

THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS, AND
LIBRARIANS REGARDING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS IN THEIR SCHOOLS
BEING IDENTIFIED AS NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON AWARD WINNING EXEMPLARY
ACHIEVEMENT GAP-CLOSING SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

Beth McGuire

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS, AND
LIBRARIANS REGARDING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS IN THEIR SCHOOLS
BEING IDENTIFIED AS NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON AWARD-WINNING EXEMPLARY
ACHIEVEMENT GAP-CLOSING SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by Beth McGuire

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

APPROVED BY:

Jose Arturo Puga, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Judy Shoemaker, Ed.D., Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at National Blue Ribbon Schools in the United States. Perceptions regarding the role of school librarianship surrounding academic achievement were explored from four National Blue Ribbon Schools locations during 2022 and 2023 in kindergarten through Grade 12. The theory guiding this study was Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The central research question was: How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award? Guiding research questions considered the role of school librarians in addressing the achievement gap while further investigating the staffing, programming, and perceptions of school librarians and library programs. Semi-structured interviews with case study participants, document analysis, and observation during site visits were conducted to ensure triangulation. As a result of the research conducted, the role of school librarians and library programs in addressing the academic achievement gap was positively perceived, and participants from the study exhibited self-efficacy.

Keywords: library, librarians, principals, English language arts teachers, self-efficacy, National Blue Ribbon Schools, achievement gap, education

Copyright Page

Copyright 2024, Beth McGuire

Dedication

I am thankful for the unwavering love and support from my parents, Daniel and Mary McGuire. My parents have always encouraged learning and have been entirely supportive. Working toward a terminal degree has been a goal that they have encouraged. When I shared with my family that I was about to begin my journey toward earning a Ph.D., responses were gleeful as they were aware of my academic goals. While my experiences in the library and education fields prepared me to begin the program at Liberty University, it was the love from my family and the desire to make them proud that gave me the belief in my abilities to approach this long-term goal. Though grateful for the learning opportunity, I look forward to having additional time with friends and family once the dissertation journey concludes. I have been blessed with loyal friends and family and eagerly await the creation of more memories together.

Obtaining a chair is far more than a step in a doctoral student's career; it is the start of a remarkable mentorship. This academic connection involved semesters of consistent communication and navigation of time zones. I appreciate the work of my chair, Dr. Jose Arturo Puga, and committee member, Dr. Judy Shoemaker.

God led me in the correct direction in April 2020 when I applied to Liberty University. His guidance has been present throughout my entire doctoral journey. I hope this research is a fine reflection of our Creator and can benefit others in the future.

Acknowledgments

The acknowledgments section of my dissertation holds great importance to me as it allows me to recognize the significant contributions of others to my research. I want to acknowledge the impact of my committee chair, Dr. Jose Arturo Puga, and my committee member, Dr. Judy Shoemaker. I also want to express my gratitude for Dr. Rachel Nichole Hernandez's involvement during my dissertation defense. Her insights were invaluable. I also sincerely appreciate the encouragement from my college peers, coworkers, professors, and teachers. I am thankful to give back to the institutions that have shaped me as an educator in my public school and college alma mater. Lastly, I want to acknowledge the participating school sites and participants who made this dissertation possible. While their names and identities are kept confidential, I want to emphasize the value of their educational work and involvement in my research studies.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Copyright Page.....	4
Dedication	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
Table of Contents	7
List of Tables	14
List of Figures	15
List of Abbreviations	16
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	17
Overview	17
Background	17
Historical Context	18
Social Context.....	20
Theoretical Context.....	21
Problem Statement	21
Purpose Statement.....	22
Significance of the Study	23
Theoretical Significance	23
Empirical Significance.....	24
Practical Significance.....	25
Research Questions	26
Central Research Question.....	27

Sub-Question One	27
Sub-Question Two	27
Definitions.....	27
Summary	29
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	31
Overview	31
Theoretical Framework	31
Related Literature.....	33
Academic Intervention.....	35
Perceptions of School Librarians and School Library Programs	40
School Librarian Requirements	42
Student Academic Achievement.....	44
Library Educational Resources	46
Collection Development Policy	47
Cataloging and Classification of Materials	49
Database Collection	51
E-book Offerings	53
Makerspace Collections	54
Professional Development	56
Physical Library Design.....	57
Online Library Presence	59
National Blue Ribbon Program.....	60
Summary	63

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	65
Overview	65
Research Design.....	65
Research Questions	68
Central Research Question.....	68
Sub-Question One	68
Sub-Question Two	69
Setting and Participants.....	69
Setting	69
Participants.....	70
Recruitment Plan.....	71
Researcher Positionality.....	72
Interpretive Framework	72
Philosophical Assumptions.....	73
Ontological Assumption	73
Epistemological Assumption	73
Axiological Assumption	74
Researcher's Role	75
Procedures.....	76
Data Collection Plan	76
Recruitment.....	76
Individual Interviews	77
Individual Interview Questions.....	78

Data Analysis	83
Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan	83
Document Analysis	84
Observations	86
Trustworthiness	87
Credibility	87
Transferability	89
Dependability	89
Confirmability	90
Ethical Considerations	90
Permissions	91
Other Participant Protections	91
Summary	92
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	93
Overview	93
Participants	93
Mary	95
Nathan	98
Carla	99
Wilma	100
Sara	101
Lori	103
Lisa	105

Daniel.....	106
Peggy.....	107
Marie.....	108
Malia.....	109
Elsa.....	112
Jim.....	114
Kathy.....	115
Barbie.....	116
Patricia.....	116
Ann.....	119
Bella.....	120
Simon.....	122
Claire.....	123
Ramona.....	124
Denise.....	125
Holly.....	127
Results.....	128
Students and Staff Positively Perceived the School Librarians and Library Programs ...	131
Environmental.....	133
Motivational.....	136
Organizational.....	139
Instructional.....	142
School Library Programs and Librarians Close Academic Achievement Gap.....	145

Culture.....	146
Collaboration.....	150
Collections	155
Challenges.....	161
Outlier Data and Findings.....	167
Public Library Relationships.....	167
Little Free Library Collections.....	170
Research Question Responses.....	171
Central Research Question.....	171
Sub-Question One	174
Sub-Question Two	183
Summary	192
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	195
Overview.....	195
Discussion.....	195
Summary of Thematic Findings.....	195
Interpretation of Findings	196
Relationships with the School Library Staff Positively Impact Student Achievement	197
School Library Programs Provide Equity and Increase Student Achievement ...	198
Available Opportunities to Support Student Achievement Further	200
Implications for Policy or Practice	202
Implications for Policy.....	203

Implications for Practice	204
Empirical and Theoretical Implications.....	206
Empirical Implications.....	206
Theoretical Implications	210
Limitations and Delimitations.....	212
Limitations	212
Delimitations	213
Recommendations for Future Research	214
Conclusion	215
References.....	217
Appendix A.....	244
Appendix B	246
Appendix C	248
Appendix H.....	250
Appendix D.....	251
Appendix E	256
Appendix F.....	261
Appendix G.....	262
Appendix I	263

List of Tables

Table 1. Study Participants: Site One	95
Table 2. Study Participants: Site Two.....	102
Table 3. Study Participants: Site Three.....	111
Table 4. Study Participants: Site Four	118
Table 5. Teacher Perceptions of the School Librarians and School Library Program	175
Table 6. Student Perceptions of the School Librarians and School Library Program	176
Table 7. Perception of School to Close Academic Achievement Gap	179
Table 8. Perception of School Library to Close Academic Achievement Gap	181
Table 9. Strengths of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap.	183
Table 10. Weakness of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap.	185
Table 11. Opportunities of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap.	188
Table 12 The Threat of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap.....	190

List of Figures

Figure 1. Study Figure of National Blue Ribbon Schools 2021-2023	94
--	----

List of Abbreviations

Accelerated Reader (AR)

American Association of School Librarians (AASL)

American Library Association (ALA)

English language arts (ELA)

Free and Voluntary Reading (FVR)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Implementation Fidelity (IF)

National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

United States Department of Education (DOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS) in the United States. These findings can assist other schools as they work to support academic achievement and can be considered by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) in future NBRS materials. Perceptions regarding the role of school librarianship surrounding academic achievement were defined as the role of school librarians and school library programs explored from four NBRS locations. The DOE sponsors the NBRS program. The research problem will be further articulated in this chapter. The role of the school librarian and library program in student achievement will be addressed. Additionally, the chapter will illustrate the significance of the study while exploring key terms and history systematically related to the topic.

Background

A general problem in education is that not all students reach academic goals. This problem leads to students being ill-prepared for college or careers (Wisdom et al., 2019), furthering future economic gaps (Atteberry et al., 2021) and opportunity gaps (Beard, 2019) that can extend as a result of lower levels of socioeconomic status (Frings et al., 2020; Rowley et al., 2020). The role of school librarians and library programs in addressing student achievement gaps will be examined. Considerations for successful school library collaboration can include scheduling (Kammer et al., 2021; Scholastic, 2016), levels of efficacy throughout the school building (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2021), and perceptions of the school library

(Burns, 2018; Durodolu, 2018; Emerson et al., 2019; Merga, 2020a; Merga & Mason, 2019), further impacting educational achievement.

The research can inform educational stakeholders about the role of the school librarian and library program that they may not have previously considered or experienced. Students gain academic improvements from a school library program, and a certified librarian is more significant than the school's socioeconomic status (Thompson et al., 2021). It is unknown what role the school library program and school librarians will have in students' academic achievement in recognized schools for closing the achievement gap. This research can illuminate this role. According to a search of published dissertations, no studies have been conducted regarding school libraries and school library programs upon NBRs Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing schools. With the prevalence of students falling into an achievement gap, additional best practices in education and library science to improve the learning experience may help students.

Historical Context

Ancient civilization libraries in Egypt contained papyrus rolls and were recognized as a beacon of intellectualism (Murray et al., 2012). The American Library Association began with Melvil Dewey as a founding member in 1876 (Wiegand, 1996). By the 1920s, high schools seeking accreditation needed a school librarian and library collections, whereas elementary library standards were developed in 1925, but most libraries were in classrooms (Woolls & Coatney, 2018). The Space Race in the 1950s was a catalyst to prepare students (Smith, 2020) and Congress funded materials for school libraries (Woolls & Coatney, 2018). The first and only national professional association for school librarians was formed in 1951 as a division of ALA, yet round table groups existed as early as 1914 (American Association of School Librarians

[AASL], 2018). The AASL standards were established in the 1960s, but 50% of schools did not have libraries in 1964 (Woolls & Coatney, 2018) despite the research regarding the support of school library programs to bolster student learning (Carson & Davies, 1948). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 included Title II funding to purchase library materials (U.S. Department of Education, 2022a). Still, funding did not provide additional school librarians or training (Wiegand, 2021). During the 1980s and 1990s, additional library funding was allocated for technology, but many schools still lacked librarians (Woolls & Coatney, 2018), with three million public school students still not having a school librarian (Wiegand, 2021). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 led to numerous states setting standards to have all students achieve academic proficiency success in twelve years (Linn et al., 2002). Landmark studies led by primary researcher Keith Curry Lance throughout four decades illustrate the importance of school librarians and library programs for students to be successful studies conducted throughout The United States (Scholastic, 2016). When Lance presented at the White House Conference on School Libraries in 2002, moderated by First Lady Laura Bush, he shared findings from studies across the country that the school library was strongly linked to student academic success. At the time of Lance's presentation in 2002, writing and research highlighting the role of school librarians were notable (Harada & Donham 1998; Haycock, 2000; Lance, 1994; Lance et al., 2000). Lance received the Distinguished Service Award from AASL in 2013 ("Awards", 2013) as his research in librarianship led to abundant studies and articles that influenced the library profession and beyond. At the same time, there are numerous studies providing evidence to support library programs and librarians as essential elements of an effective school system (Lance, 1994, 2002; Lance & Hofschire, 2012; Lance & Kachel, 2018) not all educational stakeholders are aware of the research regarding the importance of library programs to the

academic achievement of students (Baker et al., 2020). The DOE has Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) was passed with provisions that recommend but did not require plans to develop effective school libraries to improve academic achievement (American Library Association, 2018). School libraries presently include books, makerspaces, databases, innovation, and collaborative learning areas, but these materials, staffing, funding, and academic impact are essential (Scholastic, 2016).

Social Context

Addressing educational achievement gaps in the United States aims to improve school experiences and opportunities for all learners while ensuring that underserved populations are not marginalized (Byrd, 2020). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) seeks to ensure that all students reach academic standards (Smith, 2020). Access to school library collections is vital for students to have research and recreational reading supporting academic standards and personal growth, but students from lower-income families have a greater need for the library collection (Scholastic, 2016) as libraries provide equitable access for the school community. Loss of library access correlates to lowering student literacy abilities (Torres, 2022) and restricting students' learning independence (Agee, 2019). Librarians collaborate and co-teach with content area teachers at higher levels as librarians have more years of experience and support in closing the academic achievement gap (Burrell et al., 2018). School library programs and librarians serve all students in the building, and students who benefit from having a high school librarian are career and college ready (Farmer & Phamle, 2021). Schools looking to improve the learning experience for their students would benefit from the study. In addition, community members can learn from exemplary schools and their implementation of school librarians and library programs to help close the achievement gap and replicate ideas in their setting. Students deserve the best

preparation for their future, and research about the impact of school librarians and library programs will be analyzed in this study. Furthermore, architects can consider additional ways to design libraries to support academic achievement (Altenburger, 2021).

Theoretical Context

The DOE has encouraged schools since 1982 to address the academic achievement gap with the National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBSR; 2021) program; however, the application does not include specific information about the school librarian or school library program. Conducting a study that included the topics surrounding self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) with educational professionals serving at NBSR provided a window into the role and perception of the library program achievement that has not been conducted at this time. Levels of support can impact collaboration with school librarians to enrich student outcomes. This support can enhance educator efficacy (Bandura, 1989) so that teachers are more successful in academically challenging their students. Interactions with others can inspire individuals to make positive changes through personal agency (Bandura, 1997). Best practices can be determined for educational leaders to consider in their respective schools and compared to recent school library funding and staffing trends from Kachel and Lance (2018), the success of school library programs to support student achievement (Kachel & Lance, 2021) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) to also take into consideration the self-efficacy levels explored by Bandura (1977) to the education professionals at NBSR sites.

Problem Statement

The problem is that National Blue Ribbon School Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing School librarians have limited support for guiding academic growth to address the achievement gap. There is a need to address the growth in academics as many students are ill-prepared for

college or careers (Wisdom et al., 2019). As a result of this lack of preparation, economic gaps (Atteberry et al., 2021) and opportunity gaps (Beard, 2019) are furthering. Another consequence of the achievement gaps is lower socioeconomic status levels (Frings et al., 2020; Rowley et al., 2020).

The NBRS program awards schools for closing the achievement gap; however, the application process does not detail the specific role of school librarians and library programs. Historical research has linked student success with access to a certified school librarian and school library (Lance, 1994; Lance et al., 2000; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). This research continues to align with recent findings about the positive impact of library programs and librarians on students to reach academic goals (Kachel & Lance, 2018; Merga, 2020a; Scholastic, 2016). With ample research finding the impact of school librarians and school library programs on student achievement, it is unknown why this aspect is not consistently a feature of the NBRS program. It is unclear how best to support librarians to ensure that all students find academic success. Learning more about the impact of school librarians and school library programs in NBRS can lead to positive changes in the evaluation process and school leadership decisions from those consulting the future research so that all students can work toward higher academic achievement levels.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study is to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at NBRS in the United States. At this stage of the research, the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries to support academic achievement in the school community will be generally defined as a misunderstood role by educational professionals. While research

demonstrates the importance school librarians have in supporting student academics (Lance & Maniotes, 2020; Lance & Kachel, 2018), there are inconsistent perspectives on the role of school librarians among teachers and principals (Agundu et al., 2021; Baker et al., 2020; M. A. Lewis, 2019; Loh, Sundaray, et al., 2021). The theory guiding this study is Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory.

Significance of the Study

Research studies reach three major aspects of significance: theoretical, empirical, and practical. Empirical significance is gathered through observations during site visits (Yin, 2018). Bandura's (1977) seminal work on self-efficacy theory will be analyzed throughout the case study. Analysis of the schools' beliefs addresses the academic achievement gap, and the perceptions of building principals and English language arts (ELA) teachers at the school librarian and library program address the achievement gaps. Practical significance can lead to positive changes and further understanding of how to assist students with library programs, instruction, and materials in closing the academic achievement gap.

Theoretical Significance

According to Bayar and Karaduman (2021), the library is part of the school culture, which profoundly impacts student success and achievement and frames a theoretical framework. Displaying and encouraging self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Bandura, 1977) can positively impact the entire learning community. Alley (2018) posits that Bandura's vision of self-efficacy can be supported in school environments, including the library. During the rapid advancements concerning information, students must gain skills in communication and thinking (Bandura, 1997). These skills are critical aspects of the AASL (2018) standards. Educators can support

student intellectual growth with higher self-efficacy levels (Bandura, 1997), sustaining a strong school culture of learning and success.

In Alley's (2018) study, it was found that a student identified the beneficial role of library books but shared that the librarian was the most beneficial aspect of the library as they helped them better understand research. Furthermore, the initial school culture is supported by leaders within a school, and the principal should be aware of all aspects of the school culture (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021), including the library. Beard (2019) claims that there is a positive impact on students' learning achievement when their educators believe in their abilities. Throughout the history of school librarianship, numerous librarians have shared that building principals lack an understanding of the role of librarians (Burrell et al., 2023; Kachel, 2019; M. Lewis, 2020; Wiegand, 2021), causing a barrier for librarians to collaborate with teachers or even perform professional duties and stressed the importance of administration support (Carson & Davies, 1948). With findings that self-efficacy levels of school librarians can impact student reading scores (Thompson et al., 2021), consideration of school culture, levels of collaboration with teachers, and perceptions of school library programs from principals and teachers can be viewed through the lens of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory throughout the study.

Empirical Significance

High school students suggested that school libraries have an even more extensive library material collection and empirically recognized the welcoming library environment, further building the school environment (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021). Students also value library author visits, new library book selections, and library research projects (Wisdom et al., 2019). Literacy activities led by the school librarian, such as book fairs, poetry slams, sustained silent reading, book discussions, and book trailers, have a role in supporting a strong school culture of reading

(Craver, 2019). Author visits led by the school librarian bring the community together (Arredondo, 2021) while having the strength to positively impact student reading perspectives and life-long reading habits (Torres, 2022). These activities are examples of school librarians taking the initiative to support a culture of reading (Fitzgerald, 2022). In addition, student research skills improved due to collaborative lessons students took part in from the librarian and content area teacher (Wisdom et al., 2019). Analyzing documents, conducting interviews with school librarians, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and principals, and observing site visits during the planned research allowed providing numerous lenses to consider the social aspect of the library program for student achievement. Altenburger (2021) conducted a multiple case study of three high school libraries and found that the library was a positive factor in the school climate. Like Loh (2016), Altenburger (2021) considered three spaces of the library: physical, social, and affective.

Practical Significance

The NBRS could have a different relationship between the building principal and school librarian that can be explored. Conducting semi-structured interviews permitted insight into the culture and views of each professional and beliefs on roles that librarians have to address academic achievement gaps. The importance of interviews is that stories can be shared and best explain the role of school librarians and school library programs from educators participating in the study. The analysis of school documents and observation in four NBRS sites involved in this case study provided multiple perspectives from the research that can be considered by other educators and compared to their settings.

Looking at the actual spaces and libraries' designs, the analysis employed by Altenburger (2021) can serve as a model for future research of NBRS during site visit observations. The

relevance of all aspects of the library program includes the design (Loh, Hamarian, et al., 2021). Focusing on recent NBRS allowed a common theme with the schools to consider the role of academic achievement. Study participants were from four schools throughout the United States, which accommodated more possibilities for generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research design for the dissertation was a qualitative case study following a practical perspective. Interviews were conducted with principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and school librarians serving in schools that received distinction as a National Blue Ribbon School recognized for closing the achievement gap. The interviews aimed to learn more about the role of school library programs and school librarians in helping students reach academic growth. The focus was on recent award recipients as it was more likely that the participants would have been involved in the programs and decisions supporting the achievement gap-closing. It is essential to learn the role of school librarians and school library programs to support students in succeeding academically. The study provided insight into schools nationwide so students can have the best educational experience possible. Research would also benefit pre-service educators, architects, professors, teachers, librarians, administrators, school board members, and the community so that the impact of school librarians and school library programs can be actualized, and students begin or continue to improve upon the achievement gap.

Research Questions

Exploring the perception of the role of school librarians and school library programs in closing the academic achievement gap required a qualitative case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The broad research questions offered insight into the role and allowed for an ethical study. The research question and sub-questions aligned with the focus of the study and

considered Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Interview data from the study included 24 participants representing five principals, ten English language arts teachers, five school librarians, two reading specialists, and two library assistants serving in four different NBRS that have addressed the achievement gap in the United States.

Central Research Question

How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award?

Sub-Question One

How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award?

Sub-Question Two

How did the self-efficacy of educational professionals in National Blue Ribbon Schools perceive the function of school libraries in addressing the achievement gap?

Definitions

1. *Achievement Gap-Closing Schools* - An achievement gap can be viewed as one group of students achieving a higher success rate than another. The student group could be based on socioeconomic status, gender, or race (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). The NBRS(2021) program applies the state assessment progress of students in schools to determine academic growth.

2. *Collaboration* - An encouraging relationship (Merga et al., 2021) between two individuals or groups working together (Kammer & Moreland, 2020) to reach shared goals defines collaboration.
3. *Collective-Efficacy* - Individuals in a group setting, such as a school setting, see others finding success and are therefore more likely to believe they can also achieve success according to the concept of collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).
4. *Makerspace* - This is the section or materials found in a library that also be referred to as fab lab, hackerspaces (Moorefield-Lang & Dubnjakovic, 2020), learning lab, sandbox, or studios (Woods & Hsu, 2020) and can include both low and high technology materials such as building blocks, robots, or a recording studio supporting both real-world and personalized learning goals (Mann, 2018).
5. *National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS)* - NBRS is an annual distinction awarded by the US Department of Education (Visone, 2022), which can recognize as many as 420 schools across the country with success in two different performance categories: Exemplary High-Performing and Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools (NBRS, 2021). Participants in the study have experienced serving in NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools as principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and school librarians (kindergarten-Grade 12).
6. *School Librarian* - This is the approved term according to AASL (Bray & Hollandsworth, 2011) to denote the certified teaching staff that manages the school library program, collection, and instruction. School librarians can also be referred to as school library media specialists and teacher librarians in the research literature (Merga, 2020a). Still, school librarians will be the nomenclature applied throughout the study.

7. *School Library* - The school library is an input of the school staffed by a school librarian, which offers facilities and current materials organized to support the learning and educational missions of the school community with continuous access for learners (Suleiman et al., 2018). With the increase in multimedia resources found in school libraries (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022), this area can also be referred to as a school library media center; however, the school library will be the terminology utilized during the study.
8. *Self-Efficacy* - The idea that individual performance is supported by experiences and persuasions with the belief that success can occur (Bandura, 1986), and the positive correlation to behavior is a result of self-efficacy (Alley, 2018).
9. *STEM* - This is a well-known acronym for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in education (Woods & Hsu, 2020), which focus is supported in library makerspaces (Mann, 2018).

Summary

The problem is that National Blue Ribbon School Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing School librarians have limited support for guiding academic growth to address the achievement gap. The NBRS program recognizes schools that address the academic achievement gap but does not take into specific account the role of school librarians and library programs in addressing student achievement. The purpose of this case study is to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at NBRS in the United States. These findings can assist other schools as they work to support academic achievement and can be considered by the DOE in future NBRS materials. Perceptions regarding the role of school librarianship surrounding academic

achievement were defined as the role of school librarians and school library programs explored from four NBRS locations serving students in kindergarten through Grade 12. How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award? was the study's central research question. Correlations between research and fieldwork will help other school leaders make educational improvements to better students' learning experiences and help address the achievement gap. School librarianship has developed since the start of the ALA in 1876 (Wiegand, 1996). The dissertation will allow for comparisons in the history of librarianship and that observed at NBRS participating in the research. As schools have a role in providing an equitable learning experience, the role of school librarians and library programs can be evaluated so that students and learning communities have more access to best practices. Considering the research of Bandura (1997) on self-efficacy, this can be contrasted with theoretical research and practical observations from interviews and site visits in the participating NBRS from the study. Broad research questions were planned to address the staffing, programs, and perceived roles of school librarians in the study from the principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and school librarians.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A detailed review of research was conducted in the fields of education and library science to explore the perception of the role of school librarians, library staff, and school library programs to support addressing the academic gap. This chapter will discuss the current literature concerning the research areas. The influences of social cognitive and sociocultural learning theories regarding school library programs and academic achievement will be detailed. Furthermore, the literature surrounding academic achievement, efficacy, intervention, collaboration, library programs, library facilities, library educational resources, library staffing, and funding will be presented from NBRS awarded for closing the academic gap. In conclusion, the necessity of the dissertation research will be discussed regarding the disparity in the literature and application to the self-efficacy theory from Bandura (1977).

Theoretical Framework

The self-efficacy theoretical framework of the research is supported by Bandura's social cognitive learning theory (1989, 2012, 1977, 2001). Bandura (1977) developed social cognitive theory, which was initially known as Bandura's social learning theory (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). The social cognitive theory posits that goal setting and self-efficacy correlates with motivation levels (Bandura, 1977). Schrik and Wasonga (2019) research on the impact of principals on student achievement includes a theoretical framework for Bandura's seminal theories, including self-efficacy and social cognitive theory. Bandura is a leading scholar and theorist, adding to the field of knowledge since their early publications during the 1960s (Schunk, 2020).

How individuals are perceived can influence the levels of self-efficacy can influence motivation and belief in success displayed by an educator and the collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) as a result of collaboration with the school community to view the attainability of goals. The social cognitive theory considers deliberate and responsive human thoughts (Bandura, 2001). In addition, goals can be general, proximal subgoals, or even distal goals (Bandura, 2001). As Bandura (2001) and Schrik and Wasonga (2019) noted, the moral aspect can influence individuals. While not further analyzed by Schrik and Wasonga (2019), collective efficacy could be additionally applied to school staff and student academic achievement. A higher level of collective efficacy correlates to both the commitment and ability of a group to reach goals (Bandura, 2001). The Principal Self-Efficacy Scale (PSES) was used in the research by Schrik and Wasonga (2019); however, the efficacy of other stakeholders was not a variable in the research findings. Each school community member has a role to play in developing and sustaining a level of collective efficacy.

Collective efficacy can be a complicated indicator to measure, but there are also many aspects to individual self-efficacy. Individuals who persist despite disappointment exhibit self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy is based upon the skills a person has and their belief that they can be successful (Bandura, 1977). There can be a wealth of insight in learning more about NBRS: Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools by applying the study of Schrik and Wasonga (2019) while using the seminal research of Bandura (1977, 1989, 1997, 2001) addressing self-efficacy. School principals have increased responsibilities, and the importance of leadership can relate to the self-efficacy sustained by the principal (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). It was found in the quantitative study including 250 principals that those leaders with more advanced degrees had higher levels of self-efficacy; however, student achievement aligned with

the goals setting and self-efficacy of the principal (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). Accessing library materials and engaging in areas such as makerspaces can provide additional social learning opportunities for all learners (Dukper et al., 2018; Li, 2021; Merga, 2020a).

The theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) was applied to research questions and observations reflective notes from site visits. Data was analyzed to find patterns and themes of self-efficacy displayed in participants from the case study. The data helped to illustrate if there was a connection between self-efficacy levels and schools that have earned the NBRS distinction for closing the achievement gap. Other educators can consider implications of self-efficacy in the case study to support continual growth and improvement throughout the school community.

Related Literature

The dominant topics of efficacy, student achievement, and library resources were presented throughout the related literature. Each topic was further analyzed to provide insight into the impact correlated to school library programs. Areas included librarian job requirements, library instructional intervention, collaboration, perceptions of school library programs, academics including reading and research skills, NBRS, staffing, funding, and support of school library programs.

Factors Concerning Efficacy

Many factors impact academic performance, but further research about the impact of school climate is needed (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Thompson et al. (2021) found in their quantitative study that the efficacy levels of school librarians can impact the reading score of students with a positive but weak relationship. Bandura (1977) found in studies that success positively impacts self-efficacy, demonstrating that the importance of belief in ability plays a role in reaching academic goals.

Social-cognitive theories, connected to self-efficacy, are linked to academic leadership (Ford et al., 2020; Thompson, 2021), impacting the overall school culture. The habit of reading books supports both educational and social development for students so that they continue to advance and will be less likely to become in the group of illiterate adults (Dukper et al., 2018). In addition, social interactions in book clubs (Visone, 2018) or serving on literacy task forces (Sutton, 2019) and technology committees (Craver, 2019) may support additional growth. Considering the types of book clubs available for students could identify ways that gender achievement gaps are addressed (Nichols-Besel et al., 2018), including the use of mixed-gender and genre-based book clubs. The time for students to participate in a book program could be before school, during lunch, after school, or in a partnership with a public library (Nichols-Besel et al., 2018)

Creating relationships with teachers, particularly first-year teachers, in the building is a best practice in school librarianship (Brown, 2020; Soulen, 2020; Soulen & Wine, 2018). A study from Soulen (2020), including 26 new teachers in one school district, identified that first-year teachers could choose to have a librarian mentor, and this option was vital to growth as numerous teachers leave the profession in three years, further supporting that librarian mentorships with teachers are beneficial (Ranellucci et al., 2020). According to AASL, librarians facilitate faculty training and can bolster the resiliency of teachers (Soulen & Wine, 2018). Collaboration can present more control in lesson planning and implementation, supporting criteria for resilience in personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997) that would support numerous learners. While full-time teachers are no longer pre-service learners, a detailed study by Ranellucci et al. (2020) identifies lower levels of technology acceptance among teachers entering the field. The American Association (2021) annually sponsors the best technology tools for education that

librarians use and can highlight in the mentorship process. Collaborative relationships can not only enhance levels of resistance but also provide additional efficacy to educators, which will, in turn, best serve the students and the entire school community, allowing educators to feel less isolated (Visone, 2018). Looking at the schedules of librarians can aid in identifying common planning times, professional learning communities offered, and the flexibility of the schedule to determine the feasibility of collaborative lessons. In a study that included 109 teachers, the most significant barrier to collaboration with the school librarian was the resource of time (Crary, 2019). According to Visone (2018), collaboration benefits students with better learning experiences, and complex aspects become more manageable for educators working together (2022). At the same time, a barrier to building collaborative partnerships is when teachers believe their weaknesses in the craft of education will be exposed while collaborating with the librarian (Craver, 2019) or if colleagues fail to value the skills of school librarians (Fitzgerald, 2022) highlighting the importance of collective efficacy in school culture.

