lived experiences of reading specialists as they use strategies to benefit struggling readers with mental health needs.

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.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, or

intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

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.
·   Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
·   Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and 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 and any hard copies will be stored in a locked cabinet. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
·   Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years. 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 be compensated for participating in this study. After the focus group participants will receive a $30 Amazon gift card.

Is study participation voluntary?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is Virginia Shank. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▮▮▮▮▮ and ▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, at ▮▮▮▮▮.

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 typing your name, 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.

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. Please complete this brief survey to share your personal and professional demographic data.

Hi, Virginia. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

* Required

1. Please list your first and last name. *

   Enter your answer

2. What is your gender? *

   ○ Female

   ○ Male

   ○ Prefer not to answer

3. What is your race/ethnicity? *

   ○ African American

   ○ American Indian

   ○ Asian

   ○ Caucasian

   ○ Hispanic

   ○ Multiracial

   ○ Other

   ○ Prefer not to answer

4. What is your age? *   📖

- ○ 25-34
- ○ 35-44
- ○ 45-54
- ○ 55-65
- ○ 66+
- ○ Prefer not to answer

5. When would you prefer to conduct your individual interview? *   📖

- ○ Late afternoon
- ○ Weekday evening
- ○ Saturday
- ○ Sunday

6. How would you describe your current school setting? *   📖

- ○ Rural
- ○ Suburban
- ○ Urban

7. How many years were you a classroom teacher before becoming a reading/literacy specialist? *
📖

Enter your answer

8. Do you have previous experience as a reading/literacy specialist in a middle or high school? *

⬜ Yes

⬜ No

9. What is your preferred method of contact? *

⬜ Email

⬜ Phone call

⬜ Text message

10. Which format would you prefer for your individual interview? *

⬜ In person

⬜ Virtual through Microsoft Teams

Submit

Appendix D

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) Access Information

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) measures teachers' evaluations of how likely they are to be successful in teaching. TSES conceptualizes teaching as a complex activity and teacher efficacy as a multi-faceted construct representing at least three distinct factors: Efficacy for Classroom Management, Efficacy to promote Student Engagement, and Efficacy in using Instructional Strategies. It is designed for and has been used by researchers and school leaders to measure teacher self-efficacy at a particular point in time, as well as before and after participating in professional development programs. There is a short- and long-form version of the scale.

🧠 Content

Category: Schooling
Sub-Category: Teaching
Domains: Teacher Self-Efficacy
Grades:
Kindergarten, 1st Grade, 2nd Grade, 3rd Grade, 4th Grade, 5th Grade, 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade
Languages: English, Spanish, Chinese
Other Language/s: Arabic, French, Greek, Portuguese, Turkish
Respondent: Teacher

📋 Administration Information

Length: Long form: 24 questions, short form: 12 questions
Administration: Paper

🔑 Access and Use

Price: Free
Contact: Megan Tschannen-Moran, mxtsch@wm.edu
Link: https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/2/5604/files/2018/04/TSES-scoring-...
Open Access: Yes
Use in Research

Jamil, F., Downer, J., & Pianta, R. (2012). Association of pre-service teachers' performance, personality, and beliefs with teacher self-efficacy at program completion. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 39(4)*, 119-138. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23479655

Moulding, L., Stewart, P., & Dunmeyer, M. (2014). Pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy: Relationship to academic ability, student teaching placement characteristics, and mentor support. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 41*, 60-66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.03.007

Scherer, R., Jansen, M., Nilsen, T., Areepattamannil, S., & Marsh, H. W. (2016). The quest for comparability: Studying the invariance of the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy (TSES) Measure across Countries. *PLOS One, 11(3)*, 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0150829

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) Long form

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help u gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by choosing a number from this scale.

How much can you do?

Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	

21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	

Efficacy in Student Engagement: Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 22
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies: Items 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24
Efficacy in Classroom Management: Items 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21
Directions for Scoring the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

Developers: Megan Tschannen-Moran, College of William and Mary
Anita Woolfolk Hoy, the Ohio State University.

Construct Validity
For information on the construct validity of the Teachers' Sense of Teacher efficacy Scale, see:

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing and elusive construct. Teaching and Teacher Education, 17, 783-805.

Factor Analysis
It is important to conduct a factor analysis to determine how your participants respond to the questions. We have consistently found three moderately correlated factors: Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management, but at times the makeup of the scales varies slightly. With preservice teachers, we recommend that the full 24-item scale (or 12-item short form) be used, because the factor structure often is less distinct for these respondents.

Subscale Scores
To determine the Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management subscale scores, we compute unweighted means of the items that load on each factor. Generally, these groupings are:

Long Form
Efficacy in Student Engagement: Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 22

Efficacy in Instructional Strategies: Items 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24

Efficacy in Classroom Management: Items 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21

Appendix E

Individual Interview Protocol

I will then define self-efficacy as "an internal belief that they, as educators, can successfully prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact students' lives" (Johnson et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019).
I also will inform participants that emotional, psychological, and mental health needs are terms used interchangeably to describe students who lack emotional regulation on a consistent enough basis to affect their learning.

1. Tell me about why you became a teacher? (Grand tour question)

2. Please describe your path toward becoming a reading specialist. (Bean & Kern, 2018)

3. Tell me about your school and your current instructional duties. (Prezyna et al., 2017)

4. Tell me about the struggling readers that you have found most challenging because of their emotional or psychological issues. RQ (Kim et al., 2021)

5. Describe a time when a student's emotional issues affected your reading instructional time and how you addressed it. RQ

6. Describe what it looks like and how you feel when you have high teacher self-efficacy (confidence in your ability to engage, teach, and positively impact your students). SQ2

7. Describe what it looks like and how you feel when you have low teacher self-efficacy. SQ1 (lack of confidence in your ability to engage, teach, and positively impact your students)

8. How would you describe your personal self-efficacy for addressing the emotional or psychological needs of the struggling readers that you serve? RQ

9. Describe your challenges when working with students with mental health issues in different instructional settings, such as a separate classroom or within the general classroom). SQ1

10. Describe successful practices or strategies you have used when working with students with mental health needs. SQ2

11. What undergraduate pre-service experiences did you have that prepared you to work with struggling readers with mental health needs? SQ2

12. What experiences did you have as a classroom teacher that prepared you to work with struggling readers with mental health needs? SQ2

13. What experiences did you have during your graduate work to be a literacy specialist that prepared you to work with struggling readers with mental health needs? SQ2

14. What professional development or coaching did you receive that led to feelings of high self-efficacy for working with students with emotional or psychological needs? SQ2 (Hirsch et al., 2022)

15. What experiences influenced your answer selections regarding _____(the lowest rated factor for efficacy) on the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Survey? SQ1

16. Tell me about any school-wide programs, classroom curricula, or literature that you have used to promote students' emotional health. RQ (Weist et al., 2018)

17. What does teacher resilience mean to you and how do you build it? SQ2 (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019)

18. Please describe how you collaborate with other school professionals to address students' emotional or psychological needs. (Todd et al., 2022) SQ3

19. Describe a time when you provided coaching, modeling, or support for a general classroom teacher who was managing a struggling reader presenting emotional or psychological issues. Do you feel that it was a success or failure? Please explain. SQ3

20. How do you balance addressing students' mental health needs with meeting their academic needs? SQ 2

21. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with struggling readers that present emotional or psychological issues? RQ

Appendix F

Focus Group Protocol

Remind about confidentiality of group. I will share themes derived from individual interviews and focus group for approval and then participation is complete, and I will email $30 Amazon gift card to you. Please reach out if you want me to use a different email than I have been using for this.

1. What is a literacy specialist's role in addressing the emotional, psychological, or mental health needs of struggling readers? RQ

   (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Firestone & Cruz, 2022; Kuronja et al., 2019)

2. Several of you mentioned (the theme of ___) as an experience that led to feelings of low self-efficacy. Why do you think this is a defeating experience? SQ2

   being ineffective or students not progressing

3. Several of you mentioned (the theme of ____) as an experience that led to feelings of high self-efficacy for managing struggling readers' mental health needs. Why do think this is an encouraging experience? SQ1 **Building Relationships with students**

4. What graduate training for literacy specialists do you wish you had been given to better address the emotional or psychological needs of students? RQ (Swindlehurst & Berry, 2021)

5. What professional development training do you think would benefit you in your current role to meet the mental health needs of your students? RQ

6. Is there a relationship between students' mental health issues and teacher burnout or teachers leaving the classroom? Why or why not? RQ (Asirit et al., 2022).

7. What else would you like to add about your experiences as reading specialists who serve elementary struggling readers with emotional, psychological, or mental health needs? RQ

8. Do you have any questions for me related to this study or how this data is being used?

Appendix G

TSES Results Summary

Efficacy in Student Engagement											
Participant	Age	Setting	1	2	4	6	9	12	14	22	Avg
Barbara	55-65	Rural	8	8	8	8	8	6	8	8	7.75
Audrey	35-44	Rural	6	5	6	7	6	5	7	6	6.00
Laura	35-44	Suburban	6	5	6	7	6	4	7	6	5.88
Rachel	45-54	Urban	8	8	7	6	7	6	6	2	6.25
Jamie	45-54	Suburban	9	5	6	8	7	8	7	7	7.13
Maggie	45-54	Suburban	7	7	7	9	9	7	8	8	7.75
Stacy	55-65	Rural	8	5	6	8	6	5	8	5	6.38
Monica	25-34	Suburban	8	7	8	9	8	9	8	9	8.25
Candace	35-44	Urban	6	7	5	7	5	7	5	4	5.75
Sheri	45-54	Urban	6	5	8	8	6	5	5	7	6.25
Hope	25-34	Rural	7	5	6	6	6	6	8	8	6.50
Kristi	25-34	Suburban	7	8	7	6	7	7	8	6	7.00
		Average/?	7.17	6.25	6.67	7.42	6.75	6.25	7.08	6.33	