Academic Intervention

The use of after-school programs, student mentoring, computer-assisted instruction, content changes, incentives, increased resources, psychological interventions, small-group instruction, and summer reading programs are possible educational interventions (Dietrichson et al., 2017). Different interventions can be applied to schools, and providing the school community with a certified school librarian and an open school library can be the most beneficial intervention (Dukper et al., 2018). School librarians and library programs also provide students with individualized learning experiences when appropriate (Ahlfeld, 2019b; Merga, 2020a) and serve as a vital learning resource (Pasini, 2018; Soulen & Wine, 2018). Even though not all instructional leaders may be familiar with the history of collaboration between librarians and

teachers, the history is outlined by Montiel-Overall (2005). Golden (2020) acknowledges the evolution of the school librarian recently to include providing instruction; however, Burns (2020) reflects that school librarians were also to serve as the role of teachers in the 1960 AASL standards.

A computer-assisted instruction tool available for implementation is Accelerated Reader (AR) and STAR Reading Level Placement tests from Renaissance Place (Bloomer, 2020). Large volumes of student information regarding the impact of STAR Accelerated Reader data from 852,295 students from 3,243 schools in the United Kingdom identified that higher implementation fidelity (IF) with the program was a direct correlation to higher academic attainment (Topping, 2018). Socioeconomic status was not a driving factor, as IF was higher in elementary than secondary levels (Topping, 2018). While IF was not measured, the summer program Big Lift in California, which positions librarians as coaches throughout the school system, found that the measurement of success with an AR data pre- and post-data assessment found data increased by one to one and a half over the summer when most students attribute three to three and a half months lost during the summer vacation (Pasini, 2018). Measuring IF can be difficult because of the time and money needed to conduct this level (Topping, 2018). The average percentage correct (APC) was higher when students had more engaged reading time (ERT) (Topping, 2018). Adaptive testing in STAR is noted to lower student stress and exam time (Topping, 2018). Bloomer (2020) reflects that while librarians run the program, analyze data, and organize the books with quiz information, classroom teachers can change the program's rules and alter the program's fidelity. In Alley's (2018) study, a student expressed that reading for AR will help earn a good grade and understood the essential life-long role of reading; however, freedom to borrow books was restricted. The inability of students to

borrow books of choice contradicts the American Library Association (2004) Freedom to Read statement.

Although AR can be used in many school buildings, ideas of Free Voluntary Reading (Patrick, 2019), Reading Adventures (Pace, 2020), and Silent Independent Reading (Erbeli & Rice, 2021) can be applied. Patrick (2019) recounts the damage that AR had to the joy of reading. To offset this, the use of Krashen's Free and Voluntary Reading (FVR) was applied in Patrick's (2019) case study. Krashen (2011) has dedicated research regarding students and reading; findings regarding free voluntary reading can be used for recreational reading. A goal is to make reading enjoyable, and a strength of FVR was the low cost to implement the program and students finding the program friendly (Patrick, 2019). Another option is the Reading Adventures, which provides students with a bag including reading, projects, and rubrics (Pace, 2020). While not linked to AR, the program's success is noted with a .4 grade level improvement from students in the AR program (Pace, 2020). Silent Independent Reading results were analyzed over 20 years, but an evident influence of success could not be verified (Erbeli & Rice, 2021). Effective librarians host reading incentives (Lance & Kachel, 2018); however, the program could be designed in many different ways. The wide variety of holdings in the library collection supports student choice in reading (M. Lewis, 2020). Librarians hold a pivotal role in making students more engaged in reading as these skills are linked to greater student achievement (Merga & Ferguson, 2021; Merga et al., 2021).

Kammer et al. (2021) conducted a study of collaborations between librarians and teachers, demonstrating the importance of the teacher, principals, and district administrator to understand the educational role of school librarians to have the needed flexibility to collaborate and enhance student instruction. This flexibility was also found to be an asset in collaboration

between school librarians and building librarians (Kammer & Moreland, 2020). Findings from Scholastic (2016) and Robertson (2019) include the importance of a flexible library schedule so that the community has more access to library materials and collaborative learning opportunities with the librarians. A certified school librarian has the professional training to create learning opportunities for the school community when the schedule is conducive to instructional offerings (Robertson, 2019). In addition, the frequency of student visits to the library, the quantity of materials borrowed, and the flexibility of the library schedule are additional indicators impacting student achievement (Lance & Kachel, 2018; Merga et al., 2021).

Dipetso and Moahi (2019) elaborate upon the necessity of students to be information literate regardless of their grade level or future goals and that the work of school librarians to facilitate collaboration between all disciplines to support the development of information literacy skills is essential. The studies of a secondary high school in Gaborone, Botswana found that students were often overwhelmed and confused in the research process, necessitating librarians collaborating more frequently with all teachers (Dipetso & Moahi, 2019). This supports the findings from Scholastic (2016) that students lack skills to locate and evaluate information without proper information literacy instruction found in library programs. In collaboration, the school librarian can provide supporting materials, and facilitate research and the discussion of primary sources (Arredondo, 2021), further enhancing students' information literacy skills. The importance of well-designed and purposeful collaboration is supported by the concept that too many details could become distracting (Kalyuga et al., 1998). School librarians that reach out to collaborate with their colleagues positively impact academic achievement (Scholastic, 2016) and provide growth in the research skills of students (Crary, 2019). Superintendent Arredondo (2021) recounts that English language arts teachers and

school librarians need diverse and relevant reading materials for students. Their collaboration with administration results in higher student reading interest. At the same time, reading proficiencies earned in their grade correlate with long-term success (Pasini, 2018), compounding the challenge for all education stakeholders to improve student achievement gaps.

Golden (2020) found that the teacher viewpoint of school library perception was not correlated between teachers' gender or level of experience. Library anxiety has been found at a college level in students, and Golden (2020) asserts that if teachers are reluctant to go to the library, this impacts their students negatively. Building a strong relationship between teachers and librarians can make improvements and ensure that scheduling options are fluid, and the library is used for positive events and never adverse events, such as detention (Burns, 2020). As the librarian and classroom teacher are seen collaborating with the lessons, students can also experience less library anxiety (Stephens, 2021). Consequently, school librarians can be negatively impacted when not accurately perceived by their peers (Elkins, 2018). An ongoing positive collaborative relationship with both principal and teachers can help to support teamwork (Burns, 2020).

Interventions with library programs can be instrumental in addressing the summer slide, where some students can drop several months of academic achievement if reading does not occur over the summer vacation (Calvert, 2019). Programs such as the summer reading bookmobile led by the school librarian can build further relationships with the school workers, students, and community (Calvert, 2019). School librarians often take the initiative in creating summer reading lists to support active reading throughout the summer vacation, according to Capotosto (2021), and this activity can increase collaboration between the librarian and teachers. Building collaboration between the school librarian and public library can benefit the

involvement in summer reading programs and library card drives, giving students access to a broader variety of resources (Kammer & Moreland, 2020). Different levels of engagement from librarians and teachers can support various academic interventions for students to advance their skills.

Perceptions of School Librarians and School Library Programs

Perceptions of school librarians and school library programs can vary among individuals and information gained from students can provide great insight. Because school library staffing is inconsistent across the United States (Loh, Sundaray, et al., 2021), this can result in school librarians being perceived as undervalued in the school ecosystem. In a study of 30 schools in Australia, numerous librarians noted that the most significant barrier was that staff did not value the librarian's collaborative efforts, compounded with the notion that teachers found their curriculum too filled for any additional collaboration (Merga, 2020a). In a study of secondary teachers located in South Africa, Durodolu (2018) found that educators often forgot about the potential of collaborations with school librarians or to have students use library electronic resources, leading to a suggestion for schools to have a collaboration policy and expectation to further strengthen student information literacy skills. Also, in Australia, Merga and Mason (2019) have researched the importance of a reading culture established and nurtured by the school librarian.

Principals have many responsibilities as instructional leaders and often fail to realize that school librarians are expertly situated to provide professional development (Cellucci & Harland, 2022; M. Lewis, 2020; M. A. Lewis, 2019). Baker et al. (2020) conducted research to ascertain the perspective of principals concerning collaborative relationships between librarians and teachers with the support of research that historically, principals have not been trained or are

unaware of the advantages of having a certified school librarian among their staff and based on their prior experiences 61% of schools in the US lack a full-time certified librarian and 9% of students do not even have access to a school library (Ahlfeld, 2019b). From 275 educational principals in Texas, key findings included that 37% of principals included librarians on leadership teams, and 28% viewed librarians as expert teachers (Baker et al., 2020). The lack of awareness of the leadership abilities of librarians from administrators can relate to fewer leadership team possibilities for school librarians (Cellucci & Harland, 2022; M. Lewis, 2020). Torres (2022) asserts that the lack of understanding a principal may have about the skills of librarians can lead to the assignment of non-instructional roles that do not match the expertise of librarians. As teachers and principals can insufficiently understand the role of the school librarian, collaborating can help form the view paired with communication with the principal about the collaborations and outcomes (Kammer et al., 2021).

For stakeholders to value the school librarian and library program, Burns (2018) identified advice in their study that libraries hold a clear vision. Building relationships with stakeholders offers additional insight into the evolution of librarianship, and librarians must take the lead in providing professional development, highlighting new technology and creative library programs demonstrating the positive impact on academic achievement (Burns, 2018). Forty-five schools in Singapore took part in a study that found that 20.6% of school leaders and 24.3% of teachers never visited the school library, failing to realize the possibility of enhancing the curriculum with collaboration (Loh, Sundaray, et al., 2021). The importance of vision (Burns, 2018) and the lack of visits from educators to the library (Loh, Sundaray, et al., 2021) demonstrate the importance of the librarian in building relationships, inviting the community to the library, and learning more about the impact from the library programs on student

achievement success. Administration can have a significant impact on school library programs; a study based in Nigeria, including 50 librarians, 100 teachers, 50 principals, and 150 parents, found that the principal influences both the library program and policies and evidence is prominent about the role librarians have to impact student achievement (Agundu et al., 2021).

School Librarian Requirements

The role of school librarians can vary, as noted in Merga's (2020b) study of 40 school library job descriptions and that too many work responsibilities can hinder librarians from reaching the highest academic impact for students. Elkins (2018) reviewed job descriptions of school librarians, and of 67 districts, 57 had specific school librarian job descriptions, whereas 91% included the librarians as the roles from the publication *Empowering Learners* to include instructional partner and only 50% of the job descriptions approaching the role of leader in Florida. Whitton (2019) studied 65 online job postings for public school librarians that represented 33 of the United States, and 75% of the postings did not include the leader role, indicating that leadership is not openly embraced. The Future Ready Librarian Framework attempted to establish a uniform description for the school librarian position (Miller & Bass, 2019), but this has not come to fruition. School librarians positively impact students worldwide (Merga, 2020b) but can be negatively affected by a lack of staffing, hours open, and funding levels. The teacher shortage has led to lessening credentials to fill gaps and can also contribute to stakeholders misunderstanding school library certification (Torres, 2022). All 40 descriptions in Merga's (2020b) study of school library job descriptions include teaching, and at least 30 of the 40 applications had collaboration, collection building, literacy education, support to staff and students, library environment, communication, administration, events, and displays. Proper communication regarding library displays can occur when the librarian creates school

announcements and emails or shares them during lunch (Horan, 2019). The librarian has a role in supporting academic achievement so that all members of the educational ecosystem can work towards short and long-term learning goals (Muhammad & Aziz, 2019). Kachel (2021) asserts that districts serving more Hispanic and English language learners (ELL) students were less likely to staff school librarians.

Failure to actualize the educative capacity of school librarians by fellow teachers, education leaders, and community members can be a huge barrier that also results in a lack of staffing and budgetary means (Lance & Callison, 2005; Merga, 2020a, 2020b; McPherson, 2020). According to the NCES statistics from 2005-2012, the staffing decline in school librarians was more significant than in all other teaching professions (Craver, 2019). Kachel and Lance (2021) found a positive relationship between library staffing and those states that made library staffing both mandatory and enforceable; however, these traits apply to just ten states and the District of Columbia, with thirteen states having a full-time state employee solely in charge of school library programs yielding educational inequities throughout the nation. The disparity is evident in California as the state does not mandate library staffing or funding and has a ratio of one librarian to 7,187 students, according to the California State Auditor report of 2016 conveyed by M. A. Lewis (2019) and that principals lacked the knowledge to find value in school library programs. As many principals and school administrators in California do not collaborate with school librarians, it becomes harder for the leaders to have the experience to advocate for the library positions (Ahlfeld, 2019b). Staffing of libraries in Michigan presents 92% of students lacking a full-time librarian (Ahlfeld, 2019b), demonstrating that staffing is low in multiple states.

It was reported that a new principal was advised to cut the position of the school librarian to help balance the budget when serving the Houston Independent School District (Hand, 2018); however, advocates from Students Need Libraries collaborated with the community to show the benefits of school librarians and school libraries. Also, Whitton (2019) asserts that school libraries frequently face cuts due to budget limitations. Not all schools lack funding for libraries. In Virginia, most public schools have a full-time school library supervisor, and the state department of education standards of quality indicates one full-time librarian per 300 students and two full-time librarians after 1,000 students in a secondary level building (Burns, 2020). From research, M. A. Lewis (2019) identified that administrators believed the librarian's role has changed, but many did not find this perspective to expand beyond a resource that provides a place to offer books. According to the study, including 290 school districts from 40 states and the District of Columbia, there was a lack of supervisors with library experience overseeing school library programs (Weeks et al., 2017). The importance of collaboration and support was evident when Lance (Lance & Callison, 2005) addressed an audience with educational stakeholders and claimed that the support for collaboration between librarians and teachers was more important than all of the funding materials.

Student Academic Achievement

Lo et al. (2018) assert that school librarians' work, collaboration, lesson planning, library collections management, and other aspects positively impact the students and school community. A study of six junior high schools in Ghana, where half of the schools had school libraries, and half did not, found a significant positive difference in the academic success earned by students who had a school library program (Dukper et al., 2018). The interactions with the librarian and

the collection available to students impact a school culture to support learning and achievement (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Durodolu, 2018).

Motivation toward reading is paramount, as Toste et al. (2020) indicate that motivation declines as students advance in grade level; however, readers do not automatically have lower motivation due to lacking reading skills. Lance and Hofschire summarize numerous studies with a conclusion that communities with a qualified school librarian and library program have students more successful on reading assessments and do not change despite the poverty or wealth of an area (Thompson et al., 2021). Students were also found to develop more independence and responsible learning due to access to library resources (Dukper et al., 2018). By applying motivation, reading goals can be set to support personal success according to goal theory (Bandura, 1997). The collaborative lessons with librarians facilitate reading engagement while noting that reading might look unassuming, but it is an active learning process (Merga, 2020a) while bolstering motivation levels.

News literacy skills for students have been found to have room for growth (Farmer, 2019) that can impact academic achievement and future goals. Librarians can collaborate with teachers to address various print, video, and images for literacy skills (Farmer, 2019) so that students gain more vital evaluation skills. Evaluation of information will support the essential skills of academic achievement in inquiry (Lance & Maniotes, 2020). Inquiry skills allow for self-directed choices so students can elect their own project-based learning or personalized learning experience in collaborative lessons with teachers and the librarian (Berg et al., 2019). This collaborative focus on inquiry will support all students in reaching further depths of knowledge and academics as the librarian is to reach all students (Lance & Maniotes, 2020).

The application of e-learning environments cannot be overlooked (Blessinger & Comeaux, 2020), as students need to be prepared to research current and future situations. The utilization of mobile technology continues to evolve and impact student research skills (Bowler et al., 2018). Standards from the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) postulate that high-quality print and digital resources will support the entire learning community in continuing to read and research (Dawkins & Gavigan, 2019).

Library Educational Resources

The school library consists of many components such as teaching spaces, books, digital resources, audio materials, makerspace items, and displays, many of which are considered job responsibilities of librarians (Merga, 2020b). Having a detailed collection development policy aids the librarian in serving the school while offering a resource for community members to consult (Dawkins & Eidson, 2021), affording a more explicit role of the library program. The American Association of School Librarians (2018) Standards and Future Ready Librarians Framework (Robertson, 2019) need to be considered with each resource that can be used to support collaboration. All reading materials used for student self-selection of reading support the growth of reading skills (Gruer & Perry, 2020). Reading materials can be used for regional state reading competitions organized and hosted by school librarians (Calzada, 2019). Suppose administrators need further evidence of the value of collaboration. In that case, these activities for students with the librarians and teachers will allow the best use of the resources (Kachel, 2019) while supporting depth of knowledge and use of educational resources. Examples of librarians leading Breakout Edu technology events, digital scavenger hunts for students, and students creating portfolios to demonstrate the information and learning they create are ways that librarians can show the strength of the library collection (Calzada, 2019).

Historically, library educational resources have been contested with technological advances, as outlined in the debate on library materials (Wiegand, 2021). The role of makerspaces in libraries has been a prevailing topic in library research with various professional viewpoints that can alter collection development policies. If schools do not have makerspace materials, this could be improved by working with local public libraries that have this type of material (Yuen & Liew, 2022). Further, school librarians can learn from their public libraries through collaborative relationships as the public library has a long history of serving as a crucial community space (Dickey, 2023). Funding and academic measurements can inhibit the success of a library makerspace, which were explored in the case qualitative study of the dissertation. Makerspaces are ideal for school libraries, given the AASL standards (Woods & Hsu, 2020), and student maker projects can also be displayed in the library (Merga, 2021).

Collection Development Policy

The content available in school libraries is guided by the collection development policies of the school district and should also contain the mission of the library program in a format that is available for stakeholders to read (Craver, 2019; Dawkins & Eidson, 2021). Dawkins and Eidson analyzed 80 different district policies on school library selection and found that policies need to be current for librarians to build the collection and that there is room for improvement in policies. According to Agundu et al. (2021), the library policy must be written according to district goals and revisited frequently. While collection development policies include selection and reconsideration plans, the policies inform the librarian on the priorities for the collection as there is limited space in the physical school library (Ahlfeld, 2019a; Dawkins & Eidson, 2021). The usage of the library collection also needs to be transparent to determine access to materials outside of school. Makerspace items such as robots and Playaway audiobooks far exceed the

average print children's book price of \$18.00 for a school library book (School Library Journal Staff, 2022). Makerspaces have faced limitations due to socioeconomic and geographic constraints; thus, school libraries with policy statements can best address the inequity and offer appropriate materials in the collections (Mersand, 2021). Dawkins and Eidson determined in their study that only 22 policies were updated within a decade, which does not help the growth of curriculum, research, or recreational reading materials. Library collections must reach the curriculum goals and provide all community members with diverse options (Jorgenson & Burrell, 2020). Plans for library collections should include resources for future students who might need additional assistive library technology (Agee, 2019).

Collection development policies also consider the ALA *Code of Ethics*, which originated in 1939, and the *Core Values of Librarians* were first released in 2004 (Oltmann, 2018). Both professional documents embrace the importance of library collections to support diversity, life-long learning, and democracy (Oltmann, 2018). Library collections must also match the instructional needs of the community as the AASL National School Library Standards for Learners focus on the domains think, create, share, and grow (Deskins, 2020; Kerby, 2019; Moreillon, 2018). Library collections should also reflect current topics and community student preferences (Loh, Hamarian, et al., 2021). Access to a high-quality library collection can afford students a safe place filled with fiction novels to support pleasure reading while developing empathy and books to help students address problems with bibliotherapeutic reading (Merga, 2020b). Johnson (2019) concludes that reading fiction can increase awareness and compassion exhibited by students, and Fitzgerald (2022) indicates that reading fiction supports students in further developing empathy. The scholarship and work of Bishop (1990) are considered revolutionary in supporting the creation of diverse collections for readers (McNair & Edwards,

2021; O'Donnell, 2019; Trudeau, 2023). Increased academic gains from students have been found to improve as students read more (Fitzgerald, 2022). At the same time, the library collection must support the entire school curriculum; therefore, the collaboration between the librarian and teachers will ensure the collection matches the student's learning needs (Deskins, 2020).

Collection development supports the curriculum and includes policies that can restrict or allow flexibility. Collection development policies can also include how students address late, lost, or damaged library materials, and Johnson (2019) urges flexibility in this regard. Instead of having a financial obligation for lost materials, students could work off the cost by helping in the library (Johnson, 2019). Kunkel (2020) advocates that imposing fines for lost materials could lead to inequity for students. Policies such as book checkout limitations, penalties for late books, and selecting books only at a reading level diminish student equity in collection development policies (Pentland, 2019). Ways to include improving the collection development are to provide students unlimited access to books and having additional professional library staff to help librarians shelve books, include money in the library budget for new materials and replacement library books to avoid fines and repayment from students, and support self-selection of library materials (Pentland, 2019). Collection development policies have severe implications concerning student equity (Johnson, 2019; Pentland, 2019).

Cataloging and Classification of Materials

Providing an organized and logical way to locate materials relates to cataloging and classification of materials, and the two predominant styles in United States libraries are the Library of Congress for more extensive libraries and Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) for smaller public libraries and school libraries (Clarke, 2021). Looking at a broader perspective, the

DDC is used the most in libraries worldwide and is presently in the 23 edition (Clarke, 2021). Nonfiction topics are arranged by discipline (Moeller & Becnel, 2019). Cataloging and organization is an essential aspect of coursework in the education of school librarians (Engelson, 2019), and these skills shape the collection for the school community (Moeller & Becnel, 2019).

Another type of growing organization is known as reader-interest classifications, which began in 1936, became popular in the 1970s, and lost acclaim in the 1980s and 1990s (Clarke, 2021). Bookstores are frequently arranged in a reader-interest classification fashion, and this can help patrons find items faster and associates stock the shelves more quickly (Clarke, 2021). In a study of seven school librarians, Moeller and Becnel (2019) identified that students found books faster with genrefication, a type of reader-interest classification with fiction arranged by topic such as historical or sport fiction, and is also a student-centered approach. AASL (2021) holds a position statement regarding labeling, which instructs librarians to have a classification system that is taught and instructs students on different classification systems so they can effectively use other libraries in the future; however, one system of use is not identified. Librarians are cautioned that personal bias must be considered if the library is generified, and that classification or labels do not reflect subjective judgements (Lechtenberg et al., 2021). While no standard genres have been established for cataloging, genrefying with clear signage of fiction books has been selected in numerous schools for fiction collections so that the books are not simply arranged by author last names, as the books would be found by subject and then alphabetically by the last name of authors (Moeller & Becnel, 2019; Sultanik, 2020). Recent commercialization to streamline is exhibited in Genre Solutions from the vendor Follett to assist in the transition that school libraries may take from DDC to genrefication as librarians could sacrifice collaboration time with teachers to put this system into place (Witteveen, 2019).

Genrefication can help to build student and teacher self-efficacy in locating library materials (Sultanik, 2020). A challenge to books arranged in DDC is that it can lead to an overabundance of options for learners, causing confusion and additional time for book selection, while genrefication can address these challenges, build confidence in students, and increase their likelihood to help classmates (Sultanik, 2020). Sultanik found that book selection decreased from an average of three minutes to five minutes and 30 seconds for book selection using a combination of instruction and genrefication to catalog materials. Witteveen (2019) shared examples of students becoming more independent in locating library books and borrowing more books due to genrefication.

Database Collection

Databases in the library's digital collection provide students with a wealth of verified information to support both the research topics and individual interests of students (Ivory & Viens, 2019). Ivory and Viens detail that many databases are available, and highlight the companies EBSCOhost, Gale, JSTOR, Lexis Nexis, and ProQuest in elementary and secondary schooling, considering the curriculum, standards, resources, and strengths. Providing teachers with database training is another priority for librarians as educational leaders (Fitzgerald, 2021). Awareness of the databases available at the local public library should influence the database decisions in collection development for the school so that they do not overlap (Ivory & Viens, 2019; Moreland & Kammer, 2020). Both school and public librarians aim to help their patrons develop information literacy skills (Nzomo & Fehrmann, 2020) supported by database instruction. This shared mission can also allow for additional collaboration between the school and public librarian to meet the needs of the student and can also encourage public library card

sign-ups (Ivory & Viens, 2019), as many public library databases are accessed using library card credentials.

Using databases in student research allows students to skim materials, apply Boolean logic, and develop organizational skills while becoming more confident in their research abilities (Ivory & Viens, 2019). These types of skills support inquiry-based and critical thinking skills that students need now and, in the future, while allowing additional technology integration into student learning and collaborations (Fitzgerald, 2021). Establishing inquiry learning can be challenging; Stripling (2020) asserts that partnership between the school librarian and teacher will be beneficial in strengthening inquiry learning and preparing learners to succeed in a society that demands these skills (Nzomo & Fehrmann, 2020).

Inquiry learning is a lifelong skill and one that is often found to be lacking in college first-year students (Pashkova-Balkenhol et al., 2019; Valenza et al., 2022). Continuous collaboration between high school librarians and college librarians can help students, and it is suggested to prepare students with skills to apply numerous citation styles with research (Pashkova-Balkenhol et al., 2019; Valenza et al., 2022). In a study of first-year college students in New Jersey representing six institutions, Valenza et al. (2022) correlated that students who did not have high school librarians had lower levels of information literacy and were not as prepared for college. EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and ProQuest were among the favorite research databases used in high school where students were identified as novices in research, yet students who did not have the experience struggled with research skills or identifying peer-reviewed literature (Valenza et al., 2022). The instruction from librarians regarding databases supports the development of information literacy skills (Pashkova-Balkenhol et al., 2019; Valenza et al., 2022).

E-book Offerings

Dawkins and Gavigan (2019) conducted a mixed method study to develop a clear picture of e-book collections used in eight schools in the southeastern United States to find that promotion and collaboration between librarians and teachers can positively impact the usage of library materials. Simply offering e-books to schools will not assure usage (Fry, 2018), just as providing electronic library resources for students was not the only factor. Librarians need to instruct students on how to use e-books regardless of students being “digital natives” (Prensky, 2012) since information literacy skills are not mastered (Loh, Hamarian, et al., 2021). According to Rutherford et al. (2018), Prensky’s concept of “digital native” has had an impact on educators’ perception of e-book usage as teens are not “digital immigrants.” Furthermore, Owate et al. (2017) found from their study in Nigeria that accessibility and human resources needed to teach students how to use the resources were equally as important. Providing e-books addresses access goals beyond the school day and extends offerings for breaks and summer vacation, further supporting AASL standard IV.C.3 (Ahlfeld, 2019a), representing curating skills (AASL, 2018).

Baron (2017) poses that the ease of either print or digital versions for students can be a deciding factor while addressing that digital reading can be negatively impacted by multitasking. Students need a break from technology to read print materials, and libraries should offer both formats, as Loh and Sun (2019) suggested. Singer and Alexander (2017) record the increase in paperless classrooms; attitudes and perceptions can influence reading preferences. According to a survey administered by Scholastic, 65% of school-age students would prefer to read print books all the time (Stoltzfus, 2016). Gaining further insight into student attitudes and perceptions can enable school librarians and educators to meet the needs of their students.

Makerspace Collections

There has been a noted growth in public school librarians having makerspaces, including materials to support higher-level learning taxonomies and critical thinking skills (Blakemore, 2018). Collaboration between librarians and teachers in STEM areas can improve because of makerspace collection to support content, career, and future-readiness (Woods & Hsu, 2020). School libraries' design to be flexible and open to all students provides equitable access to the materials regardless of the course enrollment of students (Mann, 2018). Phillips et al. (2019) document a growth of passive library activities that could be part of makerspaces or independent of the area, including video areas, puzzle stations, and access to building materials such as Legos or K'Nex. Makerspaces could have a featured weekly activity, such as the Maker Monday program Brown (2020) runs in the school library to provide students with positive interactions and engagement with cross-curricular connections. Furthermore, library art stations such as crotchet and knitting locations have been identified to develop student skills further (Fontichiaro, 2018). To improve the selection of materials at the school library, librarians can observe the makerspaces at their local public library for ideas (Kammer & Moreland, 2020).

Lamb (2020) asserts that makerspaces have been prevalent in school libraries. Yet, Mersand (2021) found scholarly research on school library makerspaces to be lacking, even though the programs can add relevancy to learning for students. While makerspaces can be found in public and college libraries, the attitude of the school librarian toward designing this collection can be a deciding factor (Moorefield-Lang & Dubnjakovic, 2020). An additional challenge to implementing makerspaces in the school library is the lack of measuring the success of such a space on standardized tests (Mersand, 2021). Consequently, Robertson (2019) upholds that implementing makerspaces addressed eight of the 10 strategies in the Future Ready

Librarians Framework at AASL standards. Makerspaces likewise support the goal of having students take ownership of their learning and curating aspects of the AASL standards (Ahlfeld, 2019a), while also allowing students to tinker and safely experience failure and build deep thinking skills (Mann, 2018). Unstructured school library availability supports connected learning that could take place during lunch, before school, or after school hours to facilitate AASL's standards while offering both formal and informal opportunities (Phillips et al., 2019) and creating a welcoming environment (Gabaldón, 2020). Another criterion to consider is the Next Generation Science Standards, which apply aspects of computational thinking in formative assessments (Hadad et al., 2020). Lee et al. (2021) illustrates the natural connection between AASL standards and the Google CS First curriculum to bolster computational thinking reinforced in library makerspace environments.

Literacy skills are united with instruction and have success with the Novel Engineering Program and the use of coding software to support problem identification in fables (Blakemore, 2018). Li (2021) investigated makerspace usage in both a middle school and a public library in a qualitative study, and identified that the learners embraced the social aspect of learning and tinkering. Providing low and high-tech materials for students in the library makerspace also promotes resource equity (Woods & Hsu, 2020). Dukper et al. (2018) discussed that libraries are also a hub of learning that necessitate open access, supporting Li's finding that social learning is essential in library makerspace. The availability of a recording studio in the makerspace can be invaluable, as Hinton (2020) recounts students crafting and creating rap together, connecting to writing skills and intellectual integrity with properly citing works. Lamb (2020) envisions a station-based design in school libraries, including a listening lounge, a biography booth, and outdoor spaces. The student engagement at the makerspace supports a

growth mindset where students acquire an attitude that they can achieve goals and create a project of their design (Brown, 2020).

An additional barrier to makerspaces can be limited spaces in libraries (Merga, 2020b), which can hinder the possibility or growth of library makerspaces. While there is no standardized design for makerspaces, some libraries may have a particular area, shelf, or storage location for makerspace materials in the school library (Mann, 2018). Some libraries may have making kits, including a comb and pipe cleaners to create a loom, or tabletop board games that students can borrow from the library collection (Lee et al., 2021). Not only can the available space provide a barrier, but it can also lead to access issues for students with disabilities if universal design principles are not present in the layout or if wheelchair height to access materials is not considered (Moorefield-Lang & Dubnjakovic, 2020). The STEAM program in The Big Lift program in California relied on the partnership with public librarians and the school system, illustrating the importance of makerspace in the library and education ecosystem (Pasini, 2018).

Professional Development

Library esteem is improved with relationship building (Merga et al., 2021), which can be enhanced as librarians lead professional development sessions for teachers. According to Berg et al. (2019), school librarians are best situated for creating and implementing professional development as school leaders and their experiences with project-based learning. Support from school administrators can foster an environment of increased collaboration between teachers and librarians that includes a discussion of planning, material sharing, and professional development led by librarians (Merga et al., 2021). With advances in instructional technology, Craver (2019) maintains that the combination of leadership skills and the flexible schedule that most school

librarians have allows for librarians to collaborate directly with teachers and provide district training to help them incorporate new tools such as augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and mobile learning, applying best practices while ensuring that students develop essential critical thinking skills. School librarians can lead district-comprehensive training, reinforcing school initiatives and highlighting the strengths of library materials and collaboration lessons aligning with AASL Standards from the Collaborate Share Foundation (Coleman, 2020).

Long-term professional development with school librarians serving as mentors for new teachers was found to add resilience to new teachers (Soulen, 2021). Barriers to reaching new teachers were faced when administrators altered the flexible schedule of school librarians and assigned non-instructional duties (Soulen, 2021). Support from the administration is indispensable to ensure proper mentorship is provided, and it is believed that the mentoring program will lead to additional collaborations between teachers and librarians (Soulen, 2021). At the same time, school librarians may need further training to lead professional development for their colleagues (Merga et al., 2021) and support from the administration (Berg et al., 2019) to embrace both structured and informal development sessions (Moreillon, 2018).

Physical Library Design

Willis et al. (2019) studied 44 students in seven schools with newly designed school libraries, finding that the school libraries supported the students' educational, social, and emotional needs. They found that regular classrooms lacked the space, materials, and social aspects placed in the school library espoused by the school librarians' welcoming climates. School library book displays and promotions were present, and the digital screens for school events also created a more developed community (Willis et al., 2019). School libraries can become the heart of the school community (Miller & Bass, 2019; Trudeau, 2023), which also

impacts the library's location in the school building. The design of college libraries can provide insight into school library designs as learning commons are frequently constructed in college libraries, which can include innovation labs, entrepreneurship hubs, event spaces, and makerspaces, sometimes called a "technology sandbox," to make an exceptional learning destination for students (Jones & Grote, 2018). While some of these spaces might not yet be in a school library, the design of the school library supports collaboration (Stewart, 2018), and there is potential for college library designs that can be considered in school libraries.

Morehart (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) celebrates the construction and layout of libraries in *American Libraries'* annual "Library Design Showcase." In 2021, the John and Claudia Belk Upper School Learning Center in North Carolina was recognized for incorporating collaboration zones, archives, a recording studio, and a café in the design (Morehart, 2021). Other notable college and public libraries included skylights, virtual reality, makerspaces, outdoor gardens, sewing machines, and broadcast booths (Morehart, 2021). No school libraries were recognized in the 2020 design showcase; however, distinguished libraries included art galleries, murals, creation lofts, and community spaces (Morehart, 2020). Palo Alto High School library in California was recognized in 2019, highlighting study rooms, a productivity center, an archive, and a mezzanine level (Morehart, 2019). Other libraries featured that year included quiet reading rooms, an amphitheater, a reading terrace, and a tutoring area. North Stafford High School Library in Virginia was recognized in 2018 as the library included a makerspace, collaboration rooms, an immersive lab, and glass doors portraying historical figures selected by students (Morehart, 2018). Other libraries had green walls to create fresh air, 22 types of study areas, and cooking demonstration space (Morehart, 2018). The featured libraries from *American Libraries*

(Morehart 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) frequently included areas that allow the community to work together in a spectacular setting.

The importance of the design is that the learning areas can be flexible to support collaborative learning (Foote, 2019; Jones & Grote, 2018; Willis et al., 2019), which was also evident in the *American Libraries* design showcase (Morehart, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). Seating in the library provides comfort for learners of all sizes with upholstery and appealing colors or styles (Jones & Grote, 2018), while affording flexibility (Stewart, 2018; Willis et al., 2019). The age of the library and the square footage for each student should be considered (Foote, 2019) to ensure the space is impressive enough to sustain learning and be positioned with natural light (Stewart, 2018; Willis et al., 2019). The vast area also gives students more choices for seating and materials (Merga, 2021; Willis et al., 2019). When college students experience a less developed library program or a non-existent library in their previous school, this can lead to anxiety and uncertainty about using a library to support learning (Jones & Grote, 2018). Collaboration with the high school librarian and college librarian can also help introduce students to college libraries before their first day of college (Jones & Grote, 2018).

Online Library Presence

The AASL standards indicate the importance of online library visibility, and Kachel (2020) assures that sharing library information online allows students and the entire school community access to the values and academic focus of their school library program. Library quality perceptions are gleaned from online views and resource access (Bowen, 2018). Million (2018) stresses the importance of website navigation as users will explore the site on different devices. Webpages must be accessible to all learners, and design elements can be reviewed at www.usability.gov to ensure equitable content access (Bowen, 2018). The library webpage can

include copious resources, and Tella's (2022) study of college students in Nigeria indicated that the ability to locate information through library webpage navigation was most significant.

Usability is also valuable in a school library as the library webpage affords students and the school community access at any hour to library resources and pathfinders, which can be equally if not more notable than the feel of the physical library space (Kachel, 2020).

School librarians can have voluminous educational responsibilities; thus, Kachel (2020) suggests forming a design team and involving students and administrators in the library webpage process. Organizing a task force can allow authentic considerations toward the website to match the school community's needs (Kous et al., 2020). New content for school library webpages is essential for users and can be supported by integrating social media embedded in the library webpage (Tella, 2022). Social media embedded in the webpage can also support district goals, such as strengthening communication with families and stakeholders while spotlighting the positive impact of teacher and librarian collaboration (Brown, 2020). Another option is to use an outside provider to maintain the library webpage (Million, 2018). Access to resources, electronic books, databases, images of students and teachers engaged in library instruction, student work, collaboration forms for teachers, and instructional tutorials are some features suggested for a library webpage (Kachel, 2020).

National Blue Ribbon Program

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) runs the National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS) program to recognize distinguished schools with outstanding student achievement or who are making remarkable gains to address the academic achievement gaps (Visone, 2018). Collaboration is maintained with the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Association of Middle Level Education, and the National Association of Secondary School

Principals (NBRS, 2021). When serving as the secretary of education under President Reagan, Bell (1981) asserted that the federal government contributes to ensuring that education quality improves. In 1982, Bell established the National Blue Ribbon Schools Award to recognize high-quality schools and offer solutions for other schools to improve (NBRS, 2021). Since the award program's inception, over 9,000 schools have received the distinction (U.S. Department of Education, 2022b).

Criteria for distinction begin with a nomination for the chief state school officers, allowing schools across the United States to be considered (Visone, 2018). The next step is for the nominated schools to complete essays and provide information about the school climate and successes, ensuring accuracy; the distinguished schools are awarded following the year submitted to ensure that the title is deserving (Visone, 2018). The annual award has two categories: Exemplary High Performing Schools and Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing (NBRS, 2021). Schools in states with the highest achievement in the top 15% of whole school performance, high school graduation rate, and the top 40% of school subgroup performance are considered to have addressed the rigors of Exemplary High Performing Schools (NBRS, 2021). The second category is the Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools with four criteria: school subgroup improvement in the top 15% of the state, school subgroup performance in the top 40% of the state, and whole school improvement exceeding the state improvement (NBRS, 2021). Lastly, the high school subgroup graduation rate in the top 40% of each subgroup is another criterion for Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools (NBRS, 2021).

Shared leadership, teamwork, and collegiality are hallmarks of achieving National Blue Ribbon School (Visone, 2018). Visone (2020) reflects that another aspect found in high achieving schools is leadership among the teaching staff, and collaborative relationships can be

another indication of this desirable trait. Earning this award brings prestige to the entire school community (NBRS, 2021). NBRS criteria evaluate school reading strategies (Visone, 2018), but not with a lens on the librarian or library program's role in supporting the goal.

While the role of school librarians and school library programs is void from the NBRS (2021) application, numerous studies illustrate the importance of school librarians and library programs. Lance and Callison (2005) assert that the earliest research on libraries' impact on academic achievement occurred in the 1960s, continued with quasi-experimental studies about library role in academic achievement in the 1980s, and advanced to statistical modeling in the late 1980s and the 1990s. In a statewide study of 500 school libraries in Pennsylvania, the level of the library program, certified school librarian, administration, and funding support directly correlated to students' academic achievement on state testing, known as the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (Lance et al., 2000). The presence of a full-time school librarian is a strong indicator of higher student graduation rates, and despite the student background, students earn higher test scores in language arts, reading, writing, and mathematics in schools that employ full-time school librarians (Lance & Kachel, 2018). Lance conducted landmark studies finding that schools having certified school librarians serving their students in libraries along with administrative support and funding for library resources were correlated to student academic success in states including Colorado, Illinois, Alaska, Michigan, Iowa, Oregon, New Mexico, Indiana, Idaho, and South Carolina (Scholastic, 2016). A recent study identified that having a full-time school librarian correlated to higher student success of proficiency on the state assessments in Missouri for all tests, including English language arts, math, and science (Burress et al., 2023). These studies and my dissertation can be shared with the DOE and their NBRS program for application consideration.

Summary

Exploring the perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and school librarians serving in NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools regarding the role of school librarians and school library programs to support academic achievement provides an opportunity for consideration of unique perspectives. Closing the achievement gaps is an essential goal of schools so that all students can achieve success. The NBRS program annually recognizes schools that reach these objectives. The crucial ideas from Bandura's self-efficacy theory can support the traits found in successful schools. Many factors support students in achieving academic achievement aspirations. Providing students, staff, and the community with a certified school librarian, school library staff, and school library program can positively impact achievement; however, this information is not included in detail with the NBRS award evaluation. Often, administrators make decisions that can support, neglect, dismiss, or even remove the library program. Relationships between school librarians, administrators, and teachers can alter self-efficacy levels and resilience that influence students' academic progress and change the collective efficacy within a school environment. Presently, there is an existing gap in the literature concerning the connection between the library staff's role and the program's academic success and the NBRS achievement gap in school attainment. Consequently, additional research is needed concerning the role of the school librarian, library staff, and library programs in recognized schools.

NBRS has been celebrated for decades for the academic impact that education creates for learners. Learning more about the role of collaboration and interventions with school librarians and material offerings in school library programs addressing the achievement gap can aid other schools yearning to make improvements and inspire additional implementations in schools.

Trends in school library funding, instructional support, library spaces, and perceptions of school library programs from recognized achievement gap-closing schools (kindergarten through Grade 12) will be analyzed to provide insight into the role of school librarians and library programs in supporting academic achievement. Sharing experiences from recent NBRS allows for the practical application of ideas and best practices for the education community. Applying Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory can support the view in the field of education.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at NBRS in the United States. These findings can assist other schools as they work to support academic achievement, and can be considered by the Department of Education (DOE) in future NBRS materials. Perceptions regarding the role of school librarianship surrounding academic achievement will be defined as the role of school librarians and school library programs explored from four NBRS locations serving students in elementary and secondary schooling. Semi-structured interviews with key school personnel, as well as document analysis and observation during site visits occurred to ensure triangulation. The research design was a qualitative case study that considered multiple perspectives (Yin, 2018). Interviews were conducted with principals, English language arts teachers, librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants serving in schools that received distinction as a National Blue Ribbon School recognized for closing the achievement gap. Document analysis and observation were the other two methods of collection to ensure triangulation. The data analysis aimed to learn more about the role of school library programs and school librarians in helping students reach academic growth. Procedures considered IRB approval, consent, member-checking, coding, data synthesis, and transferability to aid future researchers with study replicability.

Research Design

Qualitative research is embraced in areas of human science, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), which extends to research in the education field. Another focus of qualitative research is to employ observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018), as this is a data collection method in

the research. Qualitative studies have a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the data collection included site visits from this viewpoint. Taking a closer look at the role of school librarians and school library programs concerning the academic achievement gap through the lens of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy is a complicated topic that can be best illuminated with the stories shared conducting a qualitative study that affords flexibility with a writing style (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A qualitative case study explored the role of school librarians and school library programs in schools that earned the National Blue Ribbon School (NBRS) distinction for addressing the academic achievement gap. Clear metrics were applied, but specific impacts of the school librarian and school library program are not detailed in the evaluation and NBRS selection process. Conducting a qualitative multisite case study enables voices from specific school settings to be heard and would not otherwise have to share experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and investigate the complicated topic of academic achievement. Participants were from nationwide school systems that have earned the same distinction as NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools, which is ideal for a qualitative multisite case study. The case study was bound and illustrated purposeful sampling (Yin, 2018) as participants served schools identified as NBRS in 2022 or 2023. Case studies allow for themes to be determined by the data collected and organized into a database, such as within-case and cross-case analysis (Yin, 2018), helping other schools address academic achievement. Numerous participants engaged in the collective or multiple case study approach, providing real-world experiences, and increasing generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research design was a qualitative multisite case study (Yin, 2018). Before any contacts were made to potential sites, IRB approved the study (Appendix A). Interviews were

conducted with principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and school librarians serving in schools that received distinction as NBRS recognized for closing the achievement gap. The goal of the interviews (Appendix B) was to learn more about the role of school library programs and school librarians in these schools in helping students achieve academic growth. The focus was on recent award recipients as it was more likely that the participants would have been involved in the programs and decisions supporting closing the achievement gap. It is essential to learn the role of school librarians and library programs to help students succeed academically. The study can provide insight into schools nationwide so students can have the best educational experience possible. Research could benefit pre-service educators, professors, teachers, librarians, administrators, school board members, and the community so that the impact of school librarians and library programs can be actualized and students begin or continue to improve their academic achievement. Observations addressed all items from the site visit note chart (Appendix C) providing consistency during site visits. Additionally, readers can review this material to analyze their library and library program.

Case studies have been conducted in several fields, including education (Yin, 2018), but are well known by Freud in psychology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin posits that popular non-research media studies presented as scholarly have weakened credibility concerning developed case studies. Consequently, the triangulation of interviews, document analysis, observations, and construct validity supported by member checks (Yin, 2018) sustained the concept of rigor and reliability for readers of this study. A strength of this design, according to Yin (2018) and Creswell and Poth (2018), is that numerous perspectives and voices can be shared as a result of the research that has not been detailed before to tell the story of the impact of school librarians and library programs for students to find academic success and close educational gaps. The

interviews necessary to reach saturation required dedicated time for analysis and passages from the interviews. All research was ethical (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the fact that I do not have any known prior contact with the school librarians, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and principals in the study upheld the tenant. Very few NBRSE Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools are from my home state of Pennsylvania. In fact, I have never had any contact with an employee from the one recent secondary NBRSE Achievement Gap-Closing School in Pennsylvania (NBRSE, 2021). This unfamiliarity helped to avoid a previous relationship or present an imbalance of power, which is to be avoided in research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Theory and analysis of patterns can be a better situation due to a well-designed case study (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004).

Research Questions

The central research question and sub-questions, listed below, have been designed to shape the research program.

Central Research Question

How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the NBRSE Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award?

Sub-Question One

How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award?

Sub-Question Two

How did the self-efficacy of educational professionals in National Blue Ribbon Schools perceive the function of school libraries in addressing the achievement gap?

Setting and Participants

The settings of the case studies were schools that have received the NBRS distinction for addressing the academic achievement gap. These schools were located in the United States of America. Participants included five specific groups of educators: school principals, English language arts teachers, school librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants serving schools participating in the case study.

Setting

The research setting involved sites with the common trait of earning the distinction of NBRS Program Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools from the DOE in 2022 and 2023. In addition, all sites serve elementary, middle school, junior high, or high school audiences in the United States. According to the NBRS (2021) data, 76 schools earned the Exemplary Achievement Gap- Closing Schools award; however, 16 schools received this distinction at the secondary level in 2021. Focusing on a specific award of NBRS provided comparable organizational structures and academic results while taking a closer analysis of the role of the school librarians and library programs in closing the academic achievement gap.

The leadership structure of participating schools varied, but all schools had at least one principal. The districts had a superintendent of schools. All participating school sites had at least one full-time certified librarian. The career background of the principals, school librarians, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, and library assistants from the educational setting was detailed. This section will be extended upon confirmation of case study sites.

Participants

Consent forms were collected since the participants were adults serving as school principals, English language arts teachers, school librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants. There was diversity regarding the sites based on participants' locations and grade levels. It was evident after receiving consent from participants, that maximum variation of sampling would occur at various sites. Participants had the common trait of working in a school that earned a specific distinction in the NBRS program, lending to purposeful sampling procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Potential sites received a permission request message through email (Appendix D) and a template for a permission response (Appendix E).

Participants in this study were school librarians, English language arts teachers, principals, reading specialists, and library assistants working in schools earning the NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools in 2022 and 2023. A specific total of years of service was not a criterion for participants in the research case study; however, their experience was part of the interview data collected. In addition to years of service, the academic background of participants is included in the study. Themes were uncovered due to the participant demographics collected. Pseudonyms for participants were given so that professional relationships would not be strained due to sharing experiences and perceptions during the study that could impact future professional relationships. After the IRB received and approved letters of support from sites, educators were contacted for the investigation following a recruitment letter (Appendix F). A recruitment (follow-up) letter (Appendix G) was developed if the response was not received. Recruitment (verbal; Appendix H) was crafted if the following methods did not warrant enough participants. In addition, participants completed a consent form (Appendix I) to clarify their involvement in the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Recruitment Plan

Recruitment letters were emailed to potential participants based on the sites' requests. Some sites provided contact information to the researcher regarding possible participants who met the study's criteria. Other sites contacted the participants on behalf of the researcher, and these potential participants were instructed to contact the researcher. Participants were not given prizes or incentives, which can lead to participant bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were informed that they would be active members and have the ability to withdraw if necessary. Also, participants reviewed the data for accuracy and will be provided a link to the dissertation on ProQuest after completion. As the participants were school librarians, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and principals from award-achieving schools, this highlighted the structure of purposeful sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interview schedules and observations adhered to the time available to participants, noting that Yin (2018) warns that this can limit the researcher. The initial goal of the study was that three participating NBRS locations, six principals, three librarians, and nine English language arts teachers from the participating sites would be recruited, making the total number of participants at least 18 individuals. The participants from the award-achieving schools reflect the purposeful sampling process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth, research saturation can be met with 14 participants. This study ended up consisting of four NBRS locations and a total of five principals, five librarians, two library assistants, two reading specialists, and 10 English language arts teachers being recruited.

Furthermore, data saturation permits the researcher to consider theoretical implications having ample viewpoints (Gall et al., 2007). Participants were provided with a clear expectation of the research and given an informed consent form, located in Appendix I, and the participants

completed this before participating in the study. Ensuring that individuals knew participation was voluntary and having a well-defined understanding of the research was vital to establishing ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

The following sections will review the researcher positionality so that readers have a chance to consider the research paradigms subscribed to by the researcher. The first aspect takes into consideration the interpretive framework. Next, the focus upon the assumptions of the research ranging from philosophical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological occurs. This will conclude with the researcher's role.

Interpretive Framework

Case studies often apply pragmatism (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Smith (2020) surmises that pragmatism reviews society at large, and this focus can be related to the concept of an academic achievement gap. John Dewey became a significant figure in pragmatism and a guide on practical program solving while realizing that situations can influence results (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Addressing the concept of problem-solving can illuminate ways that school librarians and school library programs can positively impact and continue to help others in a real-world scenario.

In addition, social constructivism will be a lens to apply to the study that aligns with the research viewpoints. Since schools are places with numerous social interactions that form an understanding of knowledge, the lens of social constructivism can be applied to study the role of school librarians and school library programs in specific award-winning schools. In particular, self-efficacy, as it relates to social cognitive theory and human agency as detailed by Bandura (1989), continues to influence my interests. A viewpoint supported by Bandura's is that

individual experiences and support from coworkers can influence colleagues' beliefs about empowerment. The interviews uncovered the viewpoints of school librarians, English language arts teachers, principals, reading specialists, and library assistants regarding the support of the program. All schools have the commonality of closing the achievement gap, and the learner acquisition of knowledge is also aligned with social constructivism.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions consider specific beliefs and worldviews exclusive to the researcher. This section focuses on assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology, axiology, and the role of the researcher. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), my views will influence the design and implementation of the study as I am a necessary instrument of the process.

Ontological Assumption

The state of being is addressed in ontological assumptions (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). These assumptions permit many accounts to be considered to create reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018); however, God's truth is a reality in my worldview. As humans strive for greatness, they can mistake the intended fact from God. According to Sire (2009), worldviews of reality can be embedded so deeply that participants or I may be entirely unaware of their authentic version of reality. These unintended mistakes, or even the subjective nature of the research topic, can potentially vary results during interviews, for example.

Epistemological Assumption

Views of knowledge are fundamental to epistemological assumptions (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). Qualitative research recognizes that participants will have varied expertise regarding the research study focus, and participants in the study will be afforded a safe space to share their accounts (Mertens, 2017), while epistemology considers the formation of knowledge. Though it

was unknown at the onset of the study, it became clear that there was vast experience from the participating school librarians, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, library assistants, and principals in their respective fields. Allowing participants to be involved in member checks and validation will support epistemology assumptions and give all members a voice (Mertens, 2017). Building relationships with the participants is also essential, according to Mertens (2017), so that information about their experiences is freely shared and the participants feel involved in the research process. Having the interviews as one of the first data collection methods allowed for a professional relationship to form before the observation and site visits. I aimed to author a dissertation to earn a terminal degree while composing a meaningful thesis. However, turning the dissertation into a best-selling nonfiction book was not a goal.

Axiological Assumption

The viewpoint that learning information consists of social and cultural situations is axiology (Tytova et al., 2021). Axiological assumptions account for considering the researcher's personal values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education English and a master's degree in the science of library science, and began my career as a school librarian in 2004. I served as a public school librarian for kindergarten through Grade 12 from 2004-2010, became a public middle-school librarian from 2010 until 2023, and became a public high-school librarian during the 2023-2024 school year. I became a library department co-chairperson from 2014 until 2016, when I assumed the sole role of library department chairperson and maintained this responsibility. In 2009, I began teaching college for the department of library and information science. I taught classes at the graduate level while considered a subject matter expert regarding the management of school library media centers, the history of children's literature, young adult libraries, and literature, and developing library

collections. I published the book *Active Reading: Activities for Librarians and Teachers* (McGuire, 2009). In addition, I participate in local, state, and national professional library associations to continue learning more about the field. These experiences should support the data analysis from the interviews, documents, and site visits to ensure triangulation in the research plan.

Researcher's Role

My role in the research as the human instrument throughout the study must be acknowledged. I did not have experience working in a NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing School. I did not have any known connection or position of authority with potential schools, school librarians, English language arts teachers, principals, reading specialists, and library assistants involved in the study. A goal of mine was to present the findings from case studies so that other educators and school employees can learn more about the role of school librarians and school library programs in considering ways of improving academic success in their respective schools.

As the researcher, I strongly believe in presenting the facts from the literature review and results from the interviews, document analysis, and site visits in a nonbiased manner. While the data methods were defined, acknowledging the role of the researcher as an instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018) cannot be overlooked. I have extensive experience in the field of education and library science. Throughout the entire case study process, I took reflective notes. Reflexivity is a way to strengthen the role of the researcher, adding rigor and validity to qualitative research so that the research process and findings are perceived as more objective (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022).

Procedures

The procedure section includes considerations for the study to be successful. Diligence for procedures was met as a result of thoughtful implementation of procedural design (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and strict adherence to the foundations of the IRB. Permissions for the study will be included and the recruitment plan will be detailed. The specific permissions and recruitment plan share the overall plans so that another research could consider a study of this nature on their own.

Data Collection Plan

Case studies have the trait of being bounded (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and my research plan involved interviewing building principals, English language arts teachers, and school librarians, in addition to library assistants and reading specialists from schools recognized for NBRIS Program Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing School in the years 2022 and 2023. This was an example of purposeful sampling in a collaborative multi-site case study. Analyzing interview themes was a significant part of the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The order of the data collection was intentional. Interviews occurred to build relationships with the participants first.

Furthermore, the information gained in the interviews clarified the document analysis. Having the site visit after most interviews and document analysis collection provided ample background information to apply during the site visits. In addition, the rapport between myself and the participants was strengthened.

Recruitment

Recruitment emails were sent to all possible sites (see Appendix D). Of the potential sites, 24 interviews shaped the dissertation from four sites. Eight interviews were conducted with

individuals who signed consent forms, however participant saturation from these sites was not reached. As a result, these interviews were not part of the study. Participant email forms were either emailed from the school leader or researcher at the determination of the site based on their consent letter (see Appendix I). Once the researcher received consent forms, individual interview dates were determined with participants and scheduled through Microsoft Teams.

Individual Interviews

Interviews enabled specific experiences with the participants to illustrate their experiences related to the research foci that might not otherwise be heard (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Reflexivity can be a challenge in individual interviews where the participating school principals, English language arts teachers, school librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants share what they believe the interviewer would want to be included in the research (Yin, 2018). According to Yin, a strength of individual interviews is that the discussions focus on the study's topics.

Creswell and Poth (2018) assert that enough participants must be included for saturation. Consequently, 24 participants engaged in this study, lending themselves to four schools, each with a school librarian, principals, and English language arts teachers. It was unknown during the process that some sites may have library assistants. Even during the initial research development, the original goal was secondary sites, so reading specialists were not planned as participants during the early stages of the plan. Three of the four sites had a library assistant, and one site had two librarians. As the award-winning schools were part of a program the DOE endorsed, the winning schools were publicly posted and archived on the website. Including the names and locations of schools that meet the study's criteria will not occur as the goal was to ensure the highest levels of confidentiality.

These margins of participants were too slim, and it was necessary to wait for the 2023 award-winning schools to be published in September 2023. According to Yin (2018), it is paramount for case studies to have enough participants to support a higher level of robustness in the study. Having sites for two award years in the study provided more confidentiality for the participants as there were more potential sites and participants.

It was necessary to look at the award winners from 2020 since the 2021 award winners did not hold enough participation in the study. One of the earlier research goals was to have a bounded frame for 2021, but staffing changed, and the years of the award-winning schools needed to be amended. As principals, English language arts teachers, school librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants can leave from school to school, they might not have been involved in the process, or the affected individuals could have already left and not have been a part of it.

Individual Interview Questions

Interviews had predetermined questions; however, the interview process allowed for flexibility. Too much flexibility can cause the researcher to ask questions with bias (Yin, 2018), so it is paramount to construct a detailed plan in advance. The following questions are presented for the semi-structured interviews. Opening ice-breaker questions were a grand tour (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to build rapport in opening interviews. Yin asserts that planning solid questions will yield better results from the data collection, while an adaptive mindset could allow for unplanned insight. The interview design was intended to be shorter (Yin, 2018), initially approximately one hour, and then adjusted to 30 minutes. Interview questions were not shared with participants in advance to provide a similar experience for all interview participants.