Efficacy in Instructional Strategies											
Participant	Age	Setting	7	10	11	17	18	20	23	24	Avg
Barbara	55-65	Rural	8	7	9	8	7	7	8	8	7.75
Audrey	35-44	Rural	5	6	5	7	4	7	5	5	5.50
Laura	35-44	Suburban	5	6	5	7	4	6	5	5	5.38
Rachel	45-54	Urban	7	7	7	6	7	8	8	5	6.88
Jamie	45-54	Suburban	9	9	8	7	5	7	7	7	7.38
Maggie	45-54	Suburban	6	8	8	9	8	7	8	8	7.75
Stacy	55-65	Rural	8	7	6	9	7	6	6	7	7.00
Monica	25-34	Suburban	8	7	8	9	9	8	9	8	8.25
Candace	35-44	Urban	6	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	6.25
Sheri	45-54	Urban	6	8	7	8	6	7	7	7	7.00
Hope	25-34	Rural	8	7	7	8	7	8	7	7	7.38
Kristi	25-34	Suburban	7	8	8	7	8	9	6	6	7.38
		Average/?	6.92	7.33	7.08	7.67	6.50	7.17	6.75	6.50	

187

Efficacy in Classroom Management											
Participant	Age	Setting	3	5	8	13	15	16	19	21	Avg
Barbara	55-65	Rural	7	9	9	9	9	9	7	7	8.25
Audrey	35-44	Rural	7	8	8	7	6	7	6	5	6.75
Laura	35-44	Suburban	7	8	8	7	6	7	6	5	6.75
Rachel	45-54	Urban	7	7	8	8	8	7	7	7	7.38
Jamie	45-54	Suburban	8	9	9	7	6	9	7	5	7.50
Maggie	45-54	Suburban	7	8	8	9	8	8	7	6	7.63
Stacy	55-65	Rural	7	9	8	7	7	9	8	4	7.38
Monica	25-34	Suburban	8	8	9	9	8	9	8	8	8.38
Candace	35-44	Urban	6	8	7	5	5	5	5	5	5.75
Sheri	45-54	Urban	7	9	9	8	7	9	6	8	7.88
Hope	25-34	Rural	7	9	9	7	6	7	6	7	7.25
Kristi	25-34	Suburban	8	9	9	7	7	8	6	7	7.63
		Average/?	7.17	8.42	8.42	7.50	6.92	7.83	6.58	6.17	

Participant	Age	Setting	SE	IS	CM
Barbara	55-65	Rural	7.75	7.75	8.25
Audrey	35-44	Rural	6.00	5.50	6.75
Laura	35-44	Suburban	5.88	5.38	6.75
Rachel	45-54	Urban	6.25	6.88	7.38
Jamie	45-54	Suburban	7.13	7.38	7.50
Maggie	45-54	Suburban	7.75	7.75	7.63
Stacy	55-65	Rural	6.38	7.00	7.38
Monica	25-34	Suburban	8.25	8.25	8.38
Candace	35-44	Urban	5.75	6.25	5.75
Sheri	45-54	Urban	6.25	7.00	7.88
Hope	25-34	Rural	6.50	7.38	7.25
Kristi	25-34	Suburban	7.00	7.38	7.63

SE = Efficacy in Student Engagement
IS = Efficacy in Instructional Strategies
CM = Efficacy in Classroom Management

Appendix H

Sample Individual Interview Transcript

Interview-20240228_190559-Meeting Recording

February 28, 2024, 12:06AM

33m 10s

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   0:17

Thanks again for your time.

I do just wanna give you kind of my definition of self-efficacy that I got from the literature. An internal belief that as educators we can successfully prepare students academically, engage them in learning, and positively impact their lives.

So that's kind of the overall definition; it's a little bit more than confidence.

I know you've been in education a long time, you know what

self-efficacy means, but I wanna make sure I'm doing what I should and explaining the terms.

So tell me about why you became a teacher.

Maggie   1:00

Oh well, that is an interesting story because I never wanted to be a teacher.

My mother-in-law, like when we first got married, said she was a teacher for 37 years.

And you should be, you should be, and I thought no, no, no.

But then I had friends who were becoming teachers, and I had my first child.

I was going to school for accounting and realized that will probably take up most of you know, my time as a new mom.

I was like, hmm, teachers have summers off, right?

So I became a teacher and now, you know, then you learn like ohh, OK.

But you know, I, I love to read always from the time I was little and I thought reading specialists will be the perfect thing for me because I knew I didn't want a whole classroom. I, it's just not me. So, it was perfect.

So really my only certification is in reading, so yeah, yeah.

Maggie   2:00

And the first few years were rocky.

I started in high school, umm, so that was, that was tough, but I learned a ton.

And then I went, you know, back down to the elementary level.

And I've just, I love it more and more every year, so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   2:15

That's wonderful.

So you, you were unusual in my participants in that you had middle and high school experience too.

So my second question was going to be what was your path to being your literacy specialist? But you began that way.

So instead, I'm going to ask you tell me a little bit. What do you notice, as I mean I know it's different, but, but what do you notice that's different or the same between the secondary being a reading specialist and the secondary and, and the elementary?

Maggie   2:29

Yeah.

Well, it's interesting because starting out I worked with mostly freshmen and you think, why? Why can they not read?

How are they in 9th grade and not being able to read and then from there I switched transferred to a pre-K to five building and I was like, ohh so this is why. Like there's just so many factors as to how they can get through there without reading so.

Maggie   3:10

They you know, the best thing about working with the little, little ones is they love when you come and get them for a reading group and that changes a little bit as they get older. But my building now is pre-K to 2, so they, they all love me? Ohh.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   3:29

So fun, they're all excited when you come.

Maggie   3:30

They're all. Yeah.

And the ones who don't get to go with reading teachers want to, you know, because they, they just think it's great so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   3:38

You know, I used to have to bring little treats and stuff for the whole class because that some of them would be so sad that they never got to go, you know, so funny.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   3:46

So we're talking a little bit about your school now.

You said K-2, so tell me a little bit about your instructional duties and the dual role that you play.

Maggie   3:55

Yeah.

So the, the title is actually data and curriculum coordinator, but it's more of a support. I say a support position for students, staff, admin and family, so it's everything. But fifty, like in the job description, it says 50% of our time should be spent with kids, so that could be pushing in.

Maggie   4:17

So I kind of just leave it up to the teacher. Uh, I leave it up to the teachers as to what they, you know, how they want me to support them. So, I would say probably a third of them have me take small groups of kids to work on reading.

So it's great because, you know, and that's one thing I, one major thing I miss about not being a reading specialist anymore is not having that time with the kids.

So I have the best of both worlds now so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   4:47

No, that's awesome.

So you do some push in some pull out and do you end up working with all three grade levels?

Maggie   4:51
Yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   4:54
Kindergarten 1st and 2nd.

Maggie   4:56
Yep.
And we're actually pre-K as well.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   4:59
Ohh.

Maggie   5:00
Mm-hmm. Yep.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   5:02
Wow.
Well, tell me about in your experience, struggling readers that maybe you found challenging because of their emotional or psychological issues.

Maggie   5:16
Yeah.
So I would say the toughest is just when they just shut down completely and you don't know why, you know, probably doesn't even have anything to do with what you're asking them to do at that moment.
So it's hard.
It's hard when you have, even though, like I work with small groups of kids, there are other kids sitting there waiting, you know?

So you can't really dig down deep with whatever is going on with this child, which, like I said, is probably not even connected to what they're being asked to do at that moment. So that's the hardest part.

And like as a reading specialist, I feel like we don't receive all of the background information or there's not as much contact with parents, even though we obviously can reach out to families.

But if something's going on in the home, reading teachers aren't the ones that get the call or the memo, you know? So not being in the loop always is tough. So.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   6:21

It is, because sometimes the classroom teacher knows, but we don't necessarily get to interact with them without children present.

Maggie   6:29

Right.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   6:30

So they, even if they think to tell us sometimes there isn't an opportunity.

Maggie   6:33

Yeah, right. Or time.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   6:37

Yes, very true, very true.

Well, tell me about a time when you were in this situation that you just described like a students, emotional issues were affecting your reading instructional time and how you addressed it.

Maggie 6:53

So I I would hold the student back, you know?

Take the rest of them back; maybe keep that one in the hall.

Hey, what's going on?

Just that sort of thing, you know, to try to just try to get to the bottom of it.

And if it didn't work at that moment, I might schedule another time talk with the teacher, maybe find out some additional information, and then pull that child another time.

Maggie 7:18

If it was something I could help with or I could offer to go talk with whoever may be the nurse or you know, something like that.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 7:28

Yeah, we have to do a lot of collaboration, don't we?

Maggie 7:31

That's yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 7:35

So switching gears a little bit to talk about self-efficacy, describe what it looks like, how you feel when you feel like you're having high teacher self-efficacy, you're feeling confident in your ability to engage, teach and positively impact your students.

Maggie 7:54

So you definitely have to celebrate those little, small successes.

You know, like if it might be just a letter sound that they remembered from the day before. Umm, and just keep that.

Keep yourself motivated and let them know how exciting it is when they do those little tiny things.

And then it's going to become something bigger in my role.

I often have heard teachers say like, well, they can't read, they can't read, you know, and, and that mindset is just something we're working hard as a building to change, like we without that expectation, that they are going to be a reader.

Maggie 8:38

It just it's not gonna happen.

So I don't, you know, we're trying to work that out, that our expectation is by the time they leave us in second grade, they will be reading because they all can might take longer, but yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 8:50

No, that that's awesome. Yeah.

Might not all be on the same level at the end, but, but being readers and that's really important for their mindset, I think so.

Maggie 8:57

Right.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 9:02

On the flip side of that, what does it look like and how do you feel when your teacher self-efficacy is low?

Maggie 9:12

Umm, when our assessments are over and you feel like they, like, rocked it and then you get the actual scores when you're like, ohh, you know it's, it's not exactly where you want it to be right away and you have to just kind of take a step back and say we're working on it, like it's not something that's gonna happen overnight.

But if we just keep, keep trudging along, we'll get them where we want.

But again, it like celebrating the little successes.

They're all different.

So we have to be happy.

I was just actually on another webinar and it was umm, it was regarding math but she was talking about they just did their mid-year diagnostic and she showed this visual of like almost like a different chart.

So one went up like that and it said this is progress and one kind of went like this and she's like, this is progress too.

So you know, it's just looking at the whole picture and not just one day or one lesson or one group keeping that forward.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   10:20
That's what's so hard, I think, with the high stakes testing for struggling readers, it's like you said, it can be encouraging and it can be discouraging.
So I love that idea that progress has its peaks and valleys.