1. Hello, my name is Beth McGuire. I appreciate your participation in the study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the perceptions of the role of school librarians and school library programs in addressing the academic achievement gap. How was your day today?
2. Please share your experiences in the education profession and the roles you have served in your career. CRQ
3. Please describe your experiences regarding school library programs. SQ1
4. How would you describe the hours of the library program in your building? SQ1
5. How would you describe the staffing of the library program in your building? SQ1
6. How would you describe the materials of the library program in your building? SQ1
7. What have you observed regarding perceived staff perceptions regarding their school library program? SQ1
8. What have you observed regarding students' perceptions of their school library program? SQ1
9. Why do you believe that the Department of Education thought there was an academic achievement gap in their school before the award year? SQ2
10. What reasons do you believe support the school's academic achievement gap before the award year? SQ2
11. What choices did the school make to ensure students could close the academic achievement gap? SQ2
12. How do you experience the role of the school library program and school librarians in your building in addressing the achievement gap? SQ2

13. SWOT is often used to analyze a program. SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. What do you think is the overall strength of your school librarian and library program to address the achievement gap? SQ2
14. What do you think is the overall weakness of the school librarian and library program for your school to address the achievement gap? SQ2
15. What do you think is the overall opportunity of your school librarian and library program to address the achievement gap? SQ2
16. What is the overall threat to your school librarian and library program to address the achievement gap? SQ2
17. Thank you for discussing all of the questions that I asked. Do you have additional information that you would like to share about the research topic that I failed to ask?
CRQ

Questions one and two were ice-breaker questions to develop rapport between the participant and researcher. These allowed the participants to establish a positive relationship with the researcher, which can be viewed as a grand tour (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While the interview was semi-structured, the opening questions were planned to be the same for each interview. Based on responses from participants, follow-up questions were sometimes needed to learn more about their experiences in the education field. Many questions were planned with how and why in the phrasing, aligning with the principles of qualitative case studies (Yin, 2018).

The third question allowed the participants to describe their experiences regarding school library programs. The participants' replies were based on their experiences. Individual results varied based on experiences, allowing different perspectives to be voiced and further adding validity to responses shared (Yin, 2018). Many factors beyond years of service influence the

effectiveness of education professionals, including professional school librarians and planning skills (Robinson & McNary, 2021). Furthermore, school librarians can hold different certifications and credentials based on the requirements from the state as they vary across the country (Kimmel et al., 2019).

The fourth question elicited information about the hours and the library's staffing during the fifth question. Another aspect uncovered with the question was to see if all participants knew the hours and staffing accurately. Providing before- and after-school hours and having the library staffed with a certified school librarian all day supports a welcoming environment for students (Gabaldón, 2020). Suleiman et al. (2018) opine that library hours should be the entire school day and extend beyond the end of school as this access benefits the learning community. Cross analysis of survey responses from sites and professions can occur (Yin, 2018).

The sixth question about the library program's materials showed a window into familiarity. While the library may have innovative materials and holdings, it was helpful to learn about the experiences of those involved in the case study. A variety of participants includes numerous sources needed in case studies (Yin, 2018), and responses between the school librarians, English language arts teachers, principals, reading specialists, and library assistants were compared.

Questions seven and eight addressed observed perceptions of the school library and staff from coworkers and students. Each participant can have a different sphere of influence, and the stories of perceptions from each participant help to tell a narrative. Perceptions can also address aspects of self-efficacy and collective efficacy articulated by Bandura (1977).

While the NBRIS may explain why schools are defined with distinction or not, the rationale can have many stakeholder perspectives. Question nine allowed participants to present

their beliefs regarding the NBRS affiliation. The viewpoints were encouraged to be shared. Question 10 asked participants to share why they believed the school had an achievement gap. Continuing with question 11, what the school did to support closing the achievement gap can be an individualized response. Both questions could generate responses concerning self-efficacy or collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Each participant evoked differing vantage points about the academic gaps throughout the school; however, the twelfth question asked for insight as to how the school librarian and school library program addressed the achievement gap. Responses in a semi-structured format provided more uniformity and flexibility. Responses between school librarians, principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, and library assistants were compared between site and cross-site to explore themes (Yin, 2018).

Questions 13 to 16 addressed participants' specific perspectives about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the school librarians and school library programs to address the academic achievement gap. These responses were analyzed collectively to see if the answers have similarities and differences. The reactions provided insight into the future directions of school library staffing and school library programs to address the academic achievement gap. Collaboration and Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory were analyzed.

The final question allowed participants to discuss anything that I might not have asked so that they could add to the study. Allowing participants to feel connected and recognized by the researcher is essential to maintaining tone (Yin, 2018). Participants might have been more inclined to stay connected with the research and read the final dissertation, knowing their thoughts and experiences were valued.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed manually to apply coding and identify themes (Saldaña, 2021). Each data collection method had a complete analysis of themes. Themes were then compared to see if there were similarities between data collection results. The use of charts was employed. Yin (2018) shares that data synthesis is time-consuming, and researchers should be prepared to afford the needed time and resources. The use of values coding can play a role in interviews and document analysis since numerous sources add to the perspective (Saldaña, 2021). Another consideration was using dramaturgical coding from site visits to gain additional insight into relationships (Saldaña, 2021). There was a possibility that the responses to interview questions—particularly those addressing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—could lend themselves to motif coding to analyze connections (Saldaña, 2021). Data triangulation was used to find the intersections using the three data methods: individual interviews, data analysis, and site visits. These can be supported with charts, values coding, dramaturgical coding, and motif coding.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Individual interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams, a product available to Liberty University students. The interviews were recorded using both audio and video. Looking back at nonverbal and facial expressions provided additional insights concerning the interviews. It was imperative that I listened to all replies and accurately portrayed responses, following best practices from Yin (2018).

Initially, my goal was to have 18 participants, which would lend itself to three schools, each with a school librarian, three English language arts teachers, and two principals. If these margins were too slim, I knew that I would add schools awarded in 2022 to the list of potential

participants. This period did not produce enough participating sites. It was necessary to wait for the 2023 award winning sites to gather enough sites and participants to reach data saturation.

Initially, one of the goals was to have a bounded frame of 2021, but if too few recipients wished to participate, the years of the award winning schools would be addressed. As principals, English language arts teachers, school librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants can leave from school to school or retire, they might not have been involved in the process, and this led to additional challenges in obtaining participants for the study.

Analysis procedures aligned with case studies parameters from Yin (2018) and follow measures outlined by Saldaña (2021). The procedures are best practice because data results are arranged and organized, allowing themes to be determined (Saldaña, 2021). The analysis is an ongoing process and one of the reasons why Yin proclaims that case studies are challenging but worthwhile.

Document Analysis

Yin (2018) avows that research materials must be organized. Many examples of documents are available on the NBRBS (2021) program website. Some examples from the NBRBS program website include school demographics, enrollment statistics, free and reduced lunch figures, and curriculum and academic support details. These documents supported the study's research questions, addressing connections to the previous academic achievement gap, ways that school improvement occurred, and how equity is addressed throughout the school.

Presently, the application for the program is available online. The application also includes the scoring rubric used for applying to schools. All submissions for the potential school involved in the study were read and analyzed in advance by the researcher to be more prepared for the interviews. The individual schools were asked to provide a copy of the school librarian

schedule and school library job description. The schedules were used for data analysis to see commonalities in the scheduling of librarians to help student achievement. Miller and Bass (2019) opine that school climate data could be available to review, which could be another material to review from the participating schools. Case studies do not have a clear demarcation to signal that enough documents have been collected (Yin, 2018), so the orderliness of documents is vital.

Document Analysis Data Analysis Plan

The materials for consideration were the school library collection development policy, vision, mission, and motto. Documents from the school building, library webpages, and social media were reviewed. Yin (2018) cautions that social media may not be the most accurate or unbiased source so that these sources will be carefully analyzed. Requests from the district for official school communication that addresses examples of the library program and librarians: (a) engaging student; (b) engaging families, community, business, and industry; (c) creating professional culture; (d) outlining school leadership; and (e) providing culturally responsive teaching and learning. These traits are part of the school climate culture focus areas in the NBR program. This displays the strengths of particular document criteria, but Yin cautions that access and bias can pose a challenge in the documents provided. Having interviews before document collection allowed for a positive relationship to be formed, avoiding difficulties noted. Another responsibility as a researcher was to capture the digital footprint of the school library programs from the schools participating in the research. The themes of the data gathered were coded. Descriptions of results were grouped with common traits as well.

Observations

The schools in the study recently received the NBRS award distinction for closing the achievement gap, and seeing the school library environment along with learning opportunities was timely. To best create the observation of the library learning environments, permission was granted to take photographs outside of school hours, as students depicted in pictures could be an additional barrier (Yin, 2018). It was a goal to observe the school library before the school day and during instructional hours so that the library's layout could be matched with the function and delivery of the instructional program. Observing sites to gather information is needed to obtain triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), and a suggested method was to photograph and draw a sketch for the researcher to reference. Observing the school library during school hours provided immediacy (Yin, 2018) and supported information gathered during interviews and document analysis.

To create consistency with the observations, I made a checklist. This document included topics such as makerspace, computers, laptops, audiobook/Playaways, books, organizational method of books, the floor plan, passive activities, collaborative teaching space, student seating spaces, decorations, meeting room, gaming area, special collections, circulation desk, posting of policies, unique displays, security features, location of the library about the school building, and bulletin boards. Watching during the school day was helpful to see the students' and teachers' collaborative learning opportunities. This helped to ensure that the same areas or aspects of the library were observed.

Observations Data Analysis Plan

The researcher used the photographs taken outside school hours to reference and craft a detailed verbal picture for readers. Another role of the photographs was to provide additional

reflective commentary from my perspective. The case study does not print actual images to protect participating schools' identities. I outlined floor plans in my notes to ensure the observations in the dissertation would help educators and architects consider and properly visualize library layouts. Seeing the students' and teachers' collaborative learning opportunities using a checklist school would be helpful. Woolls and Coatney (2018) assert that successful library programs have vital school librarians and school library collections for the community. The note template helped ensure that the same areas or aspects of the library were observed. A sample observational data collection chart for field notes is found in Appendix C. This structure permitted the researcher to be a non-participant observer (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout site visits, at times, it was noted that younger students were curious about the presence of the researcher, and the librarian on site provided an introduction for students.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the basis of trustworthiness in research requires four main tenets. The four components identified as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability will be reviewed in detail. Researchers tend to work diligently to establish trustworthiness in their study, but a supported conclusion is that the reader will determine the level of trust in a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Mindfulness in all areas regarding trustworthiness has been applied to the study.

Credibility

Respected researchers Lincoln and Guba (1985) view credibility as the most essential element of trustworthiness. According to Yin (2018), numerous case studies can use plentiful strategies to support credibility. An example of credibility in this study is that there was a better understanding of the data before the interviews. Using documents helped strengthen the

interview results (Yin, 2018). This is one triangulation method (Creswell & Poth, 2018), as using different techniques helps create and generate credibility. Many different viewpoints were taken into consideration from the interviews with principals, English language arts teachers, school librarians, reading specialists, and library assistants from the research case study. Prolonged engagement also supports credibility (Shenton, 2004), which was achieved with interviews with the principal, English language arts teachers, school librarian, reading specialists, and library assistants from the school, in addition to a site visit and analysis of documents related to the school.

Other ways to help support credibility included using debriefing discussions and peer feedback opportunities throughout the project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another important aspect is that the researcher will employ “reflective commentary,” also known as “progressive subjectivity” from Lincoln and Guba (1985), so that the evolving fact-finding process is detailed, allowing for tracking the development of thoughts (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). I have a background of serving as a public-school librarian since 2004. This background provides insight into the role of school librarianship, and educators and administrators can aid in the research case study to help form a more skilled interpretive bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013) by sharing the material from the study. Throughout the interviews, member checks occurred so that participants could confirm or clarify study details, which added additional credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, interviewees could review the transcripts, adding further credibility, which is needed to present an accurate case study account (Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2018). Debriefing, reflective commentary, member checks, and transcript review helped support the study’s credibility.

Transferability

While I aimed to present a case study with the utmost credibility with steps to ensure transferability, the readers decide on the transfer level (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Using details from the researcher in writing was essential; however, I should not dwell upon the transfer level. In this situation, not all readers will have the experience of serving as a school librarian, English language arts teacher, principal, reading specialist, and library assistant in a National Blue Ribbon School recognized for closing the achievement gap. The research aspired to provide an accurate representation that can be considered experience to apply in a given situation. Detailed descriptions of the research project will help readers transfer the worlds and conditions in the case studies to their situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It is possible that educators would seek to learn more about the role of the school library and school library program to improve academic achievement gaps in their setting and gain knowledge from the case study presented. Still, the reader will decide the level of transferability for their situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Dependability

Qualitative research is complex, but it does not ensure that one data collection method is better (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013) than another for dependability. One way to improve the level of dependability is to articulate clear procedures for the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I needed to use numerous methods and achieve triangulations to support additional dependability, but no specific formula exists for this achievement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The data method collection involved interviews, document analysis, and site visits. I worked with a dissertation chair and committee member to strengthen the inquiry audit further.

Confirmability

Reflective commentary helps to address confirmability, providing needed reflexivity, which is included in the observation process of the research design (Shenton, 2004). An audit trail allows for the documentation of the findings to be reviewed (Shenton, 2004). Knowing that I am an active member of the school library community, it was essential to ensure that professional bias did not cloud the research process. I have no previous relationships with research study members, nor have I held any position of power or supervision over the participants, thus helping to support confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation is also essential for confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), and this process was applied for confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

The IRB approval is included in Appendix A. Participation required consent from participants (Appendix I). During the case study, participants could withdraw. As the DOE publishes the award-winning schools annually and has an archive of all winning schools (NBRS, 2021), complete anonymity cannot be secured. Schools were assigned numbers for identification in the research and future publications to address this situation. Having four schools involved in the study granted schools additional anonymity. As the schools, school librarians, English language arts teachers, principals, reading specialists, and library assistants were located in different areas in the United States, it was best to have consistent site approvals sent to the district superintendents, in addition to the IRB consent.

Digital documents were stored in a password-protected file, as best-practice advised by Creswell and Poth (2018). Artifacts were scanned and added to password-protected files. Artifacts gathered in the research cannot be saved digitally; they were secured and locked in a

filing cabinet. The files will be securely stored for three years, and by the end of three years, it will be apparent if further research will be conducted or if the research files need to be destroyed. Individual interviewee comments must remain secure as personal and professional comments may be shared that could influence work relationships. Participants could fear retaliation due to their responses and withhold true feelings and experiences if the schools would openly and files were unsecured. The consent information reviewed the data storage and security procedures to prevent participants from feeling these concerns. Individual participants were given pseudonyms in the dissertation to afford additional protection.

Permissions

Data collection was taken after IRB approval was given, which was necessary for correct permission and procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Appendix A contains information about the IRB approval. After the site letter was approved by the IRB, participants' informed consent needed to be obtained. No research participants were under the age of 18. As the individuals were from different schools, support from the school district superintendent or administration required permission. Schools and educators participating in the case study were afforded privacy and ethical treatment (Yin, 2018).

Other Participant Protections

Participants in a study can be considered as an uncertain experience, and to help add clarity to the situation, participants could see that their involvement in the study would be voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study. In addition, participants were informed that their names would not be used in the writing as they would be assigned pseudonyms, and their sites would not have their official names. Sites would be assigned a number to provide additional confidentiality for all involved in the research study. These additional masking strategies would

support minor risks for ill will between participants and their colleagues or sites when reading the research findings.

Summary

The design choice of multiple case studies aligned with the goal of the research plan to explore the role of school librarians and school library programs in a specific type of school recognized as a NBRIS Achievement Gap-Closing School. The IRB awarded approval for the research. The doctoral candidate's chair, committee member, and school of education from college approved chapters one through three of the manuscript before data collection. Research positionality and philosophical frameworks should be considered for those who wish to replicate the study to understand the design choices better. Data collection methods included individual interviews, document analysis, and observations to certify triangulation in the study. Participants in the survey were school librarians, principals, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, and library assistants from recent NBRIS, representing four different sites and 24 individuals. Data analysis occurred by finding themes and coding interviews, documents, and observations from site visits to ensure triangulation by applying the fundamentals of case study research detailed by Yin (2018). Peer review literature consulted for this research was evaluated, influencing the research and implications for future studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at NBRS in the United States. While the study originally planned for the participants of English language arts teachers, principals, and librarians, as the study continued, participation expanded to include two library assistants and two reading specialists. The problem is that NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing School librarians have limited support for guiding academic growth to address the achievement gap. Perceptions can influence the levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), including the motivation and belief in success displayed by an educator and the collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) as a result of collaboration with the school community to view the attainability of goals. While research demonstrates the importance school librarians have in supporting student academics (Lance & Kachel, 2018; Lance & Maniotes, 2020), there are inconsistent perspectives on the role of school librarians among teachers and principals (Agundu et al., 2021; Baker et al., 2020; M. A. Lewis, 2019; Loh, Sundaray, et al., 2021). The chapter will include a table to introduce the participants from each site, followed by descriptions of each participant, analysis of all site visits and documents, identifying themes and sub-themes, and research responses. A summary will close the chapter.

Participants

The school sites participating in the study earned the NBRS distinction for closing the academic achievement gap award during 2022 or 2023. The DOE produces an annual awards announcement and maintains a database of winning schools with the building contact information. During the 2021 award season, 76 schools won for closing the academic

achievement gap (NBRS, 2021), 33 were recognized in 2022 (NBRS, 2022), 43 earned the distinction in 2023 (NBRS, 2023), and each was contacted and invited to participate in this research study. Of the 152 award-winning sites contacted, 11 agreed to participate, and the IRB approved the respective site letters. The percentage of schools that earned a NBRS award for being an Achievement Gap-Closing School was smaller than that of Exemplary High Performing Schools, as indicated in the figure below (NBRS, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024).

Figure 1

Study Figure of National Blue Ribbon Schools 2021-2023

Award Year	Total # of National Blue Ribbon Schools Awarded	# of Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools	% of Award Achievement Gap-Closing Schools
2021	325	76	23.3
2022	297	33	11.1
2023	353	43	12.1

As the participants from each site required the building principal, school librarian, and three English language arts teachers who were there during the NBRS process, this was demonstrative of purposeful sampling. Some sites had multiple administrators and librarians, and who also wished to participate. Two sites had reading specialists and library assistants participate in the study. Of the 11 agreeing sites, four sites included a complete set of participants. The researcher assigned pseudonyms to the participants. Participants were grouped by their site, which does not necessarily align with the order in which sites were visited, nor were the interviews arranged in the order that they were completed in the study. The data collection process of the individual interviews with participants in the study and visits to the sites from the researcher occurred from March 2023 through December 2023.

Table 1*Study Participants: Site One*

Study Participant	Total Years in Education	Present Job	Other career experience	Total Years in Present Job
Mary	17	District Librarian	Grade 5 Social Studies Teacher	8
Nathan	22	Intermediate School Principal	High School Teacher, Transportation and Maintenance Director	13
Carla	14	Reading Specialist	ELA Grades K-3 Teacher	1
Wilma	40	ELA Grade 4 Teacher	Special Education Teacher, Grades 3,4,5 all subjects Teacher	8
Sara	21	ELA Grade 4 Teacher	Grade 3 ELA and Grade 3& 5 Math Teacher	7

English language arts = ELA

Participants from Site One include a district librarian, a principal, a reading specialist, and two ELA Grade 4 Teachers. The educational experiences of the participants range from 14 to 40 years. All participants hold the appropriate credentials for their positions. The years of experience in their current role at the school range from one to 13 years. Of the 114 years of combined education from the participants, the average years of experience in education is 22.8 years. These participants hold combined 37 years in their current roles. Thus, the average years of experience in the current role in the school is 7.4 years. This data is provided from the information shared during individual interviews.

Mary

Mary is an experienced teacher and librarian. While this is Mary's eighth year as the school librarian, she was previously a fifth-grade social studies and classroom teacher at the

building before earning her master's degree in library science. Mary has been an educator at the school for 17 years. Mary is also the only librarian in her school district, as the other libraries are staffed with aids, and she also oversees the library material orders for all buildings.

I noticed that Mary took the interview seriously and wanted to help others. She was enthusiastic about reaching all students in the library program and is a long-time trusted colleague and leader in this school building. While participants were not asked to bring or prepare data, Mary was ready with examples of projects to support reading from the library, reading goal setting, spreadsheets, and templates to monitor student reading goals arranged by class. As I rewatched the interview recording, I was reminded that Mary took the time to answer each question in detail and shared their experiences openly. When it was time for member-check, Mary reviewed the transcript quickly and with detail in her responses.

In answering the greatest strength of the school library program to address the academic achievement gap, she acknowledged that the goal sheet that the librarian works on with the students for the Accelerated Reader (AR) program was strong. Still, she selected the library's organization and the motivation she provides the students as primary strengths:

My goal was to make it in such a way that they don't really have to struggle with the idea of having to read in their reading level is kind of stressful for some because you know, there's books they want to read that on the level.

Reading on level refers to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) students' achievement using the AR program. Students are expected to locate books of interest that align with their reading abilities as measured through participation in the reading program. Mary continues to state the following:

I wanted to make everything accessible in an easy way where they didn't have to think about it. Like if I'm going to have to read in my level then just where are those books at so I don't have to think about it.

Allowing students to find their books seamlessly was something that Mary was able to support with the organization of the library. This structure of materials allowed students to find books with ease and confidence. In terms of motivation, Mary articulates the importance of this aspect:

As far as the motivational side, I'm constantly just, you know, when they return a book and I'm like, did you like it? What do you make on the AR test? And you know, if they took it out, I'm like let me know if you liked this book if I help them find the book. I just feel like as far as motivation goes, they were going to talk about that aspect when I feel like I do a lot of talking to them about it. I mean, otherwise they it's just like I'm checking in checking out books. I'm not, I do a lot more than that. So, I mean, I'm doing a lot of motivating and have you read this book and this book is good and you know, do you like stuff like this? Because this book is really good. And, you know, it's in your level and if they check it out, they'll come back and tell me, you know, I did really like this book.

Mary shared that students consider her reading suggestions and they have choices in their title selections within their reading levels. Mary provided specific details in her response to each of the interview questions. She shared the encouragement that the entire school staff offers students. Mary elaborated that when students meet the AR goal, they visit her in the library to get their picture taken, receive prizes, and receive schoolwide bonus bucks that will be used during the school auction. In addition, an announcement was made while the celebratory bell was rung, and the hallway was filled with cheers from the school. From Mary's experiences, staff perceive the library program positively and believe it reaches many students. Mary shares that the students

are optimistic about the library and fancy being there to find more books and participate in library lessons. Mary also had additional information about the library program while focusing on the importance of providing reading time.

Nathan

Nathan began his career as a high school teacher and taught in three school districts over six years while serving as a football and track coach. His first administrative role was as a transportation and maintenance director for three years. Nathan then moved into the role of building principal and has been in this capacity for 13 years. With 22 years in education, Nathan has a wide variety of expertise. He states that, based on the nature of education, “days didn’t slow down, but the years sped up.” Recently, Nathan received a national award for principalship.

I found Nathan to be helpful and willing to work to meet me at the best time for my schedule. Throughout our encounters, Nathan was courteous in making time and remained highly organized with details. While Nathan has received an award for his building and his prize in principalship, he was extremely humble and modest in his accounts. When I reviewed the interview recording, I noticed the calm cadence of his responses, respect in addressing me as ma’am, and excitement to share the Read-a-Thon program that began in 2016, which helps to support academic goal prizes and class trips and are tied to the goal sheet. When reflecting upon the strength of the library program in addressing the academic achievement gap, Nathan quickly pointed out the role of his librarian, Mary, “she’s a self-starter and makes sure everything gets done.” To further comment on Mary, he finds her the key to success in the library program, addressing the achievement gap, stating that her “ability to work with us and be part of this and have a key part in our success; it is an invaluable strength that she possesses.”

As for the student perceptions of the library program, Nathan shared that his librarian “can hardly take a lunch without some kid getting very aggravated that they can't get into the library. The kids love going down there.” Students want unlimited access to their library program.

Nathan presented an overall picture of the school building and showed kindness. He knew the community well and shared information about a staff member with rental properties I would now know about to prepare for the site visit. His responses to communication were cordial and timely, as correspondence also took place even on weekends.

Carla

Carla is a veteran teacher with 14 years of experience. She continued professional learning and earned her master's degree in administration. She was a third-grade teacher during the Blue-Ribbon process, but this year, she served as the school's reading specialist. She has taught kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. She states that classroom libraries are robust and arranged by the ZPD in the AR program to mirror the school library.

Carla communicated positively regarding the perception of the library program. In addition, she states that “students love the library.” She shares that students delight in reading-duel opportunities run by the librarian. In this program, students would select the same book to read at their AR ZPD level, set a deadline to complete it, and then take the test. The winner with the best reading time and score on the test will receive a prize. In addition, students in Carla’s class participate in book bingo to read different genres that Mary has incorporated for students. When reflecting upon the staff's perception of the library, Carla shares more about the topic:

I feel like our building is a huge team. We kind of all jump on board. We're really sold out to the way that we think things work here. And the way that because a lot of the

teachers here, we haven't always been a high achieving school, you know, a gap-closing school. And so, when you know what that feels like and kind of have to climb yourself out. You become very proud of what has been accomplished and how to kind of maintain that. So, I feel everyone here is a lot on the same page as far as the library and how to use those. And like I will constantly go back to the school sheet and how we track data. We all push to the same direction. We're all pushing these kids constantly to achieve their goals. We have a lot of goals that we reward big and, you know, short-term goals and long-term goals, short-term rewards long-term rewards. And I think the library is a big it plays a big part in that.

This ties into the school community's intense goals and data tracking usage. Goal sheets go home daily as the parent keeps track of the goals and are referenced in parent meetings. As I listened to the interview, I was reminded of her friendly responses and detailed elaboration for each response.

My impression of Carla was that she was dedicated to education and relished her job. She shared the collective success and felt part of an educational team. She was also prepared to reveal examples of data templates. Carla was motivated to continue seeing her school community flourish.

Wilma

With 40 years as an educator, Wilma has the most experience out of all my participants. Her first 10 years were as a special education teacher; the other 30 years have been as a regular education teacher in Grades 3-5, whereas Wilma is presently a fourth-grade teacher.

Throughout her career, Wilma has worked in different states and school districts. She reflects on these involvements from decades of experience and believes they also apply to her school:

I've worked with some really good librarians. I can't think of a bad librarian I've ever worked with. And they're super important to just supporting what you do in the classroom. I just value their input; I value their expertise. Librarians are critical to supporting classrooms.

Wilma shares that her students regularly participate in reading-duels and believes that this motivates students to read more carefully. The librarian will also take their pictures, which appeal to the students from Wilma's viewpoint. She believes students see the library as a positive aspect, nicely decorated by the librarian, and anticipate their library class. As I reviewed the interview, it was apparent that Wilma is highly articulate and pleased to share her experiences.

Sara

Sara is also an experienced educator. She has been teaching in this school for 19 years and a total of 21 school years. Of these, 13 years of her experience have been as a fifth-grade math teacher, one year as a third-grade math teacher, and seven years as a fourth-grade reading teacher.

When reflecting on the students' perceptions, Sara shares that she loves the library and want to always be in it. Sara articulates the following staff perceptions of the library program:

I think everybody has a positive outlook on our library. It's a very warm and inviting place to be. Like we all would like to go out there and curl up with a good book ourselves. And that never happened, but would be nice. She, our librarian, is willing to work with our staff like if we have a novel study going on. She'll pull things that relate to

that. Or if you're going to do a poetry unit she'll pull out and have available for the kids that week poetry in the library and kind of tag team with you. So, they hear it in two places. Just overall a good experience.

Sara answered each question meticulously, demonstrating her value in the study to meet with me. Sara also shared that she finds students participating in reading-duels successfully. When I reviewed the transcript and watched the interview recording, it was evident that Sara answered all the questions entirely and warmly. She shared the community involvement with the reading programs and the decorating throughout the school and classrooms. Books from the public library are also borrowed to add to the event.

All participants from Site One offered a window into their school, which I learned more about from the document analysis and site visit. Each participant was welcoming and supportive of the study. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to gain more experience from each of the participating educators.

Table 2

Study Participants: Site Two

Study Participant	Total Years in Education	Present Job	Other career experience	Total Years in Present Job
Lori	31	District Librarian	Grade 8 ELA teacher, Grade 11 English, and Spanish Teacher	7
Lisa	38	Elementary School Library Assistant	Secretary to the principal	3
Daniel	25	Elementary School Principal	Lead teacher Alternative Charter High School, Middle School ELA, and High School ELA Teacher	2

Peggy	5	Grade 6 ELA Teacher	Grade 7 ELA and Science Teacher	2
Marie	10	Grade 5 and 6 ELA Teacher	Grade 4 ELA Teacher	9
Malia	9	Grade 5 ELA Teacher	Grade 3 Teacher	8

Participants from Site Two include a district librarian, library assistant, principal, reading specialist, an ELA Grade 6 teacher, an ELA Grades 5-6 teacher, and an ELA Grade 5 teacher, with educational experiences ranging from five to 38 years. All participants hold the appropriate credentials for their positions. The years of experience in their current role at the school range from two to nine years. Of 118 years of education from the participants, the average years of experience in education is 19.6 years. The participants have 31 years in their current roles, making the average years of experience at the current role in the school 5.1 years. This data is provided from the information shared during individual interviews.

Lori

Lori is the district librarian and has 31 years with the school district as an educator. She has been involved in the district in many different roles. For the first 18 years of Lori's career, she taught eighth-grade reading and language arts and was then transferred to the high school to teach junior English and Spanish. When her previous librarian decided to take a job out of state seven years ago, Lori was thrilled to become the school librarian. Lori has also been the school's spring play director for many years.

From my impressions, Lori was very prepared for the upcoming interview. In advance, she had sent me information about the library facilities, the instructional plans for kindergarten through Grade 2 and Grades 3-4, the website link to the virtual library, the Future Ready School

Library Plan, the mission statement, goals, and collection development policy for the school library. After the interview, I learned that her experience in Spanish is helping her improve the Spanish collection in the library and bolster digital resources in both English and Spanish.

Lori is split between the elementary/middle and high school libraries, so she has two buildings to maintain. She feels that the staff views the library program favorably. Lori states the following about her colleagues:

I think they've been very, very supportive. You know, if I ask them to do something or if I'm saying, hey, this is a competition for this month and you know, really get on board with it and support it and promote the things we're doing in the library. So yeah, I think and I try and enhance what they're doing as well.

While the support and teamwork between the librarian and teachers are ideal, Lori sees a problem with time to strengthen collaboration further:

I don't have the time to actually, like, meet with their teams and say, hey, what's coming up, you know, what can I be doing? So, you're doing an animal project, you know in third grade or whatever. What skills or what can I be working on in the library? And yeah, if I wasn't in two different buildings, I would. It would make that's really what I'd like to be doing is a lot more collaboration. I did it last year with our fifth and sixth grade teachers. They had the kids, one grade was doing countries, one grade was doing states, and with so researching and doing different projects I threw in a Google My Maps kind of activity that they did over their country or their states. But that just kind of, I just kind of found out about that and I was like, oh, you guys are doing this? I could do you know? So, it wasn't intentional like I went, I thought. Oh, and now I'll go say hey, how do you how do you think about this? So, I'd like to be doing more collaboration like that.

Lori disclosed that she observes that their students really like coming to the library. With the present schedule, Lori cannot meet with the students in Grades 7-8, which poses a challenge. Creating memorable reading experiences with older students can be more challenging as they tend to focus more on required class readings; at the same time, Lori shares that “the library is the heart of our school.” The service Lori impressed me has given the school district and her diverse educational experiences.

Lisa

For the past three years, Lisa has been the library assistant at the elementary/middle school, whereas she was previously the secretary to the high school principal for 35 years. I realize that Lisa has seen much growth and changes throughout the schools as she has served the same school district for 38 years. She shares about this change in the library that she observes at the high school in the following statement:

The use of databases opened up a whole new avenue for kids when they went to the library, but they could also access that from the classrooms, and it gave teachers another avenue to head towards and give them resources for their classes. I saw the change from going from using the audio-visual equipment during that time also got away from filmstrip machines and that whole process of checking out the teachers, checking out those devices and the addition of Smartboards. Yeah, I got to see all that.

Another change that Lisa observed was the librarian's use of educational challenges. Now, Lisa sees different activities in the library and notes the popularity of the contests that the librarians host for the students:

They love to compete. They love challenges. Our librarian is very good at creating different things for them to use so we have had competitions. Like right now she has one

that's going on who can read more than her. The kids are challenged to read more than she does. Then she keeps a log, and then she'll post up there, if anybody's beating her, or if they're getting close. They love that challenge. She also uses a program called Beanstack, where the kids can log their minutes. She was able to give them what her reward was, is they could read in the library, in tents by a flashlight. They got the flashlight; they got a boarding pass and they got a stamp. Our theme in the library is travel with good books.

Lisa is enthusiastic about her school district, and states her answers with delight. She recounted her vast experiences in education like a story. She was so appreciative of being included as a participant in the study. When I designed the study, I did not know if the participating schools would have library assistants. I am thrilled for her perspectives and involvement in making a richer dissertation process.

Daniel

This is Daniel's 25th year in education, but his second year as the principal of the elementary/middle school principal and his first year in the additional role of curriculum director. His career in education started as a lead teacher at an alternative charter high school for three years. Daniel's next move was to an eighth-grade ELA position for 17 years. The next move was for high school English, and also coaching school basketball. While Daniel has had a lot of experience in different schools, he reflects upon the vitality of the library program. "Just seeing how many kids we have reading and how much effort our librarian and our librarian assistant put into getting kids engaged with texts. It's pretty impressive." The positive reaction is not limited to Daniel. In reflecting upon the teachers' perspectives regarding the library program, Daniel shares the following:

There are regularly scheduled library times for each grade level and that's important because our teachers are intent on getting kids in, engage with texts. We have wagons that go around each day that collect and then and then, you know, bring back books to the library. And so that's an omnipresent thing in our school and I think that teachers are still looking for ways to maybe utilize the library as a place to go and to do research or you know I think that a receptacle for books and a place where kids can get texts. I mean, that's certainly what a library is and always has been, but can we make it more about we do have, you know, our librarian does teach classes on, you know, digital citizenship, Internet safety, things like that, how best to use some technologies.

This response showed that Daniel was aware of the lessons and activities in his library program and was paying attention to his teachers' perspectives.

Throughout the interview, I was impressed with the depth of Daniel's answers. He was thinking about the topics and adding their perspectives and experiences. The fire alarm went off during our interview, and I had to exit the building. It did not take long, but Daniel was patient and understood that these things could happen, and he kindly proceeded with the interview. In addition, Daniel was dressed in beach and luau attire to match the school theme of the day, which was good to see that the principal participated in themes at a high level.

Peggy

This is Peggy's fifth year as a teacher, and she has always been in the same school building. During her first three years, she taught seventh-grade English language arts and science. She is in her second year as a sixth-grade English language arts teacher. Her sixth grade students have a scheduled library class, whereas they did not when she taught seventh grade.

Peggy shares that she uses library resources and that her students enjoy their library classes, planned library activities, and reading print books:

I feel like I still need to mention that because nowadays some people are like, do we actually check out hard copies of books? And so, yes, I would say it's the books that they can choose to read independently. Usually, a student always has a hard copy of the book there. And myself, personally, I sometimes check them out for my own reading or for like our class read aloud. And so, I use those.

In addition, the library has materials to support makerspace items. Peggy has not yet incorporated this into instruction. Referencing her librarian, Peggy states that the librarian has offerings in the library. “In-depth with some of the other options they have like different makerspace cart items like Ozobots and cool, kind of like STEM things.” This referenced materials available in the library and how they can be used for all classrooms in the building. While Peggy did not know when she would use the materials in class, she was aware of their availability. Further, she was confident that the librarian could help integrate the materials into instruction:

I was impressed with Peggy's different experiences with library exposure just for changing from teaching seventh grade to sixth grade. There was a big difference between the grade levels. Peggy graciously shared with me the opening letter from the librarian to the teachers.

Marie

Marie began her educational career as a fourth-grade English language arts teacher for one year, but she has been a fifth- and sixth-grade English language arts teacher for the last nine years. Her educational experience has been at this site, and she is incredibly excited to reach the

milestone of 10 years in the education profession. She is interested in professional development and earned her master's degree as a reading specialist.

Marie shares that the perceptions of the school library program are overwhelmingly positive:

Everyone enjoys our librarians, especially with the aspect of promoting reading and doing some fun activities and motivational pieces like competitions and reading minutes. I know they do like right now. They're doing a pumpkin carving competition. I think from that perspective adding a little bit of a motivational piece, I know the staff speaks very highly of.

Marie has also found a positive way for the students to complete reading challenges with Beanstack and competitions like the March Madness guessing game with the middle school students she teaches. Fifth and sixth grade are part of the middle school in this building.

Marie could meet with me outside her school schedule, and I was grateful for her commitment to my research study. Her answers were clear, and she was not hesitant to ensure her responses addressed each question. The responses showed her thoughtfulness and numerous experiences in the education profession.

Malia

Malia began her teaching career as a third-grade teacher in the building during her first year, and for the next eight years, she served as a fifth-grade English language arts teacher. All nine years of Malia's education experiences have been at this site. She shares that she cherishes her education experiences and sees the complexity level increase from third-grade library lessons to fifth-grade library lessons.

Throughout the interview, I learned about Malia's student experiences. She shared that they recently had a library pumpkin decorating contest, and one of her students and their sibling joined forces with their dad to create their pumpkin on *When You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. She was thrilled to see the family coming together on a literary project.

Malia knows the school community's needs and has materials to reach all students. She reflects upon the growth of the library collection to reach all students:

We have a section in our library now dedicated. It's a Spanish section only, so all of those books in that section are in Spanish, so it's cool that we can support their first language. The librarian does a great job of making sure that they're picking books at their level. So, you know, having a kid walk in fifth grade and maybe not being able to speak English, she has such a wide variety of books that they don't have to go to the kindergarten section. They don't have to go to the picture books section there. Books that look like fifth grade books but are leveled so low that it allows them to find something that can help them.

I found Malia to have a firm understanding of the school community. She was aware of the communication from the librarians. Malia saw library events supporting learning at school with a comprehensive collection and at home with literary contests.

Aside from the principal Daniel, all participants have worked in the same school district for their careers. This shows a strong level of commitment to the school system. Each participant from this site was able to discuss all the questions posed. Interviewing and meeting the participants during the site visit was a privilege.

Table 3*Study Participants: Site Three*

Study Participant	Total Years in Education	Present Job	Other career experience	Total Years in Present Job
Elsa	18.5	Elementary Librarian	Library Aide, Middle school, and HS 9-12 English Teacher	7.5
Karen	30	Elementary Library secretary	Grade 5 and 6 Teacher, long term substitute Teacher	10
Jim	20	Elementary Principal	Teacher of Grades 4,5,6, MS Assistant Principal	2
Kathy	20	ELA Grade 2 Teacher	Teacher of Grades 1-3 in mission and parochial schools.	6
Barbie	29	ELA Grade 4 Teacher	Teacher of Grades 2, 3,4, 5 ELA, Grade 7 and 8 Math Teacher College instructor	23
Patricia	15	Literacy Coach	Grades 1-5 Teacher, reading recovery, international educator	5

Participants from Site Three include an elementary librarian, library secretary, principal, ELA Grade 2 teacher, ELA Grade 4 teacher, and literacy coach with educational experiences ranging from 15 to 29 years. All participants hold the appropriate credentials for their positions. The years of experience in their current role at the school range from two to 23 years. Of 132.5 combined years in education from the participants, the average years of experience in education are 22.08 years. With 53.5 years in their current roles from the participants, the average years of experience at the current roles in the school is 8.91 years. This data is provided from the information shared during individual interviews at that time.

Elsa

Elsa has been the librarian at the site for 7.5 years and serves as the librarian in two elementary schools in the district. In addition, she is the library media content lead for the school district. This lead means that she represents the library media department on committees, meets regularly with the director of technology, and plans team meetings for the library media department. Elsa has had a flexible schedule for both libraries for the past two years. Before this, the schedule was entirely fixed between both buildings. She also holds a degree in secondary English education and taught middle and high school English for four years. Then, she taught seventh-grade English and worked part-time as a library aide during her library degree work. Next, Elsa became an elementary librarian in another district, having an entirely flexible library schedule between two libraries.

Since Elsa's job has shifted to a flexible model, she notices that the perception of her role has shifted:

When I came, we were a prep period. Librarians were the prep period, and that's what we were looked at. We were not looked at as anything more. As the change has made us becoming flexible, now we're starting to be looked at more of that resource and that teaching partner. So, I work very closely with my staff.

In addition, the district team is considering rebranding the librarian's job title. They were previously referred to as media specialists and technology coaches in her school district. Now, most coworkers address their role as library media specialists.

When I met with Elsa, I was looking forward to this as she had already shared the school-board-approved district library plan the day before our scheduled interview, and she shared the public document with me. In addition, she expressed exhilaration about continuing my research

and was pleased with the attention to the library programs. In my experience, Elsa exuded passion for her career and willingly extended any support she could during the research process.

Karen

Karen was enthusiastic about sharing that she had loved the last 10 years of her career, where she served as the media secretary for the school. Her career in education began as a fifth-grade teacher, and then she went to middle school and taught sixth grade. As her family grew, she decided to become a substitute teacher and also worked on her master's degree in reading as she had always loved books. Karen has 30 years of experience in education at this point. Karen works at the same two elementary schools as Elsa, and Karen's schedule alternates every other day between the elementary schools so that Elsa and Karen are at the elementary libraries on opposite days.

Karen likes her role in the library and the partnership with the teachers and students. She has noticed that the library program's role has changed in the 10 years she has been there, from a library where books are checked out to a media center that is "utilized for more than one thing." Karen observes the staff's support for the library and the students' passion. Karen shares the following about the students:

There's not a kid that does not love coming to library truly, right? They all love to come to get new books. When I see them in the morning, in the hallway, they all stop and ask me do we have check out today? You know, they're excited to come- always. I can't think of an instance, you know as a child is having a particularly bad day, and then we usually try to find some way to, you know, turn it around and help them find something that they're going to be excited to check out and, you know, read. That's why the reason I love

my job is because the people who come to me are glad to be where I am. The library.

Why wouldn't you be happy there?

The students and staff mirror Karen's enthusiasm. Karen also finds strength in her collaboration with Elsa, as they have worked together for almost eight years. She responded cordially throughout our correspondence and was eager to help.

Jim

While Jim has served in numerous educational roles and leadership, all 20 years of his experience has been in the same school district. Five years have been in administration, most recently as an elementary school principal for the past two years, and previously as a middle school assistant principal. Jim's teaching experience ranges from Grades 3-6.

During the interview, Jim was keen to help with the research study and ensure that all the data needed to answer each question was provided. Jim believes that the one-to-one technology device approach from the district also helps with this aspect. The technology supports the use of reading programs and online books from the library collection as he reflects on this topic:

So, we've got different programs that they can utilize through technology, but we also have hard copies. So, we're trying to again utilize that to our capabilities of getting books and kids hands, whether it's electronically or you know, hard copy. So, the excitement of getting into different things and having a media specialist/librarian, being able to orchestrate that and giving her time in which to tell us what all in the media is really, I think a critical piece of making that Media Center flourish even more than what it is.

Communication between the librarians and staff allows a better understanding of the rich resources available. Library resources are offered in print and digital formats.

I am thankful for Jim's participation in the study and his willingness to discuss the topics from the interview. During the site visit, Jim was able to give me a tour of the school, and I saw the students' use of books and technology. I also saw the librarian and teacher collaborate to introduce digital database resources to support student research projects. Jim believed that the availability of technology helped with this process.

Kathy

Kathy is in her sixth year at the school teaching second grade and has 20 years of elementary education experience. She taught at a mission school and a parochial school in Grades 1-3. Her students use the Fountas and Pinnell reading program and have a wide range of skills from level B to L, where B indicates beginner and L reflects chapter books.

In her time at the school, Kathy shares that the staff's perception of the library program continues to improve as the collection holds a wider variety of "diverse books" and a "multicultural selection." Beyond the collection, Kathy reflects that a strength of the library program is the librarian's communication with the teachers, who have the "accessibility of her putting herself out there." This, from Kathy's perspective, includes the librarian asking, "how can I help you or what can I do to help your class or meet your needs or what books do you need?" These sentiments support a strong working relationship between the librarian and the classroom teachers.

During the interview, Kathy was pleased to share her classroom library and the systems that ensure students select books to support their reading growth with the F&P reading program. Kathy was inclined to help with the research process and gracefully provide her experiences. I was thankful to have the chance to meet her and know that students benefit from her compassion and expertise.

Barbie

This is the seventh consecutive year Barbie has served as a fourth-grade teacher, and she holds 23 years of service at the site. Throughout Barbie's career, she has also taught college classes for mathematics methods in the school of education. Throughout Barbie's 29 years in education, she has taught second-, third-, fourth-, fifth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade classes.

Barbie believes her colleagues perceive their school library positively and are satisfied with its programs. She has observed that students love their library program and are eager to read new books. At the same time, Barbie thinks it would be best for the librarian to be in their building full-time. She accounts the following about their librarian:

They are not in our building every day because they have more and more schools and I think that's a huge threat because I would love to have someone in our library full time because they don't just know the books, but they're also really good with the technology pieces because students also have opportunities, especially as we're researching during our science about extreme weather. To do that online, and they're just so good at the technology piece as well.

Barbie had a lot of experiences to share and was focused during the interview. While Barbie asked for topics to prepare for the interview, this was not expected of participants. I valued her diligence throughout the process.

Patricia

Patricia is in her fifth year at the site as the literacy coach. At the same time, Patricia has 15 years in education and 11 years of service at the site. She also taught Grades 3-5, and served as an international educator before she became the literacy coach for the site. Patricia considered

earning her master's degree in library science, but did not since schools in her area have more reading specialists than library positions on their staff.

The organizational process of the library, having books facing out and topics arranged by genre, is something that Patricia views as positive for the students in the library program. Patricia sees that there can be a conflict between the reading program and how the library operates. Two years ago, a policy was implemented that media specialists and the aid would not necessarily encourage students to read books at their level. She reflects on this aspect in the following statement:

So, in the past, you know, like if it's like a kindergarten or first grade, we kind of encourage them to go towards the picture books. And now it's like if the kid wants to go get *Harry Potter* and they're 6 years old, they can check it out and we're not allowed to tell them they can't.

This would not align with the reading program used in the classrooms. Patricia continues:

We would not be expecting a 6-year-old to read *Harry Potter*, but we don't limit kids in the library. So, some teachers are frustrated by that. I kind of feel like they can get books from lots of locations. Maybe dad or mom are going to read the *Harry Potter* to the child? I'm not there, so I don't have time to like. I mean, to me, I just, I'm more of a hands-off kind of person.

Patricia reflected that the policy could be improved with more clarity on the goals with all teachers. In this perspective, there is a time and place for reading to foster curiosity and for curriculum that might not always intersect.

Throughout the interview process, Patricia was very thorough in her replies. Patricia was also eager to share her recent book list for the reading room. When I visited the site, the books had arrived, and Patricia began unboxing and organizing the books for the special book room.

The participants at Site Three had a variety of educational experiences. Only Jim, the principal, has spent his career in the school district. All participants demonstrated commitment to education and detailed, inspiring experiences. It was a pleasure to interact with all participants from the site.

Table 4

Study Participants: Site Four

Study Participant	Total Years in Education	Present Job	Other career experience	Total Years in Present Job
Ann	13	High School Librarian	Government contracting, computer systems programmer, county public library accounting and clerk, HS library assistant	5
Bella	26	High School Librarian	Preschool Teacher, Government, nonprofit, special education Teacher, Teacher Grades 1-4	8
Simon	30	High School Head Principal	Instructional assistant, special education teacher, middle school History Teacher, High School History and Social Sciences Teacher, Assistant Principal High School, Middle School Principal	1
Claire	28	High School Assistant Principal	High School History Teacher, Department	1

			chair, instructional supervisor, director of instruction	
Ramona	5	ELA Grades 9 & 11 Teacher	Middle School ELA Teacher, ELA 10 Grade Teacher	4
Denise	4	ELA Grades 11 & 12 Teacher	ELA Grades 10-12 Teacher	4
Holly	16	ELA Grades 10 & 12 Teacher	ELA Grades 9-12 Teacher, creative writing Teacher, instructional assistant	11

Participants from Site Four include two high school librarians, a principal, an assistant principal, an ELA Grades 9 and 11 teacher, an ELA Grades 11-12 teacher, and an ELA Grades 10 and 12 teacher, with educational experiences ranging from four to 30 years. All participants hold the appropriate credentials for their positions. The years of experience in their current role at the school range from one to 11 years. Of a total of 122 years in education from the participants, the average number of years of experience in education is 17.42 years. The participants have 34 combined years in their current roles, making the average years of experience at the current role in the school 4.85 years. This data is provided from the information shared during individual interviews.

Ann

Ann's professional career began as a defense contractor and later as a programmer after earning her master's in computer information systems. After starting a family, she left the field to raise her children for 15 years. Then Ann became interested in working with a schedule like her children's. Next, Ann took a position in accounting and as a clerk at a county public library until

there was an opening for a school library assistant position. While Ann was working as the library assistant at the high school site, one of the librarians encouraged her to earn her second master's degree in school librarianship. When one of the librarians at the high school retired, Ann had earned her second master's degree and the position where she has served for the last five years. Ann speaks very positively of her colleagues and school. She states the following:

I would love to see every school value their library and I know that in the world today that's not the case. But we have so much to offer the school and the teachers and the students, and I really, we are so fortunate in our school that our administrators are very and our principal especially is very supportive of the library. And I don't think that that happens everywhere and we have, I think librarians have so much to give the school and the students. If the administrators are actually on board with it, you know and the teachers become on board with it.

Collaboration is a strength that Ann finds in her school library program among the school community. A supportive administration can help with this goal, as there are challenges to ensuring collaboration.

Throughout the process, Ann was sure to address each question. In addition, Ann shared documents related to the library program. I was struck by Ann's various experiences and her passion for education and librarianship.

Bella

When Bella graduated with her degree in education, it was difficult to find a position in education, so she taught preschool for a year and then worked for the government at an Army base. Bella realized that she preferred working with children, so she then moved to a nationwide nonprofit to help children who had been abused. This position was extremely demanding, and

Bella took a new position in special education, where she was teaching in a self-contained classroom. Then Bella co-taught second grade and taught third grade for eight years. Bella's next move was to first grade, where she taught for seven years, and her librarian encouraged her to earn her master's degree in library science. This year is Bella's eighth year as a high school librarian at the site, and she expresses contentment in her position.

Bella observes that the student finds the library a welcoming place and can be involved in library clubs such as book clubs, a coffee house for a writer's club, a crochet club, or events like the read-in and author visits. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with their librarians. Additionally, they are invited to the Teachers as Readers professional development program organized by the librarians at the high school for over 15 years. In reflecting on the staff's perspectives regarding the library, Bella states the following:

I think the teachers definitely know it's a place where students can come to work quietly or collaboratively. It's a place that they can come to, for people, for us, to help them. You know, a lot of times they'll send them. OK, you're having trouble with your words and your search in your database. You know, the librarians are a great place to go for that. So, I do think they think of us as a good resource for the kids when they are researching or even just basic computer skills. We do a lot of troubleshooting if our technology staff isn't here, so I think they do look at us as a good resource.

With the staffing of two full-time librarians and a full-time library assistant, the high school library does not close during the day, providing uninterrupted open access to the library and its services. The high school has three lunch periods, and each library professional eats at a different time so that the library remains open.

Bella thoughtfully addressed each question asked and added abundant details with her responses. She has a wide range of experiences in education and related careers that have prepared her to lead as a high school librarian. All communication through email was prompt and timely from Bella.

Simon

Simon is in his first year as the head principal at the high school, but he is not new to the building. Previously, Simon was the assistant principal at the high school for four years and became a middle school principal for a feeder middle school to the present high school site. He articulates that he does not view the award as “a one-year snapshot, but it’s part of a culture that have been created” and one in which he has been invested for years with pride. Before serving in administration, Simon began as an instructional assistant in special education and then as a teacher in special education. The following experience was teaching middle school for three years, followed by teaching for a year in Mexico City. Simon’s next career milestone was high school, as he taught history and social sciences for five years while coaching basketball and track.

Simon illuminated the importance of reaching all students in the library and discussed that the library tried having exercise bikes to help students read and exercise. Still, it did not have the usage they anticipated. He stated, “I think being willing to try and fail as an adult gives an example for the kid.” Simon encourages librarians to try different methods to build relationships with students in the heart of the building, which is the school library, from Simon’s perspective.

The interview process allowed Simon to reflect upon his teaching experiences and library collaborations. Simon's following statement occurred near the end of our interview:

I'm sad that I didn't really use the library as much. I didn't see the library in the role when I was a teacher as I do as an administrator. But I give credit to our librarians, whom we've had, whom I've worked with, for kind of opening my eyes.

As the high school has three additional principals, Simon is the principal in charge of evaluating the school librarians. I am thankful for his candid responses and for sharing his experiences during the interview. His educational journey is inspirational to me.

Claire

This is Claire's first year as an assistant principal at the high school after a long career with the school district for 28 years. Claire taught 19 years of high school history classes and was the social sciences department chairperson. She loved teaching U.S. history and AP government courses. Next, Claire earned a position at the central office as a history and social sciences instruction supervisor and had another role in academic counseling. This prepared Claire's next step as Director of Instruction. During this role, she was also a lead for the administration in preparing the application for the National Blue Ribbon for the high school site. She also holds a master's degree in school administration and a doctoral degree in organizational leadership. Claire was overjoyed about the opportunity to serve as a building administrator.

Claire describes the library as an active location for students and faculty. She can walk past it from her office on the second floor to observe the activity below and Claire shares the following statement:

I think they feel very welcomed and of course I know I can see that cause they go and they go all the time. I also can see them doing activities that they are not. Oh, I'm just in the corner on my phone because this is a place where people won't bother me. It's also that they are interacting with each other, interacting with the library staff, interacting

with, they have games, they have puzzles, you know, so it's a space where I feel like they must feel very comfortable because they do go. It is, you know, always seems to have students in it in the morning and during lunch in particular. And then used by classes.

Claire reflects that library materials helped support the academic achievement gap by being inclusive and welcoming to all perspectives.

Having the chance to interview Claire was a privilege. During my site visit, Simon, the head principal, provided me with a school tour and introduced me to many staff members. One of the individuals that Simon acquainted me with was Claire. Simon encouraged her to participate in the study to share her perspectives. Claire participated, signed the consent form, and participated in an individual interview. Claire was articulate and reflective of all questions posed while further explaining her experiences with the NBRs process.

Ramona

Ramona is in her fifth year as a teacher. She taught eighth grade ELA for one year and is in her fifth year at the high school site. In addition, Ramona is pursuing her master's degree in school librarianship. This year, she teaches ELA in Grades 9 and 11, but has also taught sections of ELA 10 before. Ramona collaborates with the librarians frequently from her perspective regarding research, search terms, and citations. Independent reading lessons with the librarians can include book tasting, speed dating, and literary food trucks.

Ramona observes faculty collaborating with the librarians. She references the new science teacher who uses the library services a lot, in addition to her peers in the ELA departments, making the library a busy place. Ramona states the following:

I think libraries are super important and librarians are super important. And they're like the unicorn teachers, right?

At the same time, some teachers are reluctant to collaborate. Ramona elaborates on this challenge with the following statement:

It's hard because you really got to get yourself out there and you really got to work. And you'll also have to understand, too, that some teachers just don't want to or don't see the necessity to come to the library.

Ramona continues:

I think that I know that collaboration is a huge part and also advocacy is also a huge thing. And I think that this is something that's kind of interesting that you're talking about the achievement gap because I know that librarians do play a vital role. And I think a lot of people don't realize that and just think that we're just here for books. I think also about the perception of the librarians, which I would like to thank you for your one question. I really like it because I think as someone who's studying to be a librarian, that a lot of people think we just have no legs and we're just behind the circulation desk and we're not.

As Ramona is working to enter the field of librarianship, she had another perspective to share. While much research supports the importance of librarians and library programs on student success (Burress et al., 2023), others' perceptions could hide the achievements.

It was refreshing to meet and discuss with Ramona. Connecting with an educator enthusiastic about entering librarianship was an unexpected and delightful experience. Like all fields, having the best individual in the role is essential. I feel confident Ramona will soon become a valuable school librarian.

Denise

Denise is serving her fourth year as a contracted teacher at the high school site and has always taught Grade 11 ELA; for the first time this year, she is also teaching Grade 12. For her

first year, she subbed in Grades 10 and 12 ELA. Denise is active in the school community and is the yearbook supervisor this year.

Denise expresses a positive viewpoint when sharing her experiences with the school librarians and the library program:

It's been phenomenal. Every time that I've needed something or wanted them to go over research or using a database, or when I used to do a kind of project-based learning assignment with my kids that involved them to do a lot of outside research, I could always go to the librarians and ask them to assist with it. And they would put on these programs that would help get my kids used to using the databases, familiarize them with it, give them the practice, and help them. Same with when I wanted to go in there and do different kind of book assignments or book projects, they would offer this really cool program called a book speed dating where my kids could go around and check out the different books that they have and then pick a book that really speaks to them. And we did all the independent reading projects.

Denise also shared the children's book unit collaborative project with the librarians. The librarians reviewed numerous books to help them identify morals and analyze different perspectives.

Throughout the interview, Denise provided insight into her experience and took her time answering the questions. I was most appreciative that Denise was thankful to be a participant in the study. I would not have been able to conduct the research without the participation of sites and participants.

Holly

All of Holly's 16 years in education have been at this high school. Her experience includes teaching 11 years of ELA Grades 9 through 12, teaching creative writing, and serving as an instructional assistant for five years. When I interviewed Holly, she worked hard to prepare students for their novel study of *Frankenstein*. Holly then described her experiences with the school librarians and library programs:

With *Frankenstein*, we went to the library and this was like when they were first getting introduced to the novel. The librarians pulled some current science trends that kind of fall along the same lines of Victor Frankenstein and what he did in *Frankenstein*. It was opening their eyes up to look at this novel that was written in 1816 and look at what they were talking about and exploring what Mary Shelley was exploring and look what's happening in our world today, you know? I was trying to get them to connect better of how relevant *Frankenstein* is to today.

Holly continues to share the upcoming plans for the library collaboration:

Then they're going to return to the library next week, and I've worked with the librarians to set up stations. So, they're going to be moving around in different stations that will be exploring Frankenstein's theme, actually making a Frankenstein. They'll have materials there to make their own Frankenstein too, actually. Go online and see in the real world where this novel was created and so to kind of bring more depth to what we're doing in class. So, I always see the library as an extension of what I can do in the classroom.

Holly observes that her students have a positive impression of the library because the staff is friendly and encouraging. She believes that some of her colleagues could use the library even more but realizes this situation is difficult:

I'm not sure how because I know in the beginning of the school year the librarians will talk about how they can help us, and I'm always on board. I mean I'm always thinking about how I could utilize them, but I know they try to promote themselves, particularly at the beginning of the school year. But then, as the school year continues, it becomes harder and harder and harder for them to get our attention because we get so busy. So, I do think there's a lot that they could offer and help, but I'm not sure exactly how for them to promote themselves consistently through the school year so that teachers will listen.

Holly encourages her peers to collaborate and shares her positive experiences with the collaborative library lessons.