Maggie   10:34
Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   10:34
I, I really like that.
I'm gonna borrow that one.

Maggie   10:37
Yeah, I'm sure you can find that visual somewhere.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   10:39
So yeah, absolutely.
I like that one.
So how personally, how would you describe your own self efficacy for addressing emotional or psychological needs of the struggling readers that you serve?

Maggie   10:56
I feel like I have always usually had good relationships with students. That trust where they can open up and, and their cheerleader, you know.
But I also I often, my husband was a Marine, so I'm like, I feel like a little drill instructor sometimes because, you know, like, c'mon you can do this.
Umm, but I, but I see results with that too, you know, and letting them know that I believe in them.

And, and that the expectation is, you will do it, you're not leaving till you do it, you know, and then they see they can, and I'm like, hey, look, how did that feel?
You know, so yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   11:38
That's, that's awesome.
What would you say are some of your challenges when you're working with students that have some of these mental health issues? I know there are different instructional settings, some it might be you're working with them pushing in the general classroom or pull out in a separate classroom.
What do you feel like are some of your challenges?

Maggie   12:01
Umm, this may not have to do with emotional or mental health issues, but attendance is a big one. You know, just when they're not, when they're not there consistently and they don't know the routines, and you know they're behind academically.
That's gotta cause anxiety for them, whether they have additional anxiety issues or not.
So that's a struggle and it's so much of that is out of our hands.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   12:22
Right.
That's very hard to address when they're not there.

Maggie   12:31
Hmm, very hard. Yeah, exactly.
Can you just say that question one more time?

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   12:39
Yeah. I just said describe challenges you've had when working with students with mental health issues in different instructional settings, such as like some challenges you might have when you pull them out, versus pushing in.

Maggie 12:54

Yeah, it's like I said, I, I never was a classroom teacher.

And I know it's just not me, but I love the fact that I get to go into classrooms because my oldest daughter is a teacher and I'm like, how, you know, how did she do that?

Maggie 13:09

Like she gets it from my mother-in-law.

But I mean, classroom teachers amaze me every day because they've got 20 plus of them sitting there.

So I think like as, as that outside person looking in the challenge is, is really like the kids who are just not engaged for whatever reason that might be, you know, hoods up, heads down, that sort of thing, and you don't know why.

Is it because they're tired?

Is it because they're just not, they don't understand it or whatever?

So umm, that's a challenge because if I'm thinking if I wasn't here to kind of interact, or you know, encourage them, the teachers on her own, it's just, and you know it's happening all over so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 13:56

Absolutely.

And I I mean, I was amazed at how many students were hungry.

You know when when I first started working in this, Umm, title one school I was, I was just really surprised at all the needs that they had.

And so I, I get 100% what you're saying.

So it's interesting because you, you took a different route.

So your undergrad experience you said you were preparing to be an accountant, is that right?

Maggie 14:20

This is.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   14:26

So were you kind of a career Switcher?

Maggie   14:26

That is my undergrad, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   14:28

Did you do undergrad at all for elementary, or for reading, or was your reading all on the grad level?

Maggie   14:35

Right, so my, my undergrad is in accounting and then yeah, my master's is in reading. It was actually called reading way back then, not Literacy so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   14:43

So what experiences did you have during your graduate work to be a reading specialist that you feel like prepared you to work with struggling readers that may need something beyond reading, whether it's, you know, mental health or something, or do you feel like it was just focused on reading?

Maggie   15:09

Yeah, I feel like it was just focused on reading and, I mean, I've, I've said I feel like I don't know if I should say this on camera, but like teachers, well, as parents and teachers, we don't have the training or the background, and I even feel like now, like, we're an inclusive district. I don't know if you if Jesse, Jessica told you that or not, but I mean, we are fully inclusive.
So we, we have all the children, you know?
Umm, I don't even feel like our counselors, and it's not like a shot at them, but it just what we see now is just unprecedented. You know?
I'm not sure anybody knows how to really make a difference with some of some of the issues that we see.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   16:05
Yes, I know.

Maggie   16:05
It's really far beyond.
I don't know.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   16:10
I, I appreciate you sharing that.
And I should have said earlier, nothing you say will be attributed exactly to you.
You'll have a pseudonym, and you'll get the chance to read everything I've written and approve it before it goes anywhere else.
I should have said that early on, but that that's really one of the reasons that I'm doing this study is I saw so many great classroom teachers and specialists leave just because they, they didn't know what to do.

Maggie   16:24
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
I mean, it's from, you know, it's from a child leaving the classroom.
And then my daughter, actually, she has an inclusive room and she has a child who will, like literally say he's going to kill the kids, you know?
And I'm like, ohh, and she's 24.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   16:56
Yeah.

Maggie   16:58
So I'm really not sure.
I don't and I can't help her because I'm like I, I don't know.
Ohh you know, so it's really we've never dealt with quite like this before.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   17:07

I know.

No, it's very different and it's very umm serious.

As you said it's things that you can't just say, well, you know, kids are being kids.

It's intense and you, you do you think of like a 24 year old not having a lot of life experience, you know, going into their first year teaching and kind of dealing with with some of these things.

So thank you, I, I appreciate you sharing that.

So when you say your district is really inclusive, does that mean that your special education teachers don't necessarily pull out students?

Is it more everyone's in the general classroom and the specialists are coming in?

Maggie   17:53

Yes, if students have like resource on their IEP, they will get pulled out with the special Ed teacher for whatever amount of time during the week, but most all of their instruction happens in the classroom. So like in our building, we have two inclusive classrooms per grade level out of five, like 2 out of five are inclusive.

Umm, so it's yeah, it's tough, but those students do receive we have a GRAIR block.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   18:20

OK. Awesome.

Maggie 18:30

So that's when our reading support takes place.

So they do also qualify for those services, so they would see a reading teacher as well if they qualify for Tier 3.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   18:43

So you do use a tier system like that.

Maggie 18:46
Yes. Mm-hmm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 18:47
So I noticed on your survey that your overall you rating, you know, sense of efficacy is pretty high. One of your lower areas that you put for yourself is one that I can certainly relate to, and that's kind of handling defiant students. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Maggie 19:04
Yeah, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 19:08
Have you experienced much of that in your role as a reading specialist?

Maggie 19:12
So the most right before I got this position, I was in a 3 to 6 building and so 6th graders can be pretty defiant.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 19:24
Yes they can.

Maggie 19:24
Umm, yeah, and we also had a tiered system there and the qualifications really allowed for large groups going with reading teachers.
So I would have like a Tier 3 intervention with 15 kids in my group.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 19:37
Umm. Ohh wow.

Maggie 19:43

Yeah. Yeah, it was tough.

So yeah, 6th grade boys can be pretty tricky when you're telling them that they need to practice reading, yeah. And I yeah, it just you know it's, it's hard because you know they need the help.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   20:08
It is.

Maggie   20:08
Those hormones come into play.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   20:12
Especially in the spring, they, they transform.

Maggie   20:13
Yeah. Fascinating.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   20:17
Tell me about in your school, I love the, you know, the inclusive mindset.
Does your school have any school wide programs, or curricula or literature that you all use to kind of promote students emotional health like social emotional learning?

Maggie   20:34
Yep. Yes, we have.
It's called second step.
I don't know how widespread that is, but it's like a lesson a week that the classroom teachers provide and it's on emotions and dealing with your emotions and that sort of thing. Umm. Relationships. It's cute, there's videos and, umm, it's a nice program, but we also have a full-time counselor, and he goes in and does lessons.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   20:58
Yeah, OK.

Maggie 21:04

Umm, we have a school resource officer.

He'll go in and do lessons and then we have two counselors from outside agencies in our buildings as well.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 21:14

Yeah.

Is that kind of like day treatment or, or someone from uh, I don't know if it's called that in other places, like someone from a Family Services or that sort of group.

Maggie 21:22

Yes.

Yep, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 21:25

Yeah, there's always so helpful to have all those people, which, which kind of ties into my next question. How can, can you describe a little bit about how you collaborate with other school professionals to address your students' needs beyond reading like an emotional need or psychological need?

Maggie 21:28

Yeah. Yeah. So luckily we do have those, those people in place.

There is a team in the building.

What is the name of that, kid talk?

They call it kid talk and I think they meet maybe once a month or so, but it's, I don't know how much of that gets shared with teachers, you know, it's, it's like the administration and the counselors and maybe some outside people coming in, but I'm not sure.

Maggie 22:11

Again, as a reading teacher, you're, you're not the like the frontline, so to speak.

So information may be shared with classroom teachers, but I don't ever recall, like hearing things that came out of that.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   22:16
I know, and that's with the counselor and the students.

Maggie   22:28
Hmm.
The counselors are all part of that too.
The students aren't part of it. It's just about them.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   22:34
Yeah, right.
And do you, do you have access a reading specialist?
Do you have access to the second step curriculum like are you?
Are you part of that and hearing it or do you just hear it if you're in the room?

Maggie   22:46
Right.
Yeah, just if you happen to be in there.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   22:49
Yeah, because and in my school we had something, but I never, you know, really got to see the curriculum or, or be part of teaching.

Maggie   22:56
Right.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   22:57
And I would just hear bits and pieces during the, the morning meeting, I guess.

Maggie   23:02

Yeah, exactly or see the signs.

You know, like the little posters, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   23:08

Right, Um, OK.

So switching gears a little bit to talk about teacher resilience.

Umm, what does that mean to you and, and how do you think you build it?

Maggie   23:20

Hmm, well, I guess it means.

Dealing with the hard stuff and finding your way to get through it the next time.

Maggie   23:34

It's not always easy.

There are a lot of tears in this profession, that's for sure.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   23:40

Yeah.

Maggie   23:41

But there's also a lot of joy, and I guess that's how you build it as you just, it's those things that get you through.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   23:48

Yeah.

And and being a mother of a, a daughter who's gone into teaching, do you see her kind of navigating that as a, as a new classroom teacher working to kind of build her resilience?

Maggie   24:01

Yeah.

Yes, yes, because this has been a rough last year.

It was kind of a piece of cake really compared to what it's been this year and she, you know, she'll have a bad day or whatever, but then, you know, she'll just talk about the kids. And so I know it's where she needs to be, and this is gonna make her better.

Maggie   24:24
You know every experience you have makes you better, so yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   24:28
Absolutely.
But it, it takes special people, though I think to keep, keep persisting even when it's tough. So that's great. So I know in your role you get the chance to coach and model and support classroom teachers. Is that right?

Maggie   24:47
All, all of them. So reading too, and yep, all of them.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   24:49
All of those things. OK.

Maggie   24:52
Yeah, so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   24:52
So, have you ever had a time where you feel like whether or not this this person was a struggling reader and that they got your services, but have you ever witnessed and kind of helped a student who maybe had helped a teacher who had a student who was presenting some emotional mental health issues and the the teacher was having a hard time managing them? Or helping them academically, can you tell about a time? Maybe when you supported a teacher and whether you felt it was a success or a failure.

Maggie   25:24

Yeah, actually, she is one of our reading teachers.

We have four reading teachers in the building, so we're very fortunate there.

Maggie   25:33

And Jan she had a group last year and it was very small group but very high need.

One of them had a one-on-one aide, so there were academic IEP's, but also emotional

behaviors as well. So she would oftentimes come to me and we would bounce ideas

back and forth, and she ended up creating like a little behavior chart for one of them.

Umm that he ended up taking with him into third grade and to the Intermediate School.

So that was nice to see.

And I remember telling her, and she kept reminding me at the beginning of the year, I

said, this is gonna be your favorite group, you know, just wait.

And by the end of the year, she's like, ohh, they've just come so far.

And the one was nonverbal, so she really had quite a mix.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   26:21

Ohh wow.

Maggie   26:23

And she just. Yeah, she's a special person.

She really knows how to how to get, get them all to where they need to be so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   26:32

That's awesome.

I think, I think Jessica might have shared her name with me as well.

I'll, have to, have to see because I I think I think she might be.

Maggie   26:42

Ohh yeah, I hope so because she's amazing.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   26:43

Yeah, that's that's awesome. I'll I'll ask you at the end.

So when you have a child, that's as you said, shutting down or just really showing something beyond academic. How, how do you balance addressing this child's needs that go beyond reading but also helping them move the needle to progress as a reader?

Maggie   27:14
Umm, you mean in the moment or over the long run?

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   27:18
Yeah. Like, like in the moment.

Maggie   27:20
OK, so if if there's other students in the room, I would continue with a lesson and just kind of let that one cool down. Take a break. I would even say like try it down.
You know, just take a break. You can join us again when you're when you're ready.
Umm. If I had them one-on-one, obviously I would just drop whatever we were doing to figure it out.
And then, like I said before, follow up as necessary if it was a continuing pattern, I guess I would probably.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   27:48
Mm-hmm.

Maggie   27:54
Well, I would after talking to the teacher, maybe reach out to the parent just to see, you know, depending on what I, what information I had gotten, if there was something, maybe we could set up or.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   28:06
Yeah.
Mm-hmm.
And you mentioned long term, what do you what do you see for those students where

you feel like you're referred to me for your reading, but you need reading and there's more going on than just academic for you?

Maggie 28:24
Right. Yeah. Our counselors are available like I could very easily set up something with the counselor.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 28:32
That's great.

Maggie 28:32
Or we have a principal and an assistant principal. So again, there are very open to setting up any type of plans. You know, meetings, things like that.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 28:44
That's great.

Maggie 28:45
I don't know.
Is Pine like a, is that just kind of an upstate New York thing?
It's neurodiversity.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 28:55
No, I I'm not familiar with that.

Maggie 28:55
I forget what it stands, OK, so I wish I had the whole, I should look it up real quick.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 28:56
I'd love to hear about that.

Maggie 29:03

It's we, it's called Pine and we as a district had training on it.
And it just gives you lots of strategies. Sorry, I'm just looking up to see if I can.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 29:21
Oh, that's wonderful.

Maggie 29:21
Yeah. Uh program for inclusion and neurodiversity education.
So yeah, for two years, everyone as part of our professional development had to take these courses and so they would just give you strategies and ideas and information on students with those different kinds of challenges, so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 29:28
OK. And so that would be offered to classroom teachers.
You all as specialists.

Maggie 29:48
Mm-hmm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 29:49
Pretty much anyone who's working with the students?

Maggie 29:51
Yeah.
And they have office hours. So you can set up like a zoom meeting and just kind of fill them in on what's going on with a student and they would offer also suggestions and things.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 30:06
That's wonderful. Do you know is that a private group that that does professional development or is that something that's like a regional? Ohh is it part of a government group or or do you know?

Maggie 30:16

Hey. It's PINE.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   30:20

And I don't need to put you on the spot. I was just curious because I haven't heard of it, so I I didn't know.

Maggie 30:22

No, no, no, it's right. It's pineprogram.org is their website but.

I don't, I can't see right off the bat like where, how far reaching it is.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   30:45

Ohh, I'll have to look that up.

Maggie 30:46

Well, they're in New York City, NY city.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   30:48

OK, so it is something close to you, but it I'll have to look into it.

See how widespread it is. I hadn't heard of it, but it sounds wonderful.

Maggie 30:57

Yeah, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   30:58

We have something, Mandt training that some of the teachers have done, but that's more the escalation, you know, and some, like physical restraint, things like that, that that's more umm SPED.

Maggie 31:06

Oh, OK, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   31:12

Like, not everyone gets to gets to go to that, but this sounds this sounds like it's more how do you prevent getting to that point, which I think is so important.

Maggie 31:13

Yes. We have. Exactly.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   31:22

Umm, that's that's awesome.

OK, well, good news. I think we're down to the last question.

You've been such a good sport answering all these questions.

Is there anything else that you would like to add to our discussion about your experiences with struggling readers that present emotional or psychological issues?

Maggie 31:45

Umm, I just think like it, I don't want it to sound negative, but they're like the best ones to work with because when they do make those gains, it's just it's extra special.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   32:00

It is.

Maggie 32:01

And we all have, you know, some kind of emotional, you know, whatever it is.

But umm, with the ones who, who really struggle with it daily, it really is.

It's a great thing when they, when they can get that aside and then get that reading going too, so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   32:21

It's, it's huge. It's amazing. I think it's, it's the thing that keeps us coming back, right?

I think for me when you see them succeed and that success breeds a little confidence and then that confidence you know, it just starts to turn things around for them, it's it's

amazing and it's it's such a blessing to get to be part of it.

So it's what keeps us going, right?

Maggie 32:49

For sure. Yep, sure does.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   32:53

Well, well, thank you so much.

I had promised this wouldn't be an hour, so I'm looking at my time and I'm glad it's not quite at the hour mark, but but it took a while, so thank you so much for spending the time.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) stopped transcription

Appendix I

Sample Focus Group Transcript

Focus Group-20240328_190800-Meeting Recording

March 28, 2024, 11:08PM

43m 41s

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   0:03

Start with the interesting question. I think.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) started transcription

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   0:07

What do you think is a literacy specialist's role in addressing the emotional, psychological or mental health needs of struggling readers?
I'm sorry you're going to see my cat in the background because I'm on the computer.

Barbara   0:19

If it.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   0:24

What do you think is a, a literacy specialist's role?

Monica   0:31

I believe the literacy specialist's role is to meet the needs of all students.
It does include, of course literacy, making sure you know that every child has the right to read, but also.
Providing umm I guess specific help in certain areas, whether it be social, emotional, umm, or helping students talk about their feelings.
Maybe before or after a lesson.
Sometimes we feel like, you know, maybe that shouldn't be a part of it, but if we're meeting the needs of the whole child, we do have to take that into consideration.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   1:16
OK.
Thank you. Anybody else?

Barbara   1:21
I think it's important to well and and our job to build a relationship with all of our students and we see a lot of a lot of kids and for short and short amounts of time.
So I think it it is important for these kids that have issues that we do build a good positive relationship with them so that they'll be able to learn when they're with us and participate in our lessons.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   1:56
Awesome.
Anybody else?

Laura   1:59
I like umm. what everybody else was saying is just building relationships and I like my room to be a safe space.
So when they come, I want them to know that they can come and talk to me and like Barbara said, it's a short amount of time and that we have them for, and so you want to build that relationship but give them that opportunity if they have a problem.
I always start off like, how's everybody doing today?
And if they're having an issue like sometimes they're like, well, not good.

Barbara   2:24
Umm.

Laura   2:26
And yeah, I'm like, well, do you wanna talk about it?
And sometimes they want to talk about it at the end of group because they don't want to say it in front of, you know, others and especially my older kids, my 5th graders. I like

them to be able to know that they can come to me and then I can be that safe space that they can, you know, if there is a problem they can confide in me.

Sheri   2:46

I think the reading specialist job is unique because it gives the students an extra person an extra support person, an extra layer of support, and as you build that relationship, you also that's how you can support the teacher but also the student.

Barbara   2:56

Good.

Sheri   3:02

And I know at our school sometimes it works out where reading specialists can even once a week, do indoor recess with a student who's having social emotional issues.
And that has been very beneficial.
It doesn't happen all the time, but in certain instances it's been very beneficial and so it can be really powerful, that relationship.

Barbara   3:24

I I agree with that.
I feel like that we're almost like mentoring some students because they have issues in so many places, so it's like you become a mentor to them, like outside of your classroom.

Sheri   3:39

Right.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   3:41

Awesome.
Anybody else want to comment on that one?
OK, um several of you, when I asked you about low self-efficacy and just a reminder self-efficacy meaning a little more than confidence - meaning your belief in your own ability to make a difference to make a positive impact, to engage a student.

Many of you mentioned a theme of being ineffective or a student not progressing as something that leads to low self-efficacy for you and so I wanted to ask, why do you feel like that is such a defeating experience?

Laura 4:33
I'll start, you wanna go ahead, Barbara?

Barbara 4:34
OK.
Ohh, go ahead
Go ahead.
Ohh, I was just gonna say I think as teachers.
Whether we're reading specialists or a teacher that we want every student to make progress, and if they're not, I've always felt like I'm not doing something right or I need to do something different or I need to work harder.

Laura 4:53
Right.

Barbara 4:57
So I think we do feel defeated if if somebody doesn't get where we, we would like to see them get and to be consistent.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 5:08
Umm yeah, several people talked about.