It was wonderful having a chance to interview Holly. As I reviewed the recording and transcript, I was reminded of how eloquently Holly answered each question from the interview. Holly was comfortable addressing each question posed.

Seven individual interviews from Site Four represented the most significant number of participants from any site in the study. Site Four was the only high school (Grades 9-12) building involved. I was profoundly appreciative of learning more from these members, as it encouraged me since I was transferred to become a high school librarian (Grade 9) at my school district amidst the data collection process of my dissertation.

Results

Each participant received a copy of the recording transcripts for his or her review. In addition, each participant was asked to review the transcript for accuracy and to add any additional comments. Every participant responded to the shared transcript from the individual interview. Triangulation was assured with individual interviews, member checks, a site visit to

the school, and a review of district documents. Data saturation occurred after completing the involvement with four sites earning the Blue Ribbon and conducting 24 individual interviews: five librarians, five administrators, two library secretaries, 10 English language arts teachers, and two reading specialists. Data saturation occurs when enough data is collected to determine themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the data collection, I completed reflective notes during the site visits. Transcripts were reviewed, and the recordings were viewed numerous times to ensure accuracy in the data collection process.

Individual interviews were scheduled at times when the participant could meet with the principal researcher. There were very few schedule changes or technical difficulties throughout the 24 interviews. Microsoft Teams was used to host individual interviews. Participants were not confused about utilizing the software, and most educators were familiar with online meetings due to their experience in education during the virtual learning time during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic of 2020 and beyond. Furthermore, the participants in the study were voluntary and displayed genuine kindness throughout the process.

After the interviews, the principal researcher created a transcript document using Microsoft Word, which was emailed to the participants for their review. Interviews originally were scheduled for 45 minutes to one hour. For interviews after September 2023, the time was modified to 30 minutes for the interview to represent the time needed better and be less intimidating for potential participants. Throughout the process, interviews lasted between 15 to 70 minutes. The total time of interviews for all 24 individuals yielded 14 hours and 45 minutes, and the average interview length was 33.6 minutes. Looking at the sites, interviews took 212 minutes (about three and a half hours) for Site One, 152 minutes (about two and a half hours) for Site Two, 210 minutes (about three and a half hours) for Site Three, and 223 minutes (about

three and a half hours) for Site Four. There was a difference in time averages based on participants, as the average time for librarian participants was 45.8 minutes, 24 minutes for library secretaries, 34.8 minutes for principals, 29.8 minutes for English language arts teachers, and 43.5 minutes for reading specialists. The participants shared their experiences working in education and throughout the Blue-Ribbon award process. All participants addressed each question and were forthright with their responses to the interview questions (see Appendix B).

Four U.S school sites that earned the Blue Ribbon Award were visited. As an overview, the four sites include a high school, an intermediate school, an elementary/middle school, and an elementary school. Students enrolled in the schools include preschool through Grade 12. The school locations varied across the United States, including the southeastern, southwestern, and midwestern regions. The total time spent at sites by the principal researcher during school days was over six instructional days. The site visit observations were completed using the Site Visit Note Sheet (see Appendix C).

The opportunity to compose writings from my site visits can provide a detailed experience of four different library programs. It is not often that individuals have the occasion to visit school libraries and meet different educational professionals for this amount of time in schools across the United States, which have been recognized for closing the academic achievement gap to see locations and detail firsthand observations. Sometimes, principals observe a few library lessons and a couple of walkthroughs of the library in a year. Other leaders might not have experience with library programs. Teachers on a fixed schedule rarely could observe their library program in action. Architects might not have been in many school libraries to consider the different materials and teaching spaces needed in modern school libraries. The site visits provide worthwhile educational field trips for the readers of my dissertation.

Items for document review included library schedules, library job descriptions, collection development policy, and reconsideration policy. Most sites did not have a social media presence for the school library. One site has a school library X (formerly known as Twitter) and an Instagram account with hundreds of recent posts. Access to the library resources online was possible from the school building or library webpage.

Inductive coding of the interview transcripts took place to make an initial code list. The words of the participants created the path of the codes using in vivo coding. Two main themes were determined, each with four sub-themes. The first theme was that students and staff positively perceived the school librarians and library programs. The sub-themes for the first theme were environmental, motivational, organizational, and instructional. The second theme was that the school librarians and library programs were perceived to support closing the academic achievement gap. The sub-themes for the second theme were culture, collaboration, interventions, and challenges.

While it is essential to consider the overall positive perception of the school librarians and school library program, it is also another layer of support to consider the perceptions of how these aspects contribute to closing the academic achievement gap. Overwhelmingly, the sub-themes of culture, collaboration, and collections support these perceptions. Through many data collections, it was also clear that the school librarians and library programs faced challenges to address the academic achievement gap. The sub-themes of culture, collaborations, collections, and challenges will be further analyzed.

Students and Staff Positively Perceived the School Librarians and Library Programs

Staff and staff positively perceived this theme of the school librarians and library programs, which was apparent during each interview and every site visit. I observed these

interactions between students, teachers, their school librarians, and the library staff. Numerous interactions between students and librarians and librarians and teachers were observed. During that time, I saw firsthand the impact of the environmental, motivational, organizational, and instructional aspects that supported these positive perceptions of the school librarians and library programs.

At Site One, students were excited to show peers their makerspace pipe projects previously made during a library lesson displayed on the bookshelves. Throughout the day, students would visit the librarian to review their AR progress, and the librarian instantly searched the students' records and data to discuss with the students. I observed that students were pleased to be in the library and interact with their librarian. In addition, the teachers had a positive perspective of the school librarian in that they could provide students with assistance.

Students displayed a positive disposition in the library as they entered for class, projects, or locating a new book at Site Two. Students could participate in a passive activity at the circulation desk as they can find items in a jar. This was called "Find-It, A Contained Adventure." Students could look at this during book checkout. Also, students felt comfortable offering the librarian suggestions. Before visiting the book fair or participating in independent reading, a sixth-grade student asked if the library had Jenga for the makerspace collection. The librarian said that they should get some Jenga games. This showed that the librarian was interested in student feedback.

At Site Three, students were so eager to visit their library that the librarian reminded them to use their "walking feet" instead of "jogging feet." The students and librarian discussed reading interests, and students successfully found new books.

Students were active in the library all day at Site Four. Examples of student activities in the library include researching, taking tests, printing documents, adding to the coloring station, building at the Lego table, constructing at the puzzle table, gaming Chess table area, and contemplating brain teasers at the tables. Over 40 board and card game options ranged from Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit, and Dominoes. Students could play these in the library. In addition, teachers will often sign out the games to use in their classrooms. Also, there was an Ellison Die Cut Machine and construction paper that students could use for projects and teachers for bulletin boards. Student library advisory board members would also sell beverages to support the library. The students and faculty viewed the library very favorably, as there were multiple ways to be involved at their library.

Environmental

The environment is referenced as a positive factor. Students and teachers would like to spend more time in the library. While much reference material includes information about the high-technology makerspaces, this was not seen to a high degree during the site visits. None of the sites had a recording studio in their library. Still, they did have some creative technology, such as Ozobots, and lower technology, such as coloring and board games for students in their library.

Student work was used to decorate the desks and doors at Site One with coloring pages. The library had decorative lights and TV images in the background. Calm music was playing. The librarian brought in monitors from their house to use in the library. During winter, the TV monitors display a fireplace image. The librarian spray-painted book carts and the library trash cans to add more personality. They brought their desk from home to use in the library. They painted the bottom pink to add pizzaz.

Decorations added character to the library at Site Two. The theme for the school year was “Reading Takes You Places.” The showcase outside the library had been updated to include a 4-foot Flat Stanley that the art teacher finished. The theme was also on the lattice bookcase display and included the literary places of Narnia, Green Gables, 100 Acre Woods, Hogwarts, Neverland, The Shire, and Whoville.

Plenty of seating was available in the teaching space at the library from Site Three. There are also new stools from the PTO funding. Guests could see decorative reading signs and small plants through the shelving units. The librarian was ready to receive their pristine, welcoming library banner from a print shop and a contemporary 8-foot bulletin board, but it was not in for the site visit.

At Site Four, there were more seats in the middle, and tall café tables with stools by the exterior windows of the library. There were three tall tables by the wall with two large-screen televisions. One television had a news channel, and the other had a sports channel playing then. There was a TV behind the circulation with library events and library news. In addition, there was a Smart TV in the makerspace area. There were traditional wooden tables and wooden chairs. The tables also had book promotions. For each promotion, the front had an image of the cover, and the back featured a description. In addition, there were upholstered oversized reading chairs and a cushioned reading bench. There was a whiteboard for collaborative teaching space, in addition to space for student testing.

The large television behind the library circulation desk included images of the library hours, bell schedules, lunch schedules, question of the day, coffee hours, book club, crochet club, follow us on social media, welcome to the library, and the library staff images. In discussion

with the librarians, this presentation was created with Google Slides and updated regularly, providing an informed and inclusive environment.

Peggy, a sixth-grade English language arts teacher from Site Two, mentions the library environment for students as the library program is effective. She shares that the library is effective with engagement. “They promote really great programs. They're always trying to come up with things to get kids excited about reading.” According to Peggy, the environment is welcoming for the faculty and staff. She appreciates the bulletin boards the library has made over the past two years for staff. Peggy accounts for the following about the library staff. “They have us send in our favorite book and a picture of ourselves, and either what we were doing over this summer or a pet, and to kind of just connect the staff to the library and the students.” This helps to support a welcoming environment. That is also inclusive as students can learn more about the teachers and staff in their school and build upon relationships with animals or travel locations.

Ramona from Site Four reflects upon the library environment and the likes of her high school students:

It is a welcoming space. They do like the comfy chairs. They like the puzzles. They like to sit in different areas and work, so I think they see it as a place to go to work, but also there's a few of them that actually got hooked to read, so I think that's I think that's good. Students look forward to many things while in the library, but ultimately, the library environment supports their academic and recreational reading.

Mary, the librarian at Site One, reflects that the library is much different than when she was in intermediate school. She had received positive feedback concerning the library environment. She observes that students appreciate the library and her efforts to create a warm atmosphere, which might be unexpected:

I have just worked so hard to make this a place where they like to come and all the staff tells me that you know, that they've noticed, and that's why they think they and probably everybody that walks through here will say oh my gosh, is this so warm and inviting and I wish I could stay in here all day. And so that makes me so happy. I look at it every day. So, I guess I'm kind of used to it. So, I don't see what they're seeing. But they say it's really warm and inviting. And I think that's what the kids see. Because it's really hard to get them to read especially with all the technology. I really wish that kids this age didn't have cell phones, but they do. And it's because of that it is so hard for them to sit still and read a book for a certain amount of time. But I mean, we start from the very beginning in here and they just love it. I mean they sit here and we'll read the whole time. Almost. I think they really enjoyed it. We really get them pumped up and excited about their goals. They know that if they come in here to read that that's going to get them further.

While students might be hyperconnected to technology, even in intermediate school, the library environment supports a positive perspective of the school librarians and library program.

Motivational

The role of the librarian is perceived as motivational throughout the participating sites. In addition, the library program supports individual and school goals. Sara, from Site One, shares the following:

We work on their library goal, which is individualized, all of their goals. All five goals are individualized to the student and meeting them where they're at, to ensure that academic growth, a full year's growth within a year of school, and usually we end up getting more than a year's growth from our kids. So, because they can see their progress

towards it. I think that motivates them. You don't have to get it all at once. So as long as you're growing towards it, and that seems to take some of the pressure off for the kids.

Sara continues the discussion about the librarian, Mary:

She's very involved with their goals. They not only go to her for their library goal, but when they have met all five goals, they go to her and they get their picture taken and she gets that picture back to them to post in their designated place. In whichever hallway it needs to be. So, she's involved in the celebrations with them and, and motivating them when she sees that they're maybe falling behind where they should be. She'll give him a pep talk and just you know, she's not just staying in her little hole in the library and never interacting with the students. So, she's very visible and involved.

Lisa, a library assistant at Site Two, shares the motivational aspects of the library program and events she observes from the librarian. "She also uses a program called Beanstack, where the kids can log their minutes." Lisa revealed that the school was remarkably successful with reading and keeping track of their progress so the librarian could continue with a motivational activity:

She was able to give them what her reward was, is they could read in the library, in tents by a flashlight. They got the flashlight; they got a boarding pass and they got a stamp.

Lisa reflects that the variety of reading options supports the students' growth skills and is also motivational:

Our librarian does a really good job of having the students choose different types of reading for themselves. So, they asked to take a nonfiction and fiction and a reader. They always have to have a reader so that they keep working on their level and keep moving up with that. The magazine can count as your nonfiction.

Students have reading options but are encouraged to read various books and materials. The librarian is involved with the entire school community and goals are supported. The use of boarding passes, flashlights, and tents in library programs can build additional desire for reading and learning, sustaining motivation.

Observations with students and librarians were plentiful to support the sub-theme identification to be motivational. Discussing goals, returning books, getting more books, reaching goals, reviewing level, and ensuring book selection matches and friendly discussion of goals occurred at Site One. Students were able to locate their books. They even used shelf markers to hold the spot when considering books. When a student met all their goals, the librarian congratulated them, updated the Google Doc goal sheets, and gave them photo props. After all 10 goals are met, they get their picture taken. The student was excited and had a large smile. The student rang the bell by the office to indicate that they reached their goals. Students applauded. The librarian took the student's picture with the brick photopaper backdrop. The librarian printed this from the colored printer and added it to the hall display. The librarian greets students by name and continually reviews the book levels. One student says, "I like all of the books that you have." Fourth- and fifth-grade students had a monthly book bingo sheet, as this activity encouraged students to read different genres and types of books. The ZPD is on the top of the page.

Students were encouraged to read more than their librarian at Site Two. Students log their reading minutes using the Beanstack application. The class most successful with their reading minutes will receive a special prize. For this time, the prize will be a Lego party day. This incentive is another way to motivate students to read more. The prize is viewed as motivational for students and reinforced by all teachers as there is a positive perception.

Different books were in book baskets throughout the library based on the topics. There was a central bookcase display. It held holiday books, and the top was decorated with a Christmas tree and silver tinsel garland. There were hallways outside the library that had second-grade books. It was motivational to see the new books from the library and student-created books to support additional positive viewpoints from the students and staff.

Many unique displays can be viewed when visiting Site Four. There was a Fall into Reading bulletin board, a special school reads display, and a promotion for the school reading program. Students in book clubs have written reviews of their favorite books. The index cards were placed before the book to entice students to read the showcased books for a display entitled “Books We’re Thankful For.” Coloring sheets from the makerspace area were also displayed. There were Smart TV presentations and displays on the tables and on the tops of bookcases, including nonfiction books for “KNOW-November,” books for celebrating Native American Heritage Month, and books for Picture Book Month November. Students and staff were observed engaging with the materials from the display during the site visit.

Organizational

The ability to locate books is essential. The organization of the library was referenced in several interviews and observed in detail throughout the site visits. The organization will allow the students to locate their materials and support positive efficacy for those students.

At Site One, books were arranged by reading level in the AR program. Books still had classification on the spine for F (fiction) or nonfiction according to Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). The librarian created color-coded reading levels to add to the spine. The librarian also created a series binder that students can consult to find the following books or explore a new series.

At Site Two, fiction library materials were arranged by genre. Colorful signs and shelf markers helped guide students to the sections. The DDC System defined the arrangement for nonfiction books. This was an extensive collection of books, in addition to numerous reading sections. There were also sections of books in the Spanish language.

The librarian took me on a guided walk to tour the high school, as she also maintained the entire district library program. The high school library was modern and recently renovated. The genre topics align with the elementary genrefication for fiction topics.

The library collection had nonfiction, fiction, and graphic novels that were regularly updated with new reading materials at Site Three. Fiction was arranged by genres; DDC arranged nonfiction. Genrefication of the collection was in the process. There was a unique display of seasonal books. While nonfiction is arranged in DDC now, the goal was to have this section genrefied in three years.

The types of books in the library included nonfiction, reference, fiction, professional collection, and story collection at Site Four. The librarians shared that the fiction collection continues to grow at the most rapid pace. The nonfiction and reference books were organized together to save space. This helped improve the circulation for a while, but fiction has been the preference read by the students from the librarians' experiences. Fiction was arranged by genre, and DDC arranged nonfiction.

Kathy at Site Three states the following about the organization in the library:

I think the library continues to get better. You know from having more diverse books like we have a great multicultural section. The book bins are now arranged kind of by author, by topic. So, much that they're not like just the bindings are showing a lot of them are bins that the kids can, you know, thumb through, and pick out. So, I think the whole setup

has changed a lot to be more user-friendly for the kids and then you know there's pictures and such two on the labels. And so, if a kid is not at that reading level, that's what I do in my classroom too. They can use the pictures as guides to help them.

The library collection continues to evolve to meet students' needs and interests, and the organizational structure was developed to support them.

Wilma from Site One notes the library's balance of fiction and nonfiction books, and has much to share about the library's organization and librarians' work:

She knows her library well so she can find you know things easily if we ask or if the kids ask. Her arrangement is a little a little different. I've never been in a library that has been arranged by book level rather than by the standard Dewey Decimal System, you know, but that's just so I'm sure somebody that you've interviewed has told you about our schools, goal sheets that we have and that kids work for. So, it just helps them to know these are all the books that are available to me because those are within my ZPD. And so that's the reason that she that she redid that. But goodness, you can imagine what the time was to do all that and rearrange shelves and so she's she spent a lot of time on her own doing all that, but it's easy to access. It's the library itself is very appealing to kids. I mean, she's got it decorated cute.

Wilma was well aware of the library's organizational process and the work of its librarian, who improved the library collection to make it easier for teachers and students to find the appropriate books.

Lori, the librarian at Site Two, commented on the challenges of organization in the DDC. In her library, the nonfiction collection is arranged in the DDC, and fiction books are genrefied:

I want to simplify our Dewey system because it's so cumbersome and, you know, books about the same topics could be under here and they could be under here. And it's very challenging for the kids to use. They can find things in our Destiny Discover search engine, but then go to the child. So, we practice and we do it as a lesson, but it is challenging.

Lori continued to address the organization within the library to help students locate the books they wish to read.

Instructional

I observed several individual and collaborative library lessons from various grade levels and subjects during the site visits. Students appreciated and participated in library instruction. Teachers also shared vital comments related to instruction during individual interviews.

At Site One, I observed numerous Grade 4 library classes. An agenda for the lesson was posted. The students began with a game to name the correct figurative language. Students raised their hands and correctly identified alliteration. They were featured books on the online platform Epic. Students would take a test after reading and discussing the book with AR software. The librarian reviewed the class's overall AR progress, and they celebrated the students who already met their goals.

While reading the book, the librarian has a student volunteer turn the digital page on the stool next to the interactive whiteboard. The librarian included theoretical qualities in the reading, and the book was also displayed for students to see on the interactive board. During the reading, the librarian paused to ask students to predict what would happen. When there was a new vocabulary word, students were asked to use context clues and define the term and could do

so. After reading the book, the librarian asked students to define the genre of the book, and they correctly identified this and could also answer the question of the author's purpose.

At Site Two, the book fair was taking place. The sixth-grade class arrived with book fair slips and library books. Students returned books in the library book return drop. Only one student had to revisit their locker to retrieve their library book. The librarian shared that the monthly reading challenge was at Beanstack and presented this on the screen from a laptop. Students could read books, update their progress, and visit the fair. Students were engaged in their time at the library.

Another example of instruction at Site Two was with the kindergarten classes at the library. Students were ecstatic to make predictions for the 21st day of *Pumpkin Jack*. For this project, a miniature pumpkin was in a jar. Students drew what they predicted Pumpkin Jack would look like today.

At Site Three, the librarian had a flexible elementary schedule. During my site visit, the instruction was collaborative. The lesson focused on research skills with electronic databases in fifth grade.

During my visit to Site Four, the two high school librarians also had a flexible schedule. I observed collaborative instruction at this site too. The lessons I observed were in collaboration with Grade 10 health classes to support research skills.

Malia from Site Two reflects upon the instructional aspects of the library program. The content and technology used in the library by students further supports classroom activities:

Our librarian is amazing in the sense of like if we need something she helps order for us.

So actually, our empathy lit circle that we're doing right now is new this year. And so, we

went through the library this summer to purchase all of the materials that we would need to implement that and then they scan them in and all those things for us on the back end.

In the following statements, Malia elaborates on how the instruction in the library is connected to her classroom:

They tell me which books they're reading or what books the librarian showed them and I love when they connect it with things like in my classroom. So, I know they're definitely paying attention to like we just had an article where we were reading about Frida Kahlo and that happened to be one of the Latin American people that she talked about in library and they were like, wait, we already know this.

In addition to being aware of the connection between the class content, continuous reading is supported by Malia's perspective. The use of the Beanstack program strengthens the connection between the library and the classroom:

That was the badge that they could earn on Beanstack was if they read a book written by a Latin American author, they could win the Frida Kahlo Award or badge or whatever it was. And they were like, we know her. And so, I know they're definitely paying attention in class because they're making those connections from that room to my room.

Malia provided examples of how the librarian supports and delivers instruction. Students are aware of the connections, and this supports continuous learning.

Holly, an English language arts teacher from Site Four, explains the importance of librarians' instruction in addressing the academic achievement gap:

I think, particularly when the librarians are giving instruction, it's just another person giving them the information, but maybe in a different way that they're able to grasp hold of it. Plus being exposed to different genres of books that maybe, maybe they haven't

really loved reading because they haven't been able to find a book that they're really truly interested in and giving them that opportunity to try different books and explore. Because by the time I get them as seniors, a lot of them, their love of reading has been destroyed and I really try to rekindle that again.

Holly's account supports the strength of instruction, which is supported by different relationships to encourage learning and literacy.

School Library Programs and Librarians Close Academic Achievement Gap

Positive perceptions of the library's role in academics were observed throughout site visits. A younger student met with their teacher at Site Two to get the librarian's book report novel suggestion. Students were experiencing technical difficulties with their Chromebooks throughout the day, and the librarian troubleshooted and fixed this. In addition, students came to use collaboration rooms. The students were working on a Neolithic-era project using the digital tool Canva to design presentations. Later, a student entered the library and asked to borrow a hotspot to use after school. The student needed to borrow this for an internet connection, and the librarian had this device available for the student after school. All these activities help to support the academic achievement gap.

At Site Three, there were teacher/staff usage forms for when the library was unstaffed, and research materials or books were to be borrowed. Teachers could complete the form by including their names and barcodes of items. Another option was to leave a post-note on the books to have the books checked out and delivered to the room. Finally, teachers could take pictures of the books and email them to the librarian. There was also an area devoted to Chromebook repairs with a slip of paper for space to detail the computer situation. While students could add to the repair slip, most of this is something that only older elementary

students could do independently. These were creative decisions made by the library program so that the library could work to address the academic needs of the school community.

There were over 50 students in the library at Site Four before the start of the school day, working on assignments and preparing to start the day. Another student visited to share their favorite book at the library and discussed reading options with the librarians and library assistant. Lunchtime was crowded as 40 students were in the library during the first lunch. A group of students played chess, and another worked on a puzzle. Approximately 25 students ate in the library at the next lunch, and some worked on Chromebooks. There were 50 students there for the third lunch in the library. The library was accessible for students to reach their academic goals.

Another student entered the library to borrow, but they say rent, the *Hunger Games* novel, and the library staff assisted them. Several students were browsing for new books and appeared to be successful in finding a novel independently. There was a fire drill, and the students exited the library and lined up with the library staff. One student continued reading their book while waiting for the drill to end. After the fire drill, a student asked for a book about the Persian Gulf and The Iraq War. The student preferred a fiction book on this topic. The librarians presented several options for the student, and the student trusted and valued their recommendations by borrowing one of the suggested books. Reading was embraced throughout the school, as reading helps to close academic achievement gaps.

Culture

A consistent school culture can support reaching goals and effective interventions. The school climate is also connected to culture. Many aspects have a role in shaping the school

culture, and the role of the school librarians and library program is a critical component in addressing the achievement gap.

At Site One, there was a culture of celebrating students' achievements. During the days I observed, students came to the library to conference with the librarian when they met all their goals. The librarian had the students prepare the photo props and take a picture. The librarian prints this image, which will be displayed on the Wall of Fame. Shortly after the photo session, I directed the goal-achieving students to the office to ring the bell. In all instances, the students rang the bell after conferencing and took their picture for the goal achievement. Students and teachers in all classes applauded the success.

Also, when two students completed the reading-duel, the librarian conferenced with the students and took an "I won a Duel" picture of them. The prize was also a carbonated beverage and bonus bucks, a school-wide positive incentive. Fostering a goal-oriented culture was evident throughout the goal charts, photographs, displays, and reading challenges addressing closing the academic gaps.

Site Three has a very welcoming learning culture. A community member was volunteering to read with students in the library, which gave students time to read together. In an hour, I noticed the volunteer reading with six different students. This volunteer comes in daily to read with students. The teachers identify the students who could use extra help or attention with the guests reading. The library environment contributed to remediating students needing additional learning support to address the achievement gaps.

Site Four fostered the reading culture with abundant care. Another aspect to promote reading was with teacher signs. Each year, the library staff creates reading place markers for teachers, which can be displayed near their door or inside the room. This year, the sign includes

the teacher's name and spaces for teachers to add books that they have recently, currently, and plan to read in the future. Students can see that their trusted teachers are reading and may be motivated to have additional discussions about reading or try a different book to read from the suggestions of their teachers. Regular reading will help students address achievement gaps, and the library programs work to highlight the culture of reading for all to view.

From Site Three, Barbie reflects upon the culture as she has been in the school system for 23 years and on her longtime colleagues in preschool through fifth grade:

We've always said that we will brainstorm and we will talk and we will talk and talk. But when a decision is made, even if we don't all agree, we all commit to it. And I think that's the biggest thing. We are consistent and I have said that since I've started here, I think consistency is the key. So, in second grade, they are teaching the curriculum and now you know we have curriculums that are in place for us. But in the beginning, you when I first taught, we were kind of coming up with our own lessons and our own, you know, resources. So, we did that together as a school and agree or disagree once a decision was made, we are all teaching and consistent to the curriculum and now it's a Common Core curriculum. We are doing the lessons. They are consistently getting that vocabulary though, as structures and procedures in place, we collaborate.

The longstanding school culture sustains collaborations that lead to consistency. Different ideas can be expressed because all team members respect the school culture.

Denise, an English language arts teacher from Site Four, also indicates the importance of the culture. She had participated in the professional development led by the librarians:

Occasionally, they have “Teachers as Readers.” I've gone to that; the other ones, I haven't been able to make it yet. But I've definitely been to “Teachers as Readers” after school and time, and it was a really positive experience. It was really nice.

In their school, librarians consistently offer professional development sessions for faculty. These offerings support a growth mindset for educators. This upbeat experience of the school culture extends far. According to Denise:

how much our teachers care and they care to close that gap and they do everything. They always go above and beyond to ensure that every kids' needs are met. Truthfully, that's what I would say to them, but also our administration. But I know just about every teacher in this building will do everything they can to make sure their kid is where, like every student is where they need to be, and that they're succeeding. And they will even adapt their lessons how they teach whatever they have to do to ensure that every kid is where they need to be before they walk out of these doors to graduate.

The goal for all students to succeed is ingrained in the school culture. The high school focuses on having all students reach the pinnacle of graduation and be prepared for their prospective futures.

Lisa, the library assistant at Site Two, detailed the creativity of the librarian Lori. Lori is creative in her techniques, and the school culture supports this approach. A positive culture can support trying new programs and methods throughout the school:

I like how our librarian does things. It's not always the same things. She does think of different things. One of the other ideas, she had a cafeteria and the kids had the challenge to read minutes, and if they won the challenge, then they got to come to the library and have lunch. We put tablecloths on the tables. We had champagne glasses and served them juice. And they brought their hot lunch in. And then they were able to have a dessert that

day and that's how they got rewarded. It was fun to watch how they were on better behavior because it was dark in there and it was like they were at a supper club.

Student behavior also helps to shape a school culture, and the library program supports that culture.

Collaboration

School cultures can help foster collaborative relationships. Collaboration between librarians, teachers, and staff supports students as they continually work to achieve academic success. Just as students need to build teamwork with their peers, librarians need to collaborate with their peers.

At Site One, I observed the teaching assistant helping with shelving at two different times of the day so that the librarian could focus on leading instruction and conferencing with students about goals. A reading specialist came to learn if more series titles were available and asked for reading a-likes. The reading specialist wanted to get insight from the librarian and build a learning plan together. Later, the librarian added titles to a book wish list from the discussion.

During my visit to Site Two, a teacher visited the library to talk to the librarian and library assistant about student book needs. The teacher ensured that this was not lunch or planning time for the library staff, demonstrating the value of their time. The teacher shared that the second nine weeks is the longest quarter and that students will have higher goals for their independent reading. No graphic novels will be permitted for this project. The teacher shared that if students wondered if the book would be accepted, they should borrow two different books. The library staff assisted the teacher and will continue to support the classroom reading project's goals. This consistency is important for a learning culture where students close academic gaps.

Before school at Site Three, the literacy coach asked about picture books and future genrefication, and had blue bins for the library. Another teacher asked for help creating spreadsheets. Many teachers entered the library to greet the librarian, including a music teacher, guidance counselor, and fourth-grade teacher. Later, I accompanied the librarian when they went to help a PreK teacher with technical difficulties concerning the learning platform SeeSaw. The librarian was taking notes about the situation. The staff told the librarian, “You rock,” as she exited the room and addressed the technical situation. The librarian shares that she is frequently the first line of defense with technology.