Barbara 5:09
You know, especially when the after they leave and yeah, so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 5:12
So I'm sorry, several people talked about we make progress one day and then a few

days later we're back to square one.

That was kind of part of the not progressing, very low feeling.

Barbara   5:24

Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   5:24

I I meant to add that earlier.

So thank you, that reminded me.

Laura   5:30

Well, I was just gonna say come along the same lines.

Umm, you.

You almost feel like a failure in a sense, if the child is not making progress a lot of times I've actually been sitting through a lot of child study meetings lately with some kiddos that we've had that they're not progressing and like you said, they're going backwards and you know that's where we really try to figure out.

Is there something more there that we can't seem to help them with? you know, but I think no matter what you you do feel defeated because that child's not progressing and that's that's our job.

And even as a reading specialist is to to help them, you know, make that progress and when they're not, you feel you, you do feel kind of like you're failing them in a sense.

Rachel   6:22

I take it a step further.

Barbara   6:22

I think it translate correct.

Rachel   6:24

I'm sorry, go ahead.

Barbara   6:25

No, I was just going to say I think that we set high expectations for our students, but also for ourselves. And that's why we may be feeling that because I think we we want to do everything we can and if we're not, then you know, we feel bad.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   6:47

Miss Rachel, what were you gonna say?

Rachel   6:48

Uh, I was just taking a step further.
You were talk about sitting in child studies and stuff and what really gets me is when your child you guys sit through an eligibility and then they tell they're slow learners and you just feel like you're beating your head against the wall because they're not getting any help.

Barbara   7:02

No.

Rachel   7:08

What else can you do?
And I think that that's very defeating for me.

Barbara   7:13

This is.

Monica   7:15

Also, I'll add sitting in IEP meetings or you know, even prior to when we're just like, OK, we're gonna, you know, start the referral process.
In the meantime, intervention still have to continue and take place.
So you feel like you're, you know, you're differentiating your interventions, you're trying to use the curriculum to fidelity.

But again, curriculums don't teach, teachers too.

So you may add in you know, little hands-on steam activity to kind of see if this may work.

Umm, and then you may, I also collaborate with their classroom teacher.

I call parents, Hey, you know, has anything changed at home? Or, you know, just asking about, you know, things that they may see their child doing that possibly could work at school but just still feeling like you should be able to do something.

But then you may hear at the end of a of an IEP meeting that the child doesn't qualify and they continue to send that child on to the next grade.

And it's like, umm, this is not OK, so yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   8:31

Well, thank you. I have one question kind of related to this.

It's not a planned question, but it's just something I thought of. When I was a reading specialist in Lynchburg City, we had so many students to serve that I wasn't allowed in Title One to serve special Ed students if they qualified, or ELL students if they qualified for time with the ESL teacher.

Rachel   8:48

Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   8:54

And I was curious about some of you who maybe are in different systems.

Are you allowed as the Title One teacher to serve students who are also seeing the SPED teacher or also getting English second language support?

Monica   9:07

That's a great question.

We at the beginning of the year, I kind of fought hard for this because we were told, you know, as you're going through your list and you're selecting your students of record, you know, if they're already EC or ESL and you can't work around, you know, they're pull out times that it was OK.

But then I have teachers coming to me saying, you know, ohh, this kid needs extra.
Can you pull them at this time for you know, this amount of time?
So yes, in my district we were told, umm, if they're EC, definitely, you know not to pull.
An ESL if you're able to work around the schedules, then you, it's OK, but they wouldn't be top priority.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   9:54
OK.

Sheri   9:56
At our school, we have the largest EL population in the division for Elementary and we're not, I don't know, Rachel might or in the same district, but things might be different school to school, but we're not told you can't service SPED or ELL.
It's just that if there already getting those supports and we don't have enough space for the students to also qualify, then we need to, to share the love.

Rachel   10:22
Mm-hmm.

Sheri   10:26
So everybody can get support rather than, you know, someone's getting two different supports and another child is not able to get any.
So we are able to work it out this year. I have two groups that have three or four ELL students in them and then if the student is not getting reading pullout for SPED, they still might have SPED services but if it's not reading pullout, then we also have been able to filter in a few of those into Title One services.
So it just depends, but there's not a rule saying you can't.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   11:01
OK.

Sheri 11:04

It's just about making sure everybody can get some support rather than, you know.

Barbara 11:12

But.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 11:12

Right.

Rachel 11:13

Yeah, it's the same with us because they're, you know, my old school that I was at.

I was the only Title One person, so people weren't double, triple dipped.

You could only you know it was just Title One for Title One students and that's it.

And even then, they all didn't get served because you had, there was only one, you

know, and assistants, but now that I'm at Payne and there's three of us, it, it can split it

up and we can see some students who get special education services and ELL services.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 11:46

Oh, that's good.

Laura 11:48

So at our school, umm, we are, we do see the EL kids if they've been ID'd.

Umm, but if there's, if they are a SPED kid, then we don't see them unless they're only

having SPED if it's like a push in or for like social, then we will pull them. But otherwise if

they're getting like you said, Sheri, same thing, they're getting pulled out for SPED, then

we don't pull them out because a lot of times they're doing OG.

And then what we're doing is contradicting what they're doing.

Barbara 12:20

The.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   12:21

That makes sense.

OK. Thank you.

So on a more positive note, when we talked about high self-efficacy for working with struggling readers and managing mental health needs, many of you and we've even talked about it a little bit tonight, talked about the value and importance of building relationships with your student.

Why do you think that building relationships is so valuable and becomes such an encouragement?

Rachel   12:49

I'll, I'll talk to that first, if that's alright.

I can just give an example today, I have students and, I'm sure all of you do,

who have outbursts and cry and have you know the social emotional needs. And I have a little boy who I've built relationship with. He was having a little bit of meltdown and I think I told you this, Ginny, when I'll tell him, Oh, you get a break from the class. So you can come and hang out with me and calm down and not be with your students and/or the other kids in your class.

And it did. He calmed down, came in and did what we were doing.

So I, I like to use the whole "just come and you'll get a break in" and then they'll come down.

But they trust me enough to know that I'll take care of and things are going to be OK because you know, you do have that special time, you know, it just having.

I don't know how many students the rest of you see, but we see three to four students and you see them every day for 30 minutes.

You can build a strong relationship because it's almost, you know, one on one plus two, you know, really small.

Barbara   13:50

Right.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   13:57

Awesome.

Anybody else?

Anybody else have kind of an anecdote like that to share about where a relationship that you built with the student made and made a difference?

OK.

Is there any disagreement where maybe you're like, I don't think building relationships is as key as you're saying it is?

No.

Do you agree that it's important?

Barbara   14:41

Yes.

Laura   14:42

Yes.

Monica   14:42

Yes.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   14:43

OK, OK, so, so I got that part right.

OK, even though, let's see here what's next?

OK.

We talked a little bit about your preparation and when I asked where there are lots of different ages represented in my group and pretty consistently when I asked about undergraduate and graduate training, most of you said you did not receive any kind of formal training in your preparation to help you address emotional psychological needs of student. So let me ask if you were part of training literacy specialists,

Umm, what graduate training do you think they need to better address maybe the more emotional aspect of helping struggling readers.

Barbara   15:35
Well, I, I think that it's important for anybody going into education now to understand that there are ,there are issues that are going to happen in your school maybe within your classroom, within the school itself that kind of has a trickle-down effect on everybody.

And I think that, you know, I remember people saying like, ohh, it's probably some much fun just to go teach because, you know, you just play and you have fun.

The kids are all, but you know, it's really not like that. And I think that people that are going into it need to be aware of certain situations that could happen or just even have a list because I mean, we could probably all give you, you know, scenarios that have happened either, you know, in our school or with students that they'll be exposed to and have to be part of.

You know, we do have Harvest and I can't, what's the other day treatment.

we have, one is harvest and one is some.

Laura   16:41
Horizon.

Barbara   16:42
Yes, we have actually both of those in our school.

Laura   16:43
Is that why?

Barbara   16:46
So that's helpful, but I don't know if it's like that everywhere.

Laura   16:53
Well, and only then, those kids that do have day treatment to Harvest and Horizon.

Umm, then you've got some kids that don't qualify for it, you know?

So you, you've still gotta figure out how to meet their needs. And, and a lot of these kids

have, and longer than I've been teaching and you guys have probably seen this too, there's kids that have just so much more baggage and have so much that they go through at their, at home that we don't even, you know, I just can't even fathom what some of these kids go through. And, you know, especially someone that I've grown up in such a good, you know, good Christian home and had a, you know, a family that loved me and these kids, a lot of them don't have that.

Barbara   17:22
Right. Yeah.

Laura   17:43
So I mean, I think a lot of these educators, like Barbara said, any educator going in needs to know how to deal with, you know, all these kids that are having these emotional needs.

Barbara   17:44
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
I had a conversation with a coworker and we were talking about and she has taught for quite a while too, but we were talking about how a lot of the students that do have issues are identified for Title One. And the one girl that I worked with one of her students who is with Harvest a lot, she missed so much because they're having outburst and they get behind, and like she even got behind in her Title One group and we like, we have to regroup.Do you know what I mean?
Because she can't consistently be there, but they're identified so we have to to see them. So that makes it really hard, and I think people need to be aware of.
I know somebody told me they're like, ohh, I'd wanna do reading and just, you know, pull kids out. But I don't think they're aware that a lot of the kids we deal with are like the lowest and the most emotionally insecure.

Laura   18:58
Umm.

Sheri   19:02

I agree when you said scenarios, I think whatever training we add to the universities, the, the preparation, I think it needs to be scenario based and this is, this is what has happened in a classroom. How would you deal with this?

And these are the appropriate ways to deal with it, and these are the not so appropriate ways. Because these kids don't understand and it is, it's shocking their system with some of these. And you know some of them are more serious that need to be dealt with, with administration and CPS and things like that and even the protocols for that.

Barbara   19:21

My I, I agree.

Sheri   19:41

Even though we go over it in a, meeting at the beginning of the year it's not, it's just they need a whole lot more background knowledge before coming into education.

Barbara   19:51

Umm.

Sheri   19:54

And I think sadly, you're exactly right, most of the students we see in Title One are also often the most needy emotionally, and they're the ones that that need the most.

Barbara   20:08

Right.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   20:12

And don't you think just struggling to read by itself can be, it can be very emotional, even if maybe you don't have trauma, especially for older students?

Laura   20:24

Yeah, well, they lack that confidence too.

Rachel   20:25

Yeah, I have.

Sheri   20:27

We were just talking about that today in PLC, how hard would it be every time that there's a report card or interim for you to get D's and F's or Cs & D's and your friends are getting A's and B's, you know, just even that little thing or the pressure the parents could put on the student who are not capable of earning those grades because they're so far behind.

Laura   20:39

Umm.

Sheri   20:48

But what does that do to their esteem?

You know, I think that would be very hard and I think that they do notice that they're not meeting the same, you know, making the same progress as their peers.

Barbara   21:03

And and I think they start noticing that very young.

I have a really low, low, low kindergarten group. And one little boy in there still is not making progress and the others are. Like that we had regrouped again, and he he's starting to notice it in kindergarten and I brought that up at his pre referral that he's noticing, you know, I mean it.

This is like a, you know, it's so serious and I, I feel like that we don't always know how to help some of these kids or they, they need more, he needs more.

And a lot of it goes back to his home. And those support from the family.

But I feel like they know they start noticing it very young.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 21:53

Anybody else want to comment on this one before I move on?

OK, let's talk a little bit about professional development.

Umm, what professional development training have you received or do you think would benefit you in your current role related to this topic of meeting emotional needs of students that you serve?

Rachel 22:18

I told you Lynchburg City has one, the youth mental health or mental health training that supposedly everyone, every employee supposed to do.

I did that. I was the one of the first sessions to do that.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 22:31

Did you think it was good information?

Rachel 22:36

Some yes and some no.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 22:39

OK.

Rachel 22:39

It could have. I don't know.

It's just always tough scenarios and stuff that we truly have.

Barbara 22:44

With.

Rachel 22:49

Umm. Maybe they could have had someone to give us good practices to handle those. Does that make sense?

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 22:59
OK.
Yeah, so, so more real life. What might seem too extreme in the training is an everyday thing that you really need to know how to deal with.

Rachel 23:07
Right, yes.

Barbara 23:17
I think it would be helpful. I don't know if there is anything like this, but for somebody that has actually been a teacher and dealt with these things, we had somebody come for a faculty meeting and you know, some of his basic information was good, but he'd never been in the classroom or had more than a handful of kids at one time. And, you know, was basically a camp type setting, you know?
So that's, that's kinda hard. Because when you have one student like the kindergarten teacher said, well, she has one that can be a runner and screaming, but then she has the rest of her class. Like what does she do?
Is she go run after it, you know, and leave everybody else and you know it,
it would be really nice if we had educators giving advice on some things, but I guess every situation is different so.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 24:18
But that credibility is important.

Barbara 24:19
Yeah, it's really that would be like in the same shoes you're in to be helping you or teaching you.

Barbara   24:29
Strategies and things to deal with some of the behaviors.

Monica   24:34
We have had conscious discipline training and a lot of the upper grade teachers feel like you know, it's a little more geared to the lower grades.
Umm. So I mean, I feel like it could fit a, but she still have, I think it would, you know, be appropriate for all grade levels.
But I think there are some missing pieces that could be added to it, but for I mean with me I'm with K1 Kindergarten first grade students.
So the social stories, you know?
Puppet. With Schubert? I don't know if you are familiar.
It's kind of fun way to get them, you know?
Yeah, Umm, on schedule with.
Hey, let's check in about our feelings and things like that.
So again, there are parts are missing pieces.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   25:28
I'm not very familiar with Schubert.
Monica.
What?
What is that part of?

Monica   25:32
So Schuber is part of conscious discipline with Becky Bailey or Doctor Becky Bailey.
It's a puppet, it's a Firefly and you kinda, Shubert has like different series of stories Shubert's big day, Shubert's helpful day.
And just how he can use his big boy voice and different scenarios to kind of control and manage his emotions and feelings.
So that's I wish I had him here with me.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 26:01
OK.

Monica 26:03
I would show you, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 26:05
Uh does were you all familiar with that?
The conscious discipline or the Shubert puppet is that in any of our Virginia schools?

Laura 26:15
So ours our school has been doing conscious discipline, but it was optional.
So our pre K teacher was kind of she led it up and you could take it if you wanted to or you didn't have to. So I know several classroom teachers were doing it, but I don't know anything about it, cause I didn't take it.

Sheri 26:38
In the city, we have Second Step which also has puppets and younger grades, and it is a a decent program.

Rachel 26:41
Umm.

Sheri 26:46
I'm not sure the schools, all the schools are still using it.
Our school is still using it and it is a good social, emotional program that is school wide.
I'm talking about empathy, you know, ways to calm down all of those things and you know it's universal, so any anybody can use it with the students, we should all be using the same language with them.
We also had a BCBA come a couple of years ago and do a faculty meeting and he really

talked about some of the behaviors we had been seeing and what we could do.

But the main thing that he talked about that I thought that was in the reading area worked for, you know, thought it was good.

Was he talked about the antecedent and that sometimes just by identifying the triggers we can eliminate some of the issues that are going on in our small groups by not allowing it to get to that point.

And by realizing what, what iw. It doesn't work for everything, but it does work with some kids and that was really powerful for all of our teachers. and his presentation was, was very good and it was very helpful.

Laura   27:55

We also had Second Step years ago.

I don't know, Cindy, if you ever did it in your years of teaching, but it used to be kind of required and then we got away from it.

And then I think our, I don't know if the guidance counselor does it now or something along the lines.

Barbara   28:12

Yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   28:19

So it sounds like it's being used pretty consistently in the city, but more optional in the county.

Barbara   28:26

I don't know if the, if the classroom teachers are using that.

Laura   28:32

I don't think they are anymore, yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   28:38

OK, here's an interesting question.

This is kind of my last question that has, I think a lot of discussion potential and then we'll just wrap up with our last two kind of a more wrapping up questions.

So thank you for hanging in there.

Do you think is there a relationship between students' mental health issues and teacher burnout or teachers leaving the classroom?

Why or why not?

Rachel   29:04

Yes.

Barbara   29:05

Yes.

Rachel   29:06

Oh, yes.

Barbara   29:07

Yes.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   29:10

Tell me more, why?

Rachel   29:13

Just the behaviors that come from them having issues in their home life and things like that. I've never seen such behaviors before.

I've never had kindergarteners cussing me out before.

I've never had, you know, kids looking me right in the face and telling me, no, I'm not going to do that. You can't make me do that, umm.

Teachers and I'm talking more classroom teachers because I don't have to experience, you know, 20 or 18 or however many coming at me at one time.

Not that they're all that way, but in the city, it's tough.
It's the children are tough and I'm sure they are in Campbell..

Rachel   29:52
I taught in Campbell for a while, but you know, going from, I mean teaching my school last year, we had a kid shot, and we had to all deal with that and all that mental health and all the people come in trying to help our students.

Laura   29:54
Yeah.

Barbara   29:54
Umm.

Rachel   30:07
I mean just that in itself was so tough on everyone, not just their home life and CPS coming, and it's just, it's surprising and it's

Barbara   30:11
This is. Do you feel like that it's a trend, though Rachel, do you feel like that?
It's like more because I remember a long time ago you might have one student that had issues, but I'm just thinking about kindergarten now.
I mean, there could be there's like 4. I mean, you can't really divide them up.
There are a lot in one class and then they, they feed off of each other.

Barbara   30:46
Of the kindergarten teachers are exhausted right now, you know, because they have them all day and we have them for like, 30 minutes.

Rachel   30:52
Yeah.

Barbara 30:53

But I just feel like it's more more prevalent than it.

Rachel 30:56

Yeah.

Barbara 30:57

It was a long time ago.

Laura 30:59

I feel like it's been since COVID.

I mean, I don't know if COVID, you know, I know people.

Everything hits back on COVID, but you know, especially the year for two years after when we were kind of back to normal, I felt like it was really bad, like especially in our school we had a behavior person come in to help and to help certain teachers that had kids that had some serious issues.

And I don't know a lot of people say, well, these kids were home for so long and had no discipline or, you know, got to play video games and do whatever they want.

So I mean, I don't know we're, uou know several years later.

So I don't know if that's still the case, but I don't know.

It just seems like like you said, it seems like a trend.

It seems more so, umm.

Barbara 31:43

Umm.

Laura 31:44

And there's more kids than just that one or two in a class.

Rachel 31:48

Umm.

Monica   31:50

Yes, I would totally agree.

And even I don't know, it may sound funny, but I'm like, what is in the food?

Like what's going on? Like what is it?

I mean, kids are just so different and they are not afraid to tell an adult. That I grew up knowing that I had to respect adults, but they are not afraid to tell them, no and just blatantly not do something.

Rachel   32:14

Umm.

Monica   32:17

So yes, I totally.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   32:23

It's so interesting tying in with this in the research I've seen that the the increase.

Barbara   32:28

Ohh.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   32:32

So what what you're saying I I see in the research they're saying that the the percentage of children who are displaying depression, anxiety, all, all of these things is so much higher than it used to be.

Barbara   32:46

Then.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   32:46

And at younger ages and so, as you said, Laura is is part of that impact kind of the the global trauma of COVID or the disruption in routine, I don't know.

Rachel 32:49

Umm.

Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 32:59

I think we're still kind of trying to figure out, you know what, what the impact of COVID was or what what is going on.

But I I do think it's not just Virginia.

Barbara 33:08

It wasn't.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 33:10

I think it's not just the East Coast at I think it's from what I've read, it seems to be national and even global.

Barbara 33:18

Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 33:18

Umm, So what else? What have I not asked about?

What else would you like to add about your experience as a reading specialist who serves elementary struggling readers with difficulty with emotional regulation?

Monica 33:36

I would like to add that I've just noticed a difference in a smaller group setting.

How I'm able to build better, stronger relationships with the students that I serve in a smaller setting for a shorter period of time, period of time and that, umm. They'll see me in the hallways, or, you know, hey, am I coming to you today? or, you know, Can we stop and talk about this? or look at how was having an awesome.