Later, I went with the librarian to observe a collaborative lesson in the fifth grade. The librarian introduced the students to the lesson and asked if they used Google, and most hands went up. The librarian explained that taking the role of researcher requires accurate information. The librarian asked students if they agreed everything on the internet was accurate. Most students recognized that this was false information. The librarian shared with the students that they would use the database, Gale. When the librarian asked about the display page, the students answered ClassLink. The lesson was projected on an interactive whiteboard screen. Students answered to use the resources and reviewed the necessary passwords for the database. The fifth-grade teacher asked about the research topic and how this would change searching. The librarian explained that you can search using different strategies. Students volunteered examples of D-Day, cars, horses, space, ocean, and Chinese history for their research interests. The librarian demonstrates that the search uses predictive text for the horse search.

Elsa reviewed the horse brief information, but they looked at the keep-reading option. Students were excited about the additional information. Elsa shared that the speaker option (read aloud) will use a computer voice and that more dots on the dice mean a harder article. In

addition, the librarian modeled how to change the font size. The classroom teacher asked a question about changing size. The librarian stated that these tools are to help you find what works. This was a tool and not a toy. Students expressed the difference between a toy and a tool: a tool helps us. The fifth-grade teacher provided tips about time management to the students. The librarian introduced a tool to change the screen color and make it easier to read the screen and the translation feature. Students were thrilled that the articles could be translated into 40 languages; if you needed a different language, you could change it. The librarian highlighted the translate button, which could be read in French. In addition, the librarian was modeling how to get links to the article so you can share it with a partner or teacher. Students replied to questions about tools or toys, and they answered tools in unison. The librarian addressed how to add the citation. The teacher shared that citations must be included in their work and that it is much nicer than what they had available for research when they were their age.

The librarian was reviewing other documents about horses and related topics. A student proclaimed that this was so much better than Google. The librarian next modeled a Taylor Swift search to assist a student. The fifth-grade teacher shared that this is perfect because they need three different sources for their research. Gale had articles, magazines, news, biographies, and other references.

Then, students got out Chromebooks. Students quickly opened their devices and accessed the database. The librarian praised their skills in accessing the database. The teacher wrote their Gale password on the board as a reference. The librarian and classroom teacher helped students with topics that I overheard, including D-Day, Kobe Bryant, and Metallica. The teacher reminded students to think of a research question and something more profound that might take

two weeks to investigate. The librarian shared with the teacher a graphic organizer would be helpful.

At Site Four, I observed collaborations between the librarians and health teachers instructing how to use databases for the Grade 10 health classes. During the site visit, there were six sections of Grade 10 health for the database research. Each librarian taught three classes in the individual classrooms and set up the projector. The students were getting ready for a health research project. The librarians were reviewing Schoology, which was projected on the board. All the students responded that they had been there before. It was reinforced that MLA citations must be used. Students volunteered to answer questions about citations. The librarian reviewed the MLA citation template and image citations; students had a guide to Teen Health and Wellness. The librarian reviewed a sample search of stress with 298 results. As a group, they looked at saving the article in Google Drive, reviewed citations at the end of the article, and explored related articles. Next, SIRS Hot Topics were reviewed, including logging in with your Google credentials, how to save, and review source types like government images. A search for stress and teenagers to find homework was an example for high achieving students. Students were learning how to save, add citations, copy, and save to the cloud/Google Drive. The following resource presented was a favorite among the librarians: Gale in Context High School. The librarian searched for depression in high school students and showed them how to add a custom range, newspaper options, highlight and make a note, and add to their Google Drive. All three databases were reviewed again. The next part of the lesson included a tutorial on Google image search examples with tools, usage rights, and Creative Commons. The librarian explained this was for educational usage, and other image searches were provided. The health teacher previewed textbook citations and the textbook citation was provided. Students took out

Chromebooks to get to the library Schoology. The librarian and health teacher helped students with their research queries as needed. This description resembled the five other library and health class collaborations that day.

Several observations of librarians with faculty and staff occurred during the site visit to Site Four. An administrator visited to obtain printed material from a copier and said hello. A STEM teacher came into the library for old items/projectors, DVD writer, and Kindle as they were working on a lesson where students would learn how to take part and assemble. Another English language arts teacher visited to plan for an upcoming lesson. Later, a special education teacher and coach visited the librarians as they needed sheets of cardstock. The librarians were also responsible for supplies, TVs, overhead projectors, paperclips, and other items. This allowed for more teacher interactions and often led to planning events and activities. The librarians stressed how this was another way to build collaborative relationships.

These examples show that librarians and staff collaborate to support student achievement. Carla from Site One reflects upon this collaboration. “Teamwork. I would say dedication and determination, probably. I feel like everyone here is determined to help every single student succeed.” This was akin to Denise’s cultural norm of student success. Ramona, English language arts teacher from Site Four, reflects upon the positive relationships with the school library program:

I would say by being a wealth of it, like being information like having information and also being there if needed to so support and in particular I think with my kids by providing those books by allowing us to come in and also making sure and working with me and collaborating with me I think is a really huge strength for us. And I think that just opens that door for other collaboration.

Continuing with the perspectives from Site Four, Simon reflected upon collaboration in the library program. “I think not only English teachers use it, but I will. You'll see it being used for various things.” This was a helpful insight as all teacher participants from Site Four were from the ELA department.

Jim, the principal from Site Three, recognizes that collaboration is a huge way for the school library program to help students close the academic achievement gap. This also relates to instruction, and while Jim agrees that English teachers benefit, he elaborated on other areas of collaboration. The certified school librarian is referred to as the media specialist in his school. Jim stated the following:

When we're in meetings, and they're bouncing in and in grade levels, you know, having another resource, another person to bounce ideas off of, whether and in particular our ELA or language arts area. But math isn't out of the norm either, for them to support with that. But ELA, having teachers explain, is the genre that we're reading right now, or this is the writing piece that we're working on right now. And then that collaboration of oh I can work on that during our media time or oh I'd really love to read this quadrant area time that because that communicates or that connects really well with that area that you are the standard that you're teaching. Again, if everyone's working at the same at the same at the same goal as our media specialist.

Like Simon, Jim recognizes the variety of collaborations with their school librarians and library programs.

Collections

Library collections at the sites included print books, digital books, databases, makerspaces, board games, and technology. The library collections provide students with

resources to address academic achievement gaps. The librarian and library staff work to promote library collections.

At Site One, the library included a makerspace. Items in the makerspace were Legos, plastic pipes, K'Nex, IO Blocks, coloring pages, and coloring supplies. Students could use the maker materials. The librarian shared that these are immensely popular. Scholastic Book Fair funds were used to obtain materials. Some blocks were the librarian's own children's belongings when they were younger.

While there was no recording studio in the library, students used the eight library computers for their reading-duels and taking the AR reading practice quizzes. Twenty laptops remained in the library from the period of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Students and teachers came down at different points to get or switch out laptops without a charge remaining.

There was no collection of Playaway books or databases, but there were a few electronic databases then. Teachers made Epic mailboxes for an online book platform. Sorting by AR was featured for their school. They used to have access to Britannica online. The librarian would like more databases, as they do not prefer all of the ads to free locations such as Fact Monster. There was no way to prevent ads, and it is hard to say what could happen.

Inside the library was a makerspace cart at Site Two. The items on the cart included Ozobots, Snap Circuits, Dominoes, K-Nex, Quibits, Qwirkle, Buzz Word Jr., Keva Structure, Zoob Builders, Legos, and Lincoln Logs. The librarian shared that replacing Ozobots has been a challenge. The charge does not last as long as it used to. I confirmed the makerspace materials with the librarian to ensure I included everything.

While not equipped with a recording studio, the library offered a convenient alternative with six computer stations. These stations were dedicated to searching the Destiny Discover catalog, providing students with easy access to the library's resources. The school's 1:1 policy, ensuring each student had their own Chromebook, further empowered students in their research and learning.

The library boasted various electronic resources, including audiobooks in Sora and numerous research databases. These databases, such as Brain Pop, Brain Pop Jr., Brain Pop Espanol, Sora, Beanstack, Pebble Go, Britannica School Elementary, Middle and Escolar, A to Z World Culture, and ABC the USA, were easily accessible and provided a wealth of information. The past training session led by the librarian on Brain Pop for the school community professional development and the potential for future training further ensured the audience was well-informed and resourceful.

Some supplies for the makerspace were at Site Three. Makerspace materials, including Legos, Little Bits, and Osmos, were not used this year until December. They were stored in the library office, which the literacy coach then used. Plans were to use the makerspace materials in instruction soon. There was not a recording studio in this site's library.

The district was 1:1 with Chromebooks. Still, there were two desktops for library catalog searching. Also, there were four Chromebooks to use as replacements when students needed a Chromebook replacement.

At this time, there was not any audiobook/Playaway equipment. These resources were not there as it was hard to maintain the battery replacements. They previously had about 10-12 Playaway devices. There was also little space to add these to the library. The librarian shared that the department was looking to build a Playaway collection and house at the three middle schools,

and these devices can be sent to students who need to borrow one. This would help with equity from the perspective of the librarian.

Additionally, numerous databases were available for students and staff alike. Gale was a new platform, and Gale in Context Elementary was used at the site. Databases included Beanstack, Britannica School, Britannic Escolar, Capstone Connect eBooks, Destiny Discover, Pebble Go, Pebble Go Next, Sora, and Teaching Books. The site also had access to some databases from the state library system.

Site Four had a makerspace area in the library, which included a Lego table. Students have built a Lego house with windows and flower hangings by the windows. There were coloring materials and coloring images organized in a magazine rack. The librarians Ann and Bella shared that this area had seen a lot of changes. The librarians reflect on the lack of use and the mess of the makerspace in the past. The previous materials were in a cart in the back room that students could use or teachers could take to their classrooms. While there was never a recording studio in the library, journalism class had a greenscreen for the school news production.

In terms of computers, the school was 1:1 with Chromebooks. Two computers were loaded as search stations. Three laptops were at the desk for sign-in using digital software to track library attendance. Also, there was a selection of laptops for printing. Not all laptops are kept out all the time due to charging. The students cannot print from the Chromebooks due to security concerns.

There were books on CDs as audiobooks. The librarians have noticed that this is not being used much by students. If they were used, this presented a problem as students do not have CD players. Teachers would borrow these, but primarily for summer road trips.

There were many databases available through the library digital portal. These included America in the 20th Century, American History, Ancient and Medieval History, Ancient and Medieval World, Britannica School, Gale eBooks, Gale in Context – High School, Global Issues, Science, U.S. History, World History, Gods, Goddess and Mythology, Modern World History, Occupational Outlook Handbook, SIRS Knowledge Source, Teen Health and Wellness, World News Digest, World Geography Online, and a career database. I observed the librarians instructing how to use databases for health class. A database brochure in the library for students to reference is housed in a display stand near the sign-in area. More information for students can also be found at Schoology. The brochure also included the databases provided by the county library.

The types of books in the library included nonfiction, reference, fiction, professional collection, and story collection. The librarians shared that the fiction collection continues to grow at the most rapid pace. The nonfiction and reference books were organized together to save space. This helped improve the circulation for a while, but fiction has been the preference of the students from the librarians' experiences.

Speaking of the librarians, Marie from Site Two described the following of their library program, acknowledging the importance of promoting reading:

They really do promote finding a love for reading and the library does a great job of putting books out there that the kids are going to be interested in a wide variety and then promoting those. So as a reading teacher, I absolutely love our library because they really do promote a wide group of genre of books, and I think that's been very, very helpful because each quarter our kids are expected to read a book on their own. And it's a lot easier if they are interested in it, which the library again does a great job.

Nathan, the principal at Site One, contemplated the need for materials in both print and digital formats:

To be honest, I had it pushed toward digital whenever we were able to go one to one in 2012-2013 and I've received some pushback from that from several saying that our kids need books in their hands and that was one of the many things- many things - that I've been wrong about and there is definitely a need to have books available in every format that we can get for our kids. So, we do have some digital subscriptions through Epic and we've had a few others.

Nathan asserted that the library collection can be varied to include “anything that can interest a kid in reading.”

The library collections do influence the environment. Daniel, the principal at Site Two, recognizes the importance of the library and its collections in supporting the closing of the academic achievement gap. He acknowledged that the librarian and library assistant work to add new titles continuously in the following statement:

The relentless search for more titles that are inclusive that you know that represented a wide array of text types, and then just that that safe space where kids can go and they can, they can get that support that they need.

Daniel continued to assert that reading options found in the library positively impact students' relationships with learning environments:

You know, giving kids a place where they can go and know that they will be able to find something that will appeal to them. And then what does that do? That reinforces the idea that lifelong readers are, you know, that they exist. And that being a reader is something that can open up their lenses to a wider array of possibilities?

Elsa, the librarian at Site Three, has noticed that improvements to the collection have been helpful to learning and providing an equitable learning experience:

I think it's the equity piece. I really do. The idea that all of our students have access to the same resources and the fact that we are bringing resources in that address our achievement gaps that might be the striving readers. So, providing resources for our kids who read out loud our newcomers coming in that don't speak any English, we've purchased scale that has 40 plus languages that it is available in. So, I think that's a strength is we're able to address those pockets that in the past have been an inequity. They have been it, you know, if you were at a school that their librarian decided they were going to spend the money on Capstone, you know, whether it was Pebble or Pebble Go next. Those kids had access to that. The other ones didn't. So now that we've provided it as a program across the entire District, K-12, that our kids that we work with, they have access and all those pockets of inequities are being addressed, whether it's a language barrier, whether it's the reading levels and the striving readers, the fact that we give them access to both print and digital resources addressing that, the different learning styles.

Challenges

Stronger organizations will work together to sustain challenges. At the same time, some challenges will weaken library programs. Carla from Site One reflects upon the challenges that can be faced due to technology:

I feel like there's so many that they just automatically want to Google the story. Google a book or audiobooks. So, they're not actually finding a quiet space, picking up a book, finding the time and making the time. I think fast paced lifestyles, you know, an often an excuse from these kids or I had ball practice and we had to drive to wherever and so I just

put my headphones on and I listened to the story, which is a good, it is a good tool, but it's definitely something that could be very convenient and the kids could not go back to picking up a book. It could be an easy way out where they're no longer reading. They're just listening.

It can be important to discuss perceptions of reading and technology-based reading options with teachers and librarians to reach a common perspective on reading and the use of technology.

Challenges with funding were detailed. Nathan, the principal from Site One, describes changes regarding funding and staffing. Mary was not the only certified librarian in the district before. Previously, each of the four school buildings in the district had a full-time librarian.

Nathan shared the following statement:

Once you get rid of three or four salaries, that's awfully hard to come back in and put those back in when funding comes back because there are so many other needs that you need. And if you're able to make it two or three years without that person and technically survive and be okay. Then it takes somebody with a lot of vision or a lot of people griping a lot to be able to make that important enough to put someone in that room.

Staffing and funding levels were inconsistent between the four sites that participated in the research study. This did not provide a level field for the librarians and library program to support academic achievement. Patricia, the reading specialist at Site Three, reflects upon the budget and the library program. She indicates that schools in her area used to have a librarian, but this has changed:

I feel like we've gone on the roller coaster. It was everybody had one. And then now we're kind of back up into thinking about this, at least the technology part being really important in teachers, understand how to use the resources. So hopefully we're going up

in a better place, but I think a lot of that, I'm assuming was by budget was the reason that those were decisions were made. And I feel like right now, like there's a lot of unknown in our state.

Patricia further addresses the capricious nature of budgeting and its implication for state level funding:

So, I don't know like if that will ever that will affect our library program specifically. But there are things that the state is saying that we have to do and those would obviously have to be funded somehow, right? So how? Like I don't know what the budget where it will be spread and how it will be used. But like that's, you know, I don't know. I think then hopefully this will continue to be a priority.

Patricia is aware that budgets and policymakers' perceptions of importance play a role, and she hopes that funding for school libraries and librarians will be a focus.

Additional concerns were expressed in interviews about censorship and book challenges that can negatively impact student achievement.

Mary is the district librarian in her school and oversees all the library books and material ordering. The district has a collection development policy on file since 2015. This includes the Evaluation and Selection of Media Center materials with references from AASL and the regulations evaluation of a selection of library/media materials with references from the Library Bill of Rights. The Library Bill of Rights in the 1981 amended version is included. The procedures for managing the challenges of instructional materials are also included. The final regulation is the request to reconsider instructional materials, which are two pages long. Mary shared the following statement about ordering library books:

That's very stressful. Because you know, I make sure I actually look at every single book I order and all the reviews to make sure of the content that's inside and the verbiage that's inside and I mean, it's just very stressful, but it usually will take me. I mean, like, over a month for each school to do a book order for them.

Mary is in charge of ordering the books for all the school district libraries, which includes four libraries.

While the district does have a book reconsideration policy on file at Site Two, Lisa and Lori both acknowledge the threat of book challenges and access to information that could negatively impact students. Lori also shares that book challenges have occurred in nearby schools and a recent conference she attended addressed self-censorship. It is important to remember that the school has a policy in place. Lori accounts for the following:

Don't get a book because you're worried that someone's going to challenge it. If it is a good quality book that kids are going to gravitate to, that they're going to see themselves in that book. You know, don't stop yourself from doing that. So, I've been much better about, you know, not censoring myself when I'm looking at getting materials for both buildings.

Lisa also details the importance of having materials for students that interest them, and the collection development policy is important. "Just making sure that every student has the choice to learn what they want to learn and that it doesn't get taken away from them."

Regarding the job description, there is a large handbook from The Board of Education. This includes the Library Bill of Rights last revised in October of 2013. The district's collection development policy is on file at Site Three. Karen reflects that developing the collection is an ongoing process that can be challenging:

We are continually reading reviews and *School Library Journal*. All different places where we can find good resources because it's a process. You know, it takes time. Even if you find them and you have the funding to order them, getting them in processing things like that takes time. And then as soon as you get them, you start right all over again. So, staying, just having that grit to just keep it going like as soon as we get all these great, good books and we get them where they need to be. Let's keep it up. You know, just to not let yourself settle.

The collection management policy, the weeding policy, and the Future Reding Librarians Framework were also reviewed. The Collection Management policy is four pages long with links to the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read, Access to Resources and Services in the School Library, and the National Council of Teachers of English's The Student's Right to Read. The request to reconsider materials is 10 items, and there is a reconsideration packet checklist. The library's weeding policy is one page and reviews its function and purpose.

At Site Four, Bella shares that the school follows the policy on book selection and has student input for material additions. As Bella stated, this is essential. "We do have the opportunity to purchase materials that we feel support our students by listening to what the students say and do not have to go through a central purchasing committee." Sometimes, students will talk to the librarians and share titles they would like to see, or they can also use the Quick Response code and request books for consideration for the high school library collection.

Claire, an assistant principal, is aware of current concerns regarding policy. She has observed recent controversy in the county, state, and nation regarding library materials and their impact on their school system:

I would say that that has brought stress and burden to librarians who are very conscientious about what they provide to their students, who may look and feel, and they want to provide literature for high school students who are one foot to college, who are learning all the things about themselves and they want their library, their library, to be inclusive. I know they have felt, given the work I've done at central office this, you know, they feel like they have a Librarian Bill of Rights and that they have the right to work with a student to find literature that the student is seeking. And I know they feel somewhat under attack from groups who feel like the library should not have certain books in their selections. The county that we're right next to right has banned books, has taken books out of their library, and so that it's fresh in our news all the time for our librarians to feel like that could that happen here. I feel like our librarians do in general, but all of our librarians and our division try to maintain a relationship with parents so that we don't have that become where we are. But I know they feel angst about the possibility of losing something in their collection that they have been very conscientious about selecting, that they feel like brings value.

The school library materials selected were adopted in 2013, but revised in 2023 and included permission to reprint from the ALA. This includes a weeding policy, controversial subjects, complaints, gifts and donations, and legal references. The policy regarding complaints regarding instructional materials and learning resources was first adopted in 2013 and most recently revised in 2023. The form includes nine specific questions for the individual to respond to with checkboxes and paragraphs.

Outlier Data and Findings

Invariably, a researcher can learn more from participants about a topic that was not anticipated. This research also included outlier findings. Numerous interviews included the topic of public library relationships. No question from the interviews specially addressed this relationship, and it was not expected to be featured with so many participants across different sites. While special collections were a topic in the site visit note sheet, the purpose was to learn about special collections inside the library. The frequency of Little Free Library from the sites was unexpected from the researcher's perspective. The outliers of public library relationships and Little Free Library collections will be discussed.

Public Library Relationships

None of the questions in the semi-structured interview included specific questions regarding collaboration or use of the public library. Yet, these topics frequently entered the responses from participants. During three of the site visits, I could visit and explore the public libraries in the service area of the schools. For the fourth site, I visited the public library website, as my time in the area did not permit a visit to the public library.

At Site One, I learned that the public library supports the reading program of intermediate schools. Children's books have information about the AR reading program inside the book cover. I could visit the public library and see that this organization was in place.

The school librarian collaborated with the public library at Site Two. The public library presents a summer reading kickoff program to the students in May. This is scheduled with the classrooms and held in the school library. There has been more collaboration with the public library as one of the school librarians in the department previously worked in a public library.

Elsa continually visits the public library to see new books and independently take pictures outside the school day.

At Site Three, I did not learn that the school posted information about library programs until I was on a tour from the principal and saw a poster on a large event bulletin board. The promotion of public library events at the school did not come up during individual interviews. This further demonstrated the value of observation during a site visit and added to the depth of a qualitative case study. Site three's public library had an entire floor devoted to makerspaces and included a production studio, a cooking laboratory, sewing machines, jewelry making, and 3D printers.

Sara from Site One reflects on the Readathon activity coinciding with Dr. Seuss's birthday:

I go to the public library and bring in books. I try to choose books that I haven't seen in kids' hands from our library, so there's some available here. The librarian pulls out books and has them laid out on tables by level so they can go quickly and find something maybe new. She hasn't seen coming off the shelves a lot. And then we have rewards.

As the public library includes AR information, sorting the books saves time for organization and supports students' goals. Communication between the libraries allows for knowledge of the reading program to serve the community best.

Kathy from Site Three is a frequent visitor to the public library and she shares the following about the public library:

I personally will go to the public library. We're doing nonfiction right now for writing, so there's some friends who are didn't have enough of the school library texts because, like, the whole school is doing a nonfiction unit or most of the school at this time. So, then I

just go and I check some out there the library in town. They come once a year and they present. So, if the kids haven't got library cards, a lot of them do right after the presentation because they're excited about it. And then they put on a summer reading program to all the kids. There are prizes as they can get and bring them in that way.

Like with Site One, additional resources were needed to reinforce the learning objectives during large school campus events. Positive relationships with the public library can help borrow books to support literacy.

Simon shared experiences with the public library from a feeder middle school to the high school that was closer to town and the public library:

And connect like using positive reinforcement and you know at the middle school our librarian used to do a genre bingo and to get people to read outside of their normal love. Like I don't read scientific science fiction. Well, you're going to need to meet this. And when at the completion of each quarter, kids that had bingo, we worked, my school used to be right near an ice cream place. So, depending on the season, she would take the group who did that down for ice cream, and they would do a lunch like a pizza. That's when we were near the library in town. So, something she initiated was having kids that don't have library cards, they went on a field trip to get a library card.

Visiting the public library was a reward, and like at Site Three, having access to public library cards was a priority for the students.

Wilma from Site One expressed concern that some students do not have access to the public library. "A lot of these kids would never go to a public library. So, a school library is the only exposure they're ever going to have to that. So, I think it's very important." The public library's location in relation to the school can impact it. A school's public library field trip

becomes more complicated when the library is not within walking distance. Dedicated educators travel to their public library on their own time, but some school and library systems may also have a delivery service to help get materials to and from the sites seamlessly.

Little Free Library Collections

The Library's Little Free Library collections were often found outside the library space. The libraries observed were in different locations. Site Three had a Little Free Library named after the elementary school, followed by Free Library. This was in front of the school near the office and commons area. The books were arranged in bins on a large display. Karen, the library assistant, shares the following. "I have seen many positive reactions to it, as parents are thrilled they can take whatever they'd like to keep for free." Initially, the Little Free Library was located inside the library, but the change of location near the office helped with visibility. At this point, the Little Free Library has been in place at the school for ten years.

A Little Free Library was also linked to the school library's social media page from Site Four. The display was near the area where students could eat lunch but also within a reasonable distance from the school library, referred to as the commons. The collection consists of donations from the library and sometimes books weeded from it. Student Library Advisory Board members participate in helping to restock the Little Free Library.

The librarians shared that they review the shelves to ensure the books match the school community standards. The Little Free Library provides additional reading options for students. This area has been in use for the last seven school years.

At Site Two, there was not a Little Free Library by design, but there were books that students could take. Near one of the exit doors in the library, there was a cart of books that

students could take for free. The books on the cart had been weeded from the library collection, and the books were in fair shape but needed to be removed to make room for new books.

Little Free Libraries or free book carts allow literacy to extend to families. In addition, those who have books and would like for others to enjoy the novels can contribute to the reading experience. Generally, using Little Free Libraries or free book offerings from schools does not add tremendous expenses to the budget, but it requires space and shelving storage for the collections. Books from the Little Free Library or free books on a cart are often weeded from the library or classroom library collections, donations, or extra copies.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this case study is to discover the perceptions of the role and programs in school libraries that support academic achievement in the school community for educational professionals at NBRS in the United States. The study included one central research question and two sub-questions. The alignment of each question with the themes will be detailed with figures in the following section with charts (see Tables 5-12). All 24 participants in the study completed an individual interview. A site visit to each of the four sites during the instructional day took place. Participants also shared documents that were reviewed concerning the library program. Themes were produced with the responses from the individual interviews, observations during site visits, and analysis of documents.

Central Research Question

How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award? In looking at the central research question, participants' educational roles were considered. This information is included in a table for each participant at each site (see Tables 1-

4). In addition, detailed background information for all participants is included in the narrative. Each participant shared their experiences, and they were highly supportive of the role of the school librarians. Allowing participants to share their experiences provides an authentic experience from specific viewpoints. Interactions with the participants during the site visit further supported the interview results. Perceptions shared by participants became the reality of how the school librarians had a role in the school's success in reaching the NBRS achievement.

An example from a participant from each site is included to further discuss the central question's role. The first example of the role of librarians in the success of earning the NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools is from Nathan, the principal at Site One. Nathan reflects upon his experiences in the role of his librarian, Mary:

A long time ago, I think a lot of times our staff looked at the library times as extra planning time for them. It was a resource where they can steal some time and plan or breathe or whatever and I'm not saying it's still not part of it. But our librarian has done a really good job working with our teachers, and more or less made the library an extension of each one of those reading classes.

Nathan has viewed a change in the perceptions and also found that the librarian can work to address areas in which students are not excelling. He stated the following:

I've encouraged her to look at our test results and see what we're low in. A lot of times it's things that are involved with a library where she can spend some time and work on work on those. She can help close those gaps and improve those scores. So, she's really worked well with the teachers and also independently to help our school.

While Malia is a Grade 3 English language arts teacher at Site Two, she is aware of what is taking place in the library, the librarian's role, and how this impacts student achievement.

Malia accounts that the librarian is effective and states the following about the librarian.

“Phenomenal job of keeping everyone involved. She is definitely an email-out-share, I'm going to let you know what's happening in my library at all times.” As the librarian works with all students and teachers in the school, communication cannot be overlooked to make individuals also feel welcomed.

Jim, the principal at Site Three, reflects with zest that his school library programs are building and growing. At the same time, students find engagement in their library that supports academic success, as Jim shares what he observes: “The different forms of technology being used for books or the book bins. I know that we're getting the love of learning out there in the classrooms.” Jim continues to expound on the exciting transformation of the librarian role that he witnessed. “The role has really changed from just focused on books in the media to more technology as well. And the different reading programs that we have available online books.” These statements from Jim correlate to how librarians use technology and excitement for reading and technology that supports students in growing additional academic skills.

Holly, a high school English language arts teacher from Site Four, shares that the librarians enrich students' learning beyond the classroom:

Extensive. I am a big believer in choice reading, so my kids are always reading a book of their choice. So, I utilize the library that way always and I'm always looking for ways to utilize them to allow my kids to go deeper into what we are doing in class.

During the site visit, I was able to observe students looking for independent reading materials at the library.

Library anxiety (Golden, 2020) was not exhibited by participants in interviews or during site visits. Throughout the individual interviews, participants expressed their experiences with

the respective library programs and the successful ways the education professionals worked together to improve the academics at their respective sites. While educational professions benefit from this positive relationship, students experience less library anxiety (Stephens, 2021) and can better succeed in their academic goals. Individuals who believe in abilities are likelier to have successful experiences (Bandura, 1986). As a result of working together, the library was perceived as a positive school component due to supportive relationships aligning with research findings (Burns, 2020). Collaborative relationships between librarians and teachers benefit the student learning experience (Visone, 2018). As educators have a better working relationship, students also find growth in their abilities (Beard, 2019), which could also account for the achievement of the NBRS Achievement-Gap Closing Schools award.

Sub-Question One

How did educational professional self-efficacy influence the implementation of school library programs during the attainment of the NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools award?

The first sub-question was addressed with the interview questions 3-8 (see Appendix B).

In looking at the perceptions of the staff regarding the school library to address the academic achievement gap from the interview questions, you can view an overview of the responses and the results in the table below. Overwhelmingly, staff from all sites clearly indicated that there was a positive perception of the library, indicating the excitement, motivation, and promotion of reading and collections in the library program.

Table 5*Teacher Perceptions of the School Librarians and School Library program*

Participants	Teacher Perceptions								
	Positive	Warm Environment	Exciting/Motivating	Promote Reading	Part of the team	Strong Collection	Organization	Mixed policies	Strong Technology
Mary	X	X							
Nathan	X								
Carla	X								
Wilma	X								
Sara	X								
Lori	X								
Lisa	X								
Daniel	X								
Peggy	X								
Marie	X			X					
Malia	X		X						
Elsa	X				X				
Karen	X			X					
Jim	X		X			X			
Kathy	X					X	X		X
Barbie	X								
Patricia								X	
Ann	X	X							
Bella	X								X
Simon	X				X				
Claire	X								
Ramona	X								
Denise	X								
Holly	X								

Barbie articulates teacher perceptions at Site Three. “I think everyone's really satisfied with our library program because I've never heard anyone share otherwise.” This is extremely impactful

because Barbie has been a teacher at the site for 23 years and has been a part of the educational community for decades.