Barbara   34:00

Yeah.

Monica   34:04

And so it just makes a huge difference compared to being in the classroom with 20 kindergarteners or 18 preschoolers trying to have nap time trying to, you know, deal with all the things that now I'm just able to really focus on building relationships. And you know, of course, getting all students to read.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   34:33

Thank you. Anybody else?
I know the Virginia Literacy Act seems to be encouraging push in more than pull out and from, or not. No. Am I wrong?

Rachel   35:03

Ohh no, I'm saying I'm totally against that.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   35:05

Yeah. Well, most of you that I spoke with found, found more, it more challenging to push in than push out depending on what was going on in the classroom. But.
I think this issue is going to persist and whereas we've talked before about how sometimes students miss Title One, miss, you know they're going to day treatment. But I think if we if instruction moves to all push in, I think then as the reading specialist, you're gonna be dealing with not only your small group, but everything else that's going on in the classroom. Any, any thoughts about that before we wrap up?

Barbara   35:51

I think with our students pushing in, because they are so distracted, some of our population we work with, I think it would be really difficult to provide like a targeted intervention within a classroom when the other stuff is going on in that classroom, I mean it would be one thing to push in to help with something, but to really give a

targeted intervention, a reading intervention, I think it would be hard to do it in the classroom. Some of the classrooms are so loud and, you know, students all over the place and so to me, I feel like if we're really focusing on their reading need, they need to be working with us in a quiet space with not many distractions.

Rachel   36:33
Umm.

Laura   36:40
Umm.

Rachel   36:43
100 percent, I agree with that.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   36:43
Anybody else?

Rachel   36:45
I'm just cause they've been encouraging us this year and I'm, I've gone into classrooms and I just can't do it and the teachers like, could you please pull out the teachers?
Once you are in there because it's distracting their students too.
I mean, my kids are distracted, their kids are distracted.

Barbara   36:58
Right.

Rachel   37:00
The whole class is distracted, so I don't. I don't get it. I don't understand, right, exactly.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   37:11
Has anybody had a positive experience?

Maybe you have one classroom teacher who really kinda is able to do it, has a good co-teaching model with you.

Sheri   37:22

There is a positive side to it in that experienced reading specialist have so much to offer to new teachers and when we have done, we, we don't do it exclusively.
But when there are instances where it works out for the Title One teacher to push in, it's been very beneficial for that teacher.
And because there are just things that they pick up on, even management wise that need to change and they can help them.
You know, just give ideas. It doesn't work with every personality we have.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   38:02
Umm.

Sheri   38:05
We only have one reading specialist, we really should have three. So that that makes it very difficult because we have to pull from two or three classrooms, 2 students from this classroom, two students from this classroom.

Barbara   38:09
This is.

Sheri   38:18
So it wouldn't make sense for them to push in because you're pushing into one classroom, but you gotta go pick up the kids from another classroom.
They're like the logistics of it.

Rachel   38:25
No.

Sheri   38:26
Just don't make sense.

Barbara   38:28
Umm.

Sheri   38:28
And then the other thing is, depending on the materials that you're using and I, I don't know that it is conducive in some instances like we're using UFLI with their Title One and my title one teacher is trying to use the online piece of it and we've bought her this big screen or whatever. That's not really ideal to push that around the school, you know, we were like, should be strap it down, should we?

Rachel   38:51
Right.

Sheri   38:55
What if a kid bumps it?
It's just, plus, that's another piece of equipment that's having come into the classroom that's already a little bit, you know, it already has 70 different things in it and so many other things to distract.

Barbara   39:05
Right.

Sheri   39:09
It just wouldn't work to use that piece as push in and so I think we have a lot to do to talk about how that's gonna work if that is what the state is pushing for, I was reading through the VLA documents today and implementation playbook for the Literacy Act, and I don't see where it explicitly says that it must be pushed in.
So I am wondering going to be division based, but they are moving towards Title One

only working with Tier 3 which we have been doing for a while anyway, but it the hope is that we won't need as many pull out anyway and I I don't know there's there's pros and cons to it.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 39:35
I don't think it's mandated.

Barbara 39:55
Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 39:55
Umm.

Sheri 39:56
But with what we're using right now, I don't, I don't see how it would work and with only having one and pulling from different classrooms, it just doesn't make sense to me. Umm, the one classroom that has five kids in it that are in Title one and it's a brand new teacher It's working in there, you know it's it's a good coteaching kind of.

Barbara 40:13
Umm.

Sheri 40:16
They have their little system, but that's really that's that's rare.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) 40:23
The exception more than the rule and and I I think maybe it's not mandated, it's just encouraged I think from from what I'm hearing.
But I hope that each division will get to make whatever decision they think is best for their setting. As you said, it, it does matter how many you have and all of that.
Alright.

Any other thoughts before I move to the last piece, which is really just to ask if you have any questions for me, um related to this study or how the data is going to be used?

Barbara   40:58
Are you gonna share with us when you're finished?

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   41:01
Yes, I will.

Barbara   41:02
OK. OK.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   41:02
Umm. And nobody has given me a cool pseudonym.
I keep waiting for someone to say, I want my name to be what
What do you want me to call you?
Umm, so so you'll know it's you.
Umm but yes, I absolutely will share.
Umm and I am, the next thing I'm gonna share is themes, so I'm gonna share that this weekend with you on some themes and just let me know that you're OK with that.
And then umm, but yes, when I finish, which you know, Lord willing, will be soon.
Umm this spring then I will certainly let you know. It will be published and available online, where you can download and see it.
I'm probably going to get it bound, but you don't want to have to come and see it that way, so I'll, I'll give you the link.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   41:54
But in anything else that you'd like to share with the group, thank you for such good discussion.
I really appreciate your time this evening and your willingness to be candid about your experience and your thoughts and.
I so appreciate it. You all are are just making this a wonderful experience for me.

I, you know, I could talk about literacy and what's going on in the classroom all day, and so I'm happy for you that you're done with this process, but I, I will miss these little chats because I've learned a lot from all of you.

So any any other questions for me?

Barbara   42:27
Umm.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   42:33
Monica, do you have anything you want to add from the North Carolina perspective?

Monica   42:38
No, you all just keep doing the great work that you're doing. I'm rooting for you.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   42:45
You too.
Now you're with K1.
Are you pushing it or pulling out Monica?

Monica   42:49
I am pulling out. I was asked to push in.
I've done it a couple days and I said Nope, this isn't gonna work.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   42:57
OK.
That, that's.
That's what I thought.
OK.
Well, thank you, ladies.
Is if there's nothing else, I'll say goodnight.
I will send you your themes as soon as you say, yes, I'm comfortable with this.

I'll send you your gift card.

So just a last reminder, if you don't want me to send it to the email I've been using, please send me an alternative.

But umm, you, you have been such a blessing to me.

Thank you again and I hope each of you have a wonderful break and a very happy Easter.

Barbara   43:27

Umm, I thank you.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   43:27

And I'll talk to you soon.

Laura   43:27

Thank you.

You too.

Monica   43:28

Thank you.

You too, Virginia.

Rachel   43:30

And.

Laura   43:30

Yeah.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   43:30

Thank y'all.

Barbara   43:31

Bye bye. Goodnight.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   43:31
Goodnight.

Sheri   43:32
Thank you.

Laura   43:33
Bye.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education)   43:33
Thanks Monica for switching K bye, y'all.

Shank, Virginia M (School of Education) stopped transcription

Appendix J

Organization of Data in Dedoose

Appendix K

Research Log and Reflexive Notes

Excerpt of Research Log

2/14

- Took my Microsoft form survey
- Modified settings to customize the thank you message to include that Ginny Shank would be in touch to schedule an individual interview.
- Double checked spacing within survey
- Attempted to put all of consent in 1 section, but it would not hold the number of characters needed.
- Sent recruitment email with survey link to participants 1 (CEPLCS) and 2 (SWVCES).

2/15

- Sent recruitment email with survey link to potential participants.
  LGCCPS/ JSEMCS/ MBEMCS/ DMDML/ AHHDML/ BGHDML/ KJHDML/ RMHDML/ MMDML
  LDSLCS/15 VEAC alums

2/16

- Added IRB approval letter to Appendix A
- Revised consent document in Appendix B to match approved version from IRB

2/23

- Reached out to MBEMCS, JDDT, MMDML to schedule interviews

2/24

- Scheduled interview for 2/29 at 1:00 p.m.
- Sent recruitment email to local chapter of VSLA, VSLA, and ILA

2/26/2024

- Reached back out to LDSLCS
- Attempted to schedule 2 interviews
- Reached out to 5 former students (LK, HS, KH, DVH, KG)

2/27/2024
Sent recruitment email to CB

2/28/2024
First interview with MBEMCS

Sample of Reflexive Notes

Interview with Maggie - 2/28

1. Surprising that that she could be a reading specialist without being a classroom teacher first in New York. I didn't expect that based on my experience in Virginia.
2. Some of my interview questions felt repetitive or like they were not getting new information, but first interview.
3. It went almost to the full hour I allocated. I need to be careful to talk less – enough to build credibility and rapport but it will be tempting not to respond to much to participants' answers.

Interview with Jamie – 3/10
I did not know that she was an immigrant – I love her perspective on considering the trauma of immigration and experience of EL's – could be a recommendation for a future study

TSES summary data
Teachers from urban schools are lowest across questions and categories.
Monica is the highest – background? Access to SEL?
I expected classroom management to be the lowest not student engagement.
Reread questions for student engagement and made sense.

Focus Group 2
I was worried about Rachel and Sheri begin from the same district, but I set the confidentiality norm and they seemed fine.
Interesting how the majority is so opposed to pushing in, but Virginia Literacy Act is recommending it.
Similar responses to Focus Group 1 – larger group because Monica missed Focus Group 1 and had to join this one. 5 was a little large to give everyone a chance to respond to every question.

Appendix L

Code Counts

Groupings of Significant Statements

Code Applications — Sort Field

Media / Codes	Building Relationships	High Expectations	Classroom Mgt	Collaboration	Admin support	Communication	Support for Gened Teacher	High Self-Efficacy	Lack of Formal Preparation	Recommendations	Lived experience	Low Self-Efficacy	Meet Individual Needs	Mental Health Needs	Model of SEL	Parents	Prof Dev	Questions	Resilience	Role of specialist	Coach/Mentor	Instructional	Lack of Information	Outlier	SPED	Social-emotional learning	Student Engagement	Totals

Code Frequency Across all Data Sources

Code Applications — Sort Field

Media	Building Relatio	High Expectat	Classroom Mgt	Collaboration	Admin suppor	Communicati	Support for Ge	High Self-Efficac	Lack of Formal F	Recommenda	Lived experienc	Low Self-Efficac	Meet Individual N	Mental Health N	Model of SEL	Parents	Prof Dev	Questions	Resilience	Role of specialis	Coach/Mentor	Instructional	Lack of Inform	Outlier	SPED	Social-emotiona	Student Engage	Totals
Interview transcript SV.docx	1	1		2	2			2	5		6	2			1		2		1	1	3	1						30
Interview transcript MM.docx	3	1		3				1	2		7	1					1		1		3	1				1		25
Interview transcript MB.docx	1			3				1	1		7	2					3		1	1	2	1				1		24
Interview transcript LS.docx	1	1		2	1			1	4		7	1					1		3	3	3					2		30
Interview transcript KB.docx	1	1		2				1	1		11	1					3		1	1	3	1			1	1		29
Interview transcript JD.docx	4	1		1				4	2		16	5					1		3	1	7	10		4		1		60
Interview transcript GR.docx	1	1		2				1	2		9	1					2		5	1	3	3				1		32
Interview transcript final LD.docx	2	1		1				1	2		3	2					1		1	1	1		1			1		17
Interview transcript DVH.docx	2			1	1			1	5		10	2					2		2	1	1	1				1	2	32
Interview transcript CP.docx	1							2	4		5	5					3		4	2	3	2				1	2	34
Interview transcript CB.docx	3			3	1			1	6		9	1					4		5		2	2				1		38
Interview transcript AK.docx	2	1		1				2	3		7	1					2		1		1	1				1		23
Focus Group 3 transcript.docx	3	2		5	2	1	3		1		4	1	1	6		1			6	6		1	1					44
Focus Group 2 transcript.docx	6	2					3		1		1	4	4	10		2	1		1		1				1	6	1	44
Focus Group 1 Transcript.docx	7		3	6	3	1	1		1	2	1	3	2			1	4		4	1		4	1	1			5	51
Totals	38	12	3	32	10	2	7	18	39	7	98	30	8	18	1	4	29		38	19	32	30	1	6	6	19	6	

Appendix M

Theme 1, Subthemes, and Participant Quotes

Alignment: Central Research Question	Major Theme 1: Increasing Mental Health Needs of Elementary Students		
Subthemes	**Participant Quotes**	**Spec.**	**Source**
RS Lived Experiences	I had a child who was taken from her home because of abuse and you know it was very hard. She didn't talk and it was very hard to reach her, to try and help the reading. I had kids that I'd have to sit under a table with and read with them because of behavior. I've seen a lot of the emotional backgrounds, whether their parents are, you know, have used drugs or I've been in conferences where the parents come in high. So I can see how it affects those kids and it definitely changes how you have to instruct them and how you find that happy medium of helping them understand. OK, this is important, we need to do this, but I also am here for you - for what you're going through.	Audrey	Individual Interview
	We have one little guy that anytime he felt frustrated with me or with another student would throw markers, just throwing markers at me at anyone. last week I had a first grade student who came in and began sharing with me about the day before when she did not come to school and her mom had choked her and beat her with a belt, and CPS came and talked to her, and so then from there, she was ready to begin instruction.You know, after I listened to her and talked to her, that's the first 5 minutes of her 15 minutes. And then we're starting instruction and then she misses one sound and is on the floor hiding under the table crying. She's already being pulled one-on-one because of other behavior issues that she's displayed in the past, right? But still, learning is not taking place for more than two minutes of the 15 minutes because in the beginning she's trauma dumping, telling stories that deserve to be heard. But then after the story is listened to, then we're displaying reactive behavior and learning is not taking place.	Hope	Individual Interview
	The smallest thing sets them off and then you are derailed from what you were trying to accomplish in the first place, and it's just hard to get them back. It could be, you know, a word that they just know they know, but they can't figure it out at the moment or it could be somebody who has said something to another kid, but they hear it, you know. It just can be the smallest little thing and it's just hard to understand why they've gone from reading with you, being confident, and working hard to snap, and it's 20 feet back now. You know that we have to reel them back in to get them to continue.	Candace	Individual Interview

	Do you feel like that it's a trend, though, do you feel like that? It's like more because I remember a long time ago you might have one student that had issues, but now there could be like 4 in one class. I'm thinking of our kindergarteners, I mean, you can't really divide them up and they feed off of each other.	Barbara	Focus Group
	Everything hits back on COVID, but you know, especially the year or two years after, when we were kind of back to normal. I felt like it was really bad, like especially in our school we had a behavior person come in to help and to help certain teachers that had kids that had some serious issues. A lot of people say, well, these kids were home for so long and had no discipline or, you know, got to play video games and do whatever they want. So I don't know if that's still the case, but I don't know it just seems like you said, it seems like a trend.	Laura	Focus Group
	We're an inclusive district and I feel so many times with kids and what they're dealing with and the trauma that they've had that even our counselors could feel at a loss of what to do and how to help them so. You know we, we just keep trying, but I feel like so many things are just unprecedented and across the country in the world these days that it's, you know, we're just all, we're all just figuring it out as we go.	Maggie	Focus Group
Collaboration & Communication w/Stakeholders	I also collaborate with their classroom teacher. I call parents, Hey, you know, has anything changed at home? Or, you know, just asking about, you know, things that they may see their child doing that possibly could work at school but just still feeling like you should be able to do something. Collaborating with others in my district and asking those hard questions, having those tough conversations with family, and administrators	Monica	Focus Group & Interview
	We can help by reaching out to parents, what we can do to support them at home, but what comes to mind for me is using social workers and guidance counselors to help with our specific group of students. I've had a lot of colleagues along the way that if I didn't handle something, maybe the way I wanted it to go, being able to talk to those colleagues who have a lot more experience than me and getting some tips and tricks from them has been helpful.	Kristi	Focus Group & Interview
	The guidance counselor gives the parents options for counseling or whatever, but the division does not mandate it. The state does not mandate it. Sometimes they'll go to the meeting one time and then the child says something that the parent is like, oh, wait a minute, they're telling too much of our business and then that's it. So I don't know, it's something we need to work on. It really is.	Sheri	Interview
	Sometimes the classroom teachers will say, "You need to take so and so and you need to help them." So I can't take and fix, right? Like again, we're a village, we're all coming together, everybody's gotta pull in. That's just how it has to be.	Jaime	Focus Group

Lack of Training	My undergraduate was in the 90s, so that type of conversation wasn't even on the table for anybody. Maybe a little bit more in my graduate classes, but not really. In those classes, I learned best practices across the board and they did talk to us a little bit about trauma, working with kids with trauma. But for me, there's no way to learn that except to experience it.	Stacy	Interview
Importance of Additional SPED courses	I'm gonna be very honest. During my time as an undergraduate student, I did not feel that my courses on differentiation or behavior were necessarily adequate, but I did do an autism endorsement and I took some type of behavior class and I did case studies in that class. I wrote an FBAI, wrote a BIP in that class and I feel that that course is incredible and should be required of every classroom teacher. I feel that course definitely prepared me and helps me better understand what can be done to address behavior and that a lot of schools that I had practicums in weren't doing those things. So when I was being hired, I was able to look for a school that did have those, umm, structure set in place. My just typical elementary Ed coursework, did not provide adequate exposure.	Hope	Interview
Professional Development	I don't remember having a lot of things on behavior and mental health and stuff back then, but I think that would be really important now for new teachers. I do feel like that I would have benefitted first from some SPED instruction as well. My grad work to be a specialist was a lot of literacy, but I did my research on trauma, students with trauma. For professional development, it would be nice to have somebody that has actually been a teacher and dealt with these things, we had somebody come for a faculty meeting and you know, some of his basic information was good, but he'd never been in the classroom or had more than a handful of kids at one time. So that's, that's kinda hard. Because when you have one student like the kindergarten teacher said, well, she has one that can be a runner and screaming, but then she has the rest of her class. Like what does she do? Should she go run after the one, you know, and leave everybody else? It would be really nice if we had educators giving advice on some things, but I guess every situation is different.	Barbara	Interview & Focus Group
	No, they don't teach how to address emotional issues in school. So I've learned mostly by watching people, getting thrown in, and a few PD sessions like the youth mental health or mental health training that supposedly everyone, every employee supposed to do. I did that. I was the one of the first sessions to do that. Some was good, but maybe they could have had someone to give us good practices to handle those tough scenarios and stuff that we truly have here.	Rachel	Interview & Focus Group

Appendix N

Research Process

Spec.	Name	Survey	Interview	Transcript	Member Check	Focus Group	Themes Check	Gift Card Sent
1	Jamie	16-Feb	10-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	6-Apr	7-Apr
2	Maggie	17-Feb	28-Feb	22-Mar	1-Apr	28-Mar	9-Apr	16-Apr
3	Stacy	19-Feb	29-Feb	29-Mar	1-Apr	1-Apr	6-Apr	7-Apr
4	Monica	20-Feb	4-Mar	26-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	10-Apr	16-Apr
5	Candace	20-Feb	7-Mar	28-Mar	2-Apr	28-Mar	7-Apr	7-Apr
6	Sheri	27-Feb	15-Mar	28-Mar	10-Apr	28-Mar	10-Apr	16-Apr
7	Hope	27-Feb	9-Mar	29-Mar	1-Apr	1-Apr	6-Apr	7-Apr
8	Kristi	3-Mar	13-Mar	29-Mar	30-Mar	1-Apr	6-Apr	7-Apr
9	Laura	6-Mar	13-Mar	26-Mar	3-Apr	28-Mar	8-Apr	16-Apr
10	Audrey	5-Mar	14-Mar	30-Mar	1-Apr	1-Apr	8-Apr	16-Apr
11	Barbara	29-Feb	20-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	6-Apr	7-Apr
12	Rachel	18-Mar	22-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	28-Mar	6-Apr	7-Apr