Claire, the assistant principal at Site Four, shares her observation of staff perceptions regarding the library, which are supported by the relationships librarians worked to foster. “I feel like they did a lot to build relationships, a lot to partner with, with teachers. I think some of that is well established.”

In looking at the perceptions of the students regarding the school library to address the academic achievement gap from the interview questions, you can view an overview of the responses and the results in the table below. Participants shared positive observations that they had of students and the library program, but many shared that students love and really like the program, which is even stronger than having a positive perspective. The library collections, technology, and instruction were also positive for the students.

Table 6

Student Perceptions of the School Librarians and School Library Program

Participants	Student Perceptions									
	Love it	Really like it	Positive	Love Programs	Technology	Books	Displays	Welcoming	Warm Environment	Instruction
Mary		X								
Nathan	X									
Carla	X									
Wilma			X	X						
Sara	X								X	
Lori		X								
Lisa	X			X						
Daniel	X					X				
Peggy	X									X
Marie		X		X						
Malia		X								X

Elsa	X		X	
Karen	X			X
Jim	X		X	X
Kathy		X		X
Barbie	X			
Patricia		X		X
Ann		X		
Bella		X		X
Simon	X			
Claire		X		X
Ramona		X		X
Denise	X		X	
Holly	X			

Carla from Site One shared the following about student perceptions of the library and how this addressed academics:

I think they love it. They love going to the library. She has a kind of one of the things that I love is, you know, it can be challenging for kids to want to pick up a chapter book. It's lengthy, it takes stamina, it takes dedication, they're going to have to stick with it. It's not a short-lived thing. And so, one of the things our librarian has incorporated in our library is they do reading-duels. And so, two kids pick out the exact same book if their ZPD aligns and she types out a little poster for them on a piece of paper and it has their names and the book title and it gives them a deadline. And so, by that deadline, they are have asked to have read the book and to take in a test on it and whoever wins the duel receives we use Bonus Bucks here. At the end of the year, they get to cash in their Bonus Bucks for large prizes. It's like an auction is what we what we use it for.

Wilma and Sara from Site One also discussed the positive effect of reading-duels for their students. Carla continues to share students' reactions to the reading duels from the library:

But I've seen kids that literally do not want to do those two-chapter books. Like it's pulling teeth sometimes but that has encouraged them and turned it around as a fun encouraging tool because they're not only reading it, but their buddy is reading it. Then there's a reward at the end if they make above a certain score and there's also an additional reward for the winner of that duel. So that's one thing that is very, very encouraging.

This response from Carla demonstrates that the programs are clearly communicated to students and staff. In addition, she offers another perspective of the program from having daily contact with the students.

From Site Three, Kathy shares how she observes students' viewpoints of the library program. Her students look forward to the librarian displaying books and creating seasonal spotlights. Each time, students can borrow a new book:

If there's a book a child really wants, she'll remember that and she'll have that book waiting for them. She does a very, very nice job of that. Or another nice thing too is we can go to her. And so, every day I have read aloud in here. I tell her I would love some books for a couple weeks for read aloud. And she'll say, well, what do you want them to teach the students? Or you know what lessons would you like? Or would you like and she'll give me a big stack, and then once I return those to the library, it's kind of cool after I've read them to my kids, they want to find those books and take them home to their families. So, it's nice to see it go full circle.

In looking at the perceptions that the school made to close the academic achievement gap from the interview questions, you can view an overview of the responses and the results in the table below. This response seemed to be more site-specific. Site One saw the involvement with

goals as a major impact of the library program to close the academic achievement gap. Site Two had a wide variety of ideas such as reading growth, materials in Spanish, interventions, and the focus on vocabulary.

Table 7

Perception of School to Close Academic Achievement Gap

Participants	School-wide choices to address achievement gap										
	Goals	Reading Growth	Materials in Spanish	Interventions	Vocabulary Focus	Homework Class time	Collaboration	Culture	Relationships	Dedication	Environment
Mary	X										
Nathan	X										
Carla	X										
Wilma	X										
Sara	X										
Lori		X									
Lisa			X								
Daniel				X							
Peggy					X						
Marie						X					
Malia										X	X
Elsa							X	X			
Karen								X		X	
Jim	X						X		X		
Kathy									X		
Barbie										X	
Patricia											X
Ann										X	
Bella				X						X	
Simon											X
Claire											X
Ramona				X							
Denise										X	
Holly				X							

Daniel, the principal at Site Two, highlighted the use of interventions to help address the achievement gap. He states the following: “Efforts toward more intentional interventions.” This indicates the importance of focusing on meaningful interventions with fidelity.

Daniel perceived this has helped the students continue to achieve higher levels. Another strength from his perspective is students' time for interventions in a structured special time and using screeners through the reading program. In conclusion, Daniel reflects on the following. “Giving kids who are demonstrating those deficiencies, that extra support that they need so that they can, you know, hopefully close those gaps.”

Ann, a librarian at Site Four, shares how the school is working to close the gaps and is committed to improving the graduation rate:

I do think that we try to identify the students at each of the levels, whether they're coming in as freshmen or whether getting toward their senior year, we identified those that need that extra assistance and extra help. We try to provide that for them by doing remediation and you know doing extra help to try to get them up to speed. We do a lot of remediation for our state tests, you know, to get them to ask those. In fact, I think we're closed next week during our we have a like a block which is kind dedicated to remediation and enrichment activities. And we are actually, it's usually the libraries are open to anyone who needs to come take a test or do work or things like that. We're actually going to close one day next week and it's going to be dedicated to specific English classes that actually need remediation before retaking a test.

The responses were edited to remove specific names of the school interventions or state tests to maintain the anonymity of the participating school sites. Schoolwide remediations were thought to have a positive impact.

An overview of the responses in the table below detail how the school library program addressed the academic achievement gap,. Goals continued to be important for the participants, as were expectations, promoting reading, collaboration, support, and instruction.

Table 8

Perception of School Library to Close Academic Achievement Gap

Participants	School library addressing achievement gap								
	Goals	Expectation	Promote Reading	Excited to read	Reading materials	Collaboration	Communication	Support	Instruction
Mary	X	X							
Nathan	X								
Carla			X						
Wilma	X								
Sara	X	X	X						
Lori			X						
Lisa					X				
Daniel					X				
Peggy			X	X					
Marie			X						
Malia					X				
Elsa					X				
Karen				X					
Jim						X			
Kathy					X		X		
Barbie						X	X	X	
Patricia					X				
Ann								X	
Bella					X				
Simon					X				
Claire					X				
Ramona					X			X	
Denise					X				X
Holly					X				X

Bella, the librarian at Site Four, shares how the library collection supports academic growth:

I think we do a really good job of finding diverse materials, books that cover different backgrounds, different economics, living, situations. We get different reading levels, some of the high low books that are high interest, lower. We don't limit ourselves to just high school if it's a middle school book that might be interesting to our kids will get that also. But we don't set we don't point them out as this is a lower book you need to read this because it's on your reading level and we really were like what are you interested in we really like to talk to the students about their interest to help them find things because all the studies show that if you if you read things that you're interested in you're going to keep reading and that's going to help your reading ability which is going to help in every situation.

Patricia, the literacy coach from Site Three, stressed the library collections' importance. "I think just having more resources available, students that they are accepted, that are really at their reading level." It is interesting that reading level perspectives can vary from participant to participant. Yet, the ability to have resources in the library collection is a common theme from the study.

Research has found a variance in educators' perception of school librarians and libraries (Barker et al., 2020; M. A. Lewis, 2019) with the danger of misaligning the library program and harming the school community. Various studies (Burress et al., 2023; Kachel, 2019; M. Lewis, 2020; Wiegand, 2021) found that principals do not have full awareness of the library program and if these individuals are dismissive of the library program, negative results could occur. In a setting, perceptions of colleagues can impact collective-efficacy levels (Bandura, 1977). While libraries are considered essential components of a school (Lance, 1994, 2002; Lance &

[illegible]

Lori		X			
Lisa				X	
Daniel			X		X
Peggy				X	
Marie			X		
Malia			X		
Elsa				X	
Karen					X
Jim			X	X	
Kathy				X	
Barbie	X				
Patricia				X	
Ann		X			
Bella			X		
Simon		X			
Claire			X		
Ramona		X	X		
Denise		X			
Holly		X			

Carla, from Site One, shares the strength of teamwork with the librarian and school community.

“I would go back to teamwork. I would say dedication and determination probably. I feel like everyone here is determined to help every single student succeed. That that's what I would say would be our strength for sure.”

Ann, a librarian at Site Four, shared the strength of collaboration:

think we spend a lot of time working with teachers and to help enrich their classes and they can bring lessons to us or ideas to us, and we work together to try to, to help them, offer our assistance, especially in the teaching of, like research and things like that. We'll pull books that we kind of work with. Whatever their work, whatever they're teaching

and we will help students pick out books that go with, you know, whatever the theme or the subject, you know that they're working on.

Ann elaborates on how the librarians motivate students to complete their work and testing in the library and continues to discuss additional strengths:

I think that the collaboration that we do with our teachers and the opportunities that we provide to help them and the students because I feel like we help them a lot by offering services to take away the burden of having to meet with the students you know and find the time to do all that that takes away from their own their own planning time.

In looking at the weaknesses of the school library to address the academic achievement gap from the interview questions, you can see an overview of the responses. The weaknesses can include time, fundings, staffing, furniture, and gaps with collection and collaboration.

Table 1

Weakness of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap

Participants	Topics Weaknesses										
	Time	Funding	Staffing (lack of)	Space (lack of)	Perfectionism	furniture	buy- in	collection gaps	collaboration gaps	volume of students	None
Mary	X										
Nathan		X	X								
Carla					X						
Wilma		X									
Sara	X										
Lori						X					
Lisa	X			X		X					
Daniel				X							
Peggy			X								
Marie			X								
Malia			X								
Elsa							X				

Karen		X	
Jim	X		
Kathy		X	
Barbie		X	
Patricia		X	
Ann			X
Bella			X
Simon			X
Claire			X
Ramona			X
Denise			X
Holly			X

Sara from Site One discusses time's weakness. She refers to the challenges faced by their librarian, Mary:

There's never enough minutes in the day for everything so not enough. Because she has to meet the needs of all the students in the building. There's not enough time sometimes to meet as like a teaching team. She doesn't always get to be a part of those teaching team meetings. So, we have to find side time to go and say hey, this is what we've got in mind. Is that going to work because we don't know what the other two grades always have going on at the same time. Just a lack of time.

Sara's statement is perceptive, as she is aware of the lessons and activities that take place in the library. However, due to her schedule, the librarian is not able to attend with her colleagues. Lisa also discussed time as a weakness at Site Two:

Not enough time of time with each of the kids. And space. You know, I think we could use some more space. We could use some more space or more updates on things in the library. There are still the tables and everything from one the school was built. I think we

could upgrade it and make it a little more inviting and there would be more space for kids too, I don't want to say relax and read, but make it a little more inviting.

In addition to time, Lisa discussed the library space and furniture. Daniel also discussed space concerns from Site Two. As Site Two has a broad scope of grades, this is an area that Daniel includes in his response:

If we were an elementary library, we'd be able to hone in on elementary particular instruction materials, if we are a middle school library, we could, you know, go in that direction. But I think and then the natural byproduct of that then too is accessibility, you know, because we're trying to yet all of those different levels and different classes into the library, the library is for the vast majority of the day scheduled out. And so, it's not the library that I worked in for most of my career in, which is a 6-8 building. I knew that I could reserve the library and take my kids there and, you know, do. And so, it's a roadblock too. I'd love to see teachers taking their kids in there and, you know, really looking at it as a Research Center. So, I definitely think that we're strapped for space and time.

In looking at the opportunities of the school library to address the academic achievement gap from the interview questions, you can view an overview of the responses. There were a lot of different opportunities, including funding, staffing, furniture, technology, programs, and resources.

Table 2*Opportunities of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap*

Participants	Topics Opportunities								
	Funding	Staffing (more)	furniture	technology	activities, reading programs	collaboration additions	resources (additional)	continue inclusive stance	Endless
Mary		X	X						
Nathan	X		X	X					
Carla					X				
Wilma					X				
Sara	X			X					
Lori						X			
Lisa							X		
Daniel								X	
Peggy					X				
Marie					X				
Malia						X			
Elsa									X
Karen									X
Jim			X						
Kathy	X								
Barbie						X			
Patricia				X					
Ann					X				
Bella					X				
Simon						X			
Claire						X			
Ramona						X			
Denise						X			
Holly						X			

Nathan, the principal at Site One, shares different opportunities. His belief in his librarian Mary is clear:

Well, everything started with funding. So, the possibility of getting new technology or even new shelves just to be able to improve our infrastructure. Because there again if you if you've got a quality person at the helm, and you can give her better tools to do her job with and things are just going to improve.

Providing more funding to support the librarian and library program will be a great opportunity to make improvements for students and the entire school community.

Jim, the principal of Site Three, also addresses opportunities based on the goals of the library program. He mentions that the library staff is working towards the following:

Revamp what our media looks like and I'm a huge supporter of that. We have some older bookshelves, as you'll see when someone walks through. For that we have some older bookshelves, but we have a plan in place, hopefully, to replace those and be more suitable at an elementary level because of the height.

Jim continues to discuss that they tried to replace the stools, tables, and whiteboards in the library. He stresses the importance of the library environment for students with his following statement:

You know, put a couple more whiteboards in there so that students can use this as a place of extended learning from a classroom and an inviting place for them to come to. And, you know, bean bags or those types of things make it comfy, cozy, almost family-oriented. That's something that we've talked about as well, you know, and what it should look like and sound like.

Opportunities usually require funding to secure. Funding might be needed to obtain excellent certified school librarians or to address other aspects of the library that others might not anticipate. These examples show a need for new bookshelves and comfortable furniture.

In looking at the threats of the school library to address the academic achievement gap from the interview questions, you can view an overview of the responses. Threats included time, funding, staffing, space, misperception, censorship, technology, and engagement.

Table 12

The Threat of the School Library Program to Address the Achievement Gap

Participants	Topics Threats							
	Time	Funding	Staffing (lack of or retirement)	Space (lack of)	misperception of library role	Censorship	Technology	Engagement
Mary			X				X	
Nathan			X					
Carla							X	
Wilma			X					
Sara			X					
Lori						X		
Lisa						X		
Daniel					X		X	
Peggy							X	
Marie		X						
Malia				X				
Elsa			X					
Karen		X						
Jim			X					
Kathy	X							
Barbie		X	X					
Patricia					X			
Ann								X
Bella						X		
Simon	X							
Claire						X		
Ramona						X		
Denise		X				X		
Holly					X			

From Site Two, Peggy reflects upon threats to the library program to address the academic achievement gap:

I would say as much as technology can be helpful, sometimes it can be a little bit of a hindrance to students' reading. Maybe they just listen to the book without actually doing the hard reading of the words on the page. While I encourage, I'd rather you listen to an audiobook than not do any reading at all, I think sometimes finding that balance of using technology and all the resources we have, but not overusing it to where it's doing more of the work, then the students themselves.

Peggy continues to share how the technology threat impacts students:

And I guess I don't know if that would be more of a threat within our library as it is within society. But just exposing students to how technology can help them without making them overuse it. And it has it doing the work for them because that could then kind of widen the gap as well.

Simon, the head principal from Site Four, addressed the threats of time and perception to the school library program to address the achievement gap as follows:

It's difficult in the day and oftentimes those students who are at risk are not staying after school; aren't doing any of those things, and if they are most often, they would be staying with a math teacher to help their current math grade or an English teacher to help their current English grade. Or a tutor to help with testing strategies and stuff.

Simon elaborates that while it can be difficult to reach all students, another challenge is with perceptions:

So, I think, a threat is being, it's almost a marketing thing, like how they could sell themselves to become a resource for our at-risk students, what they can provide that other

people can't. And I think one of them is you're not an English teacher. You're not a math teacher. I don't have you in class. We can have a different relationship than you do with them. I am not grading your work; I am just providing you feedback to improve.

Marketing and perceptions can be addressed with putting a strong library plan in place (Kachel & Lance, 2020). Participants expressed concerns about threats to the school library program overcoming the achievement gap, and this is essential to explore so that pathways of success can occur to reach at-risk students further.

A stronger self-efficacy can allow individuals to have a more positive outlook on others and build a stronger collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The perceptions of the school libraries need to be accounted for so that the achievement gap can be addressed (Burns, 2018; Durodolu, 2018; Emerson et al., 2019; Merga, 2020a; Merga & Mason, 2019). How much the library will be embraced in improving academics affects the school culture (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021). Educational professionals with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to participate in collaborative relationships with their school librarian, and their research shows the value of collaboration in this function to support student learning (Arredondo, 2021; Crary, 2019; Dipetso & Moahi, 2019; Scholastic, 2016). Also, the belief in the function of the school library can assist the librarians when dealing with difficulties such as topics surrounding time, funding, and censorship uncovered during the data collection process due to high efficacy levels (Bandura, 1997).

Summary

The involvement of 24 participants in individual interviews, document analysis, and site visits to locations provided a wealth of experiences and opportunities to gain more knowledge about the perceptions of the school librarians and school library program to address the academic

achievement gap. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect his or her identity, and sites were identified with numbers to provide anonymity. Having the schools win the NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing schools in 2022-2023 also afforded participants and sites further privacy. Data from multiple approaches included individual interviews with participants, a site visit where a standard note sheet guided the discussion, and document analysis. This study design provided insight into the perceptions of 24 educators serving in a NBRS. A description of all 24 participants is included in a chart and further described in narrative format. The findings from the analysis can be aligned with two major themes, which also have four subthemes. The themes developed from the data collection process were environments, motivational, organizational, instructional, culture, collaboration, and challenges. Each theme was supported by data collected, including participant quotations and a narrative to address the central research questions and sub-questions.

To gain insight into the perceptions, the information shared by participants was invaluable and shaped the outcomes of the qualitative case study. It was evident that participants held a favorable impression of school librarians and library programs and believed that the school librarians and library programs had a significant role in closing the academic achievement gap. The descriptions from participants provided data to support the importance of school librarians and library programs in the school ecosystem of participating NBRS sites. Bandura's (1977) theory on self-efficacy was a guiding theory to the study. The participants in the study had a positive outlook on their educational experiences and aptitude, leading to developed self-efficacious behaviors. Their capability in their abilities strengthened the possibility of having a favorable perspective of their colleagues and the ability to reach goals together. The positive working relationships between the school librarian, school library program, and participants were

evident. Participants needed a certain level of positive relationships to help students close the academic achievement gap and support a collaborative environment. As the participants worked together, they did not collapse to the challenges and found that their belief made reaching positive outcomes for the school community possible. The results of this study illustrated the complex nature of the role of school librarians and library programs in closing the academic achievement gap. The participation of 24 educators from four sites across the United States of America provided a diverse sample of experiences to consider the perceptions of the role of school librarians and school library programs.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of the case study was to explore the perceptions of education professionals in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS) Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools regarding the role of school librarians and school library programs in supporting academic achievement. The study comprises four NBRS Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools between 2022 and 2023. The study includes 24 participants working in the capacities of school principals, school librarians, English language arts teachers, reading specialists, and library assistants. Discovering more from the participants in the study at schools who were successful in supporting the growth in other schools to improve academics and support the role of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) in school settings. Analyzing the responses from participants, site visits, and documents generated two themes. Each theme has four sub-themes to detail in the chapter. This chapter examines the implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This section outlines the qualitative case study's results and the themes prevailing from the data collection process. I will discuss the results of the data analysis, how this impacts policy and practice, and how this applies to theory and practice. Next, I will discuss the study's limitations and delimitations. Following the delimitations, I will present recommendations for future research and, finally, the conclusion.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The analysis of individual interviews, documents, and site visits prompted the themes that students and staff positively perceived school librarians and librarians and that school librarians

and school library programs had a positive role in closing the academic achievement class. The first theme was supported by environmental, motivational, organizational, and instructional sub-themes. The sub-themes of culture, collaboration, collection, and challenges supported the second theme. To derive themes, it was necessary to use in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2021).

The qualitative case study focused on the role of Bandura's (1977) theory on self-efficacy. The themes and subthemes from the data analysis support the tenets of Bandura's theory. According to the perspectives shared from the study, there is a positive and strong perception of school librarians and school library programs addressing the academic achievement gap.

Interpretation of Findings

In chapter four of this dissertation, there were two main themes, each with four sub-themes. The first theme was that the students and staff perceived the school librarians and library program positively. The sub-themes for this theme included environmental, motivational, organizational, and instructional. For the second theme, the researcher indicated that the school librarians and library program were positively perceived to close the academic achievement gap. Culture, collaboration, collection, and challenges were the sub-themes for the second theme. The findings align with Bandura's research regarding the importance of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. After the themes from the qualitative case study will be discussed, the participant quotes and summary of concepts will be provided to address the central research question and sub-questions.

The participants in this qualitative case study have a wealth of knowledge concerning education. Collectively, they hold over 600 years of experience in education across different

areas and grade levels in the United States. A few participants even taught outside of the United States for diverse experiences.

Relationships with the School Library Staff Positively Impact Student Achievement

It is complicated to form relationships when individuals do not value their abilities (Bandura, 1997). From visiting the four sites and interviewing numerous educators, it was evident that there were positive relationships between the librarians and teachers. Individuals with positive relationships communicate and work together so students reach goals, and communication is an effective practice (Horan, 2019) in these roles. In all sites from the study, the librarians share leadership roles or professional development that they developed for the faculty. Since the librarians feel comfortable informing the education community from their leadership skills (McPherson, 2020), this can also influence higher levels of efficacy throughout the school community (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2021).

Positive relationships will be necessary for the school to succeed. Positive relationships will support a collaborative environment. Research shows librarians should collaborate with all teachers (Brown, 2020; Soulen, 2020; Soulen & Wine, 2018). Collaboration was viewed during site visits and further described by participants during individual interviews.

Jim, the principal at Site Three, details the importance of relationships to foster togetherness in the school community:

Relationships, I mean, really, that's the foundation of where things are at for us building relationships and that mentality of these are our kids and not my kids. So, it's I said, all hands-on deck and we truly do believe that if a student is struggling and there's a substitute in the class, another prior teacher might know that here that and then they

interact, right, it's really building that foundation of that respect and responsibility through relationship.

Collaboration requires a certain level of positive relationships throughout the school community in this situation.

Previous research has found mixed perceptions of the role of school librarians (Agundu et al., 2021; Baker et al., 2020; M. A. Lewis, 2019; Loh, Sundaray, et al., 2021). Yet, my qualitative case study's perceptions of school librarians and library programs at their sites were overwhelmingly positive. It could be said that the participants also shared that they were committed to education and believed their roles all had an encouraging impact on the schools. This relates to the belief that self-efficacy will lead to the entire community holding stronger, collective efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

School Library Programs Provide Equity and Increase Student Achievement

The interviews and site visits illustrate that the library is the heart of the school, just as notated in research (Miller & Bass, 2019; Trudeau, 2023). Each site has a staffed library program with offerings for all students. The library collection was often referenced as supporting various student interests, backgrounds, languages, and reading skills from the qualitative multisite case study. Providing students access to library services helped. Most school libraries from the participating sites had their library staffed throughout the school day to support the school, and this, in turn, benefited students with additional learning experiences, allowing the academic achievement gap to be addressed.

Materials were available in print and electronic services. Jim, the principal at Site Three, notes the strength of instruction from the library supports using ebooks, which is supported by research (Fry, 2018). Databases could support learning of all levels with text difficulty options,

text-to-speech, and multiple language offerings as observed during the site visits. Regardless of a student's level, there would be resources to develop their skills at the library further.

Little Free Libraries allowed students to select books for their own permanent reading collection and provided all students with additional resources. Further, partnering with public libraries provided students with additional resources and programs to sustain their connection to the library program. Not all families can afford books for the home to have a permanent home library for their children to read or have limited access to books (Loh et al., 2022). This is also a way to provide additional equity to the school community.

Librarians instructed students using various databases. I observed collaborative lessons with fifth and tenth grade students concerning databases, and uniquely, both classes featured different databases from Gale services. Students had access to many resources, and one shared that this was better than Google. Providing students with resources tailored to their needs is an example of equity. These research skills supported by librarians foster the development of inquiry in students (Alley, 2018).

From Site Two, Malia recognizes that all instruction and library offerings occupy space. Planners and architects must also consider the challenges of space to ensure equity. Malia states that “the number of kids in the growing population that we have. Just making sure that we have the available space for these learning opportunities to take place.” Resources about award-winning library design can also be helpful such as depicted in Morehart’s (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) library design showcases. Claire notes the library's welcoming design during her interview. These sentiments correlate with current literature as access to resources and learning are hallmarks of library programs, and now they also include being a welcoming (Trudeau, 2023) and safe space to uphold positive social-emotional learning (Dickey, 2023).

Elsa, the librarian at Site Two, includes profound words on providing a diverse collection from Bishop (1990); this further demonstrates the legacy of the analogy to influence educators (McNair & Edwards, 2021; O'Donnell, 2019; Trudeau, 2023). She shares the following statement about the wide variety of reading resources. "We really work with the windows and mirrors and the sliding doors, you know, making sure that kids are able to see themselves in books and also they're being exposed to other cultures and other ways of living." The library collections integrated print, technology, and non-traditional items from multiple perspectives to support student learning and curiosity. Loh et al. (2022) demonstrated that students have diverse reading preferences and that the collection must extend beyond trending titles, which links to Bishop (1990).

Available Opportunities to Support Student Achievement Further

One of the many strengths of having self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and then building collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) is that challenges will not cause the individual or group to give up on reaching challenging goals despite the difficulties. While all of the sites were working hard to support student growth, there were opportunities to strengthen the role of the school librarians and school library programs while addressing the challenges in their sites and the field of librarianship.

There is an increase in materials found in libraries. Materials include books, audiobooks, makerspace items, technology tools, and databases. Incorporating resources through collaboration and instruction throughout the library program supports student academic growth and lifelong skills. The variety of books can impact reading skills and the conviction that links to Bandura's writing (1977, 1986, 1989, 1997, 2001, 2012) and beliefs concerning efficacy, which will help students expand to other books that may be more complex in writing style or topic (Loh

et al., 2022). It is important to remember that funding needs to be in place for the school library offerings. Some of the schools for the study received funds from the state, which provided books but not any supplies or technologies. Another site had requirements for librarians and library assistants based on student enrollment numbers. Some librarians experienced a set budget from the school. Budgets can be viewed as a reflection of priorities and if library staff or library materials throughout the school are not lacking this can impact self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) level. Wilma, from Site One, eloquently stated the challenge for the librarian to meet all of these needs by the librarian. “Lack of funding. If we had more funding and she had access to more books, I know that would make her role easier and it would benefit the kids but you know, that's out of our hands.” Wilma knows what is needed but realizes limitations not directly in her control as a classroom teacher. For the librarians to make the concept of choice reading a successful strategy, they need to develop a comprehensive collection of library books. This is supported by research concerning the effectiveness of FVR (Krashen, 2011; M. Lewis, 2020; Patrick, 2019) and self-selection (Gruer & Perry, 2020).

Nathan, the Site One principal, believes librarians helping students improve their learning and test scores are supported by research (Burress et al., 2023; Kachel & Lance, 2021; Lance & Maniotes, 2020). While connections between library and math might not be the first reflection from individuals, this thought from Jim is supported by research illustrating increased math scores with full-time librarians in schools (Burress et al., 2023). With decades of experience in the field of education, Nathan has observed changes in the perception of the role of school librarians, as has Jim, the principal at site three, to become more favorable. As participants include male and female educational professionals with a wide range of experience levels, all display a positive perspective of the role of their school librarians and library program to address

the achievement gap, these viewpoints were not different despite the years of experience or gender of colleagues, as demonstrated by research by Golden (2020). The changes that Lisa, the library assistant at Site Two, saw firsthand with the evolution of continual growth of technology in library program relate to the findings that school librarians have embraced technology throughout history (Dickey, 2023). However, not all schools had the same level of funding for certified librarians, library staff, and materials. Bridging the academic achievement gap took different approaches at sites based on these factors.

In most situations, students do not attend school throughout the summer. Learning needs to continue throughout the year, which can be supported by relationships between the public and school libraries and the respective librarians. Some sites shared how the library organization was fashioned the same way between schools and public libraries to have a more consistent experience for library patrons. Teachers, principals, and librarians shared stories of working with the public library. A collaborative approach can continue to improve awareness of the availability of resources for students and families. Yuen and Liew (2022) articulate the benefits of collaborating with the school and public librarians concerning makerspaces, including considering new ideas and leveraging equity towards makerspace materials. Flexibility between school and public librarians working together can be another strength (Kammer & Moreland, 2020).

Implications for Policy or Practice

The upcoming section details the implications for policy and practice to improve the perception of school libraries and school librarians regarding their role in their schools being identified as NBRIS Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools. At the same time, the implications from the case study apply to schools and school libraries in each unique

setting. The findings supported by this study comprise the implications for study correlating to policy and practice, which have the opportunity to benefit NBRs Achievement Gap-Closing Schools, education professionals, researchers, future educators, school administrators, school board members, policymakers, the DOE, and architects as they aspire to have schools that address the academic achievement gap.

Implications for Policy

Implications for policies can impact school policies, state laws, regulations, and courses for school, library, education, and administration college programs. While the severity of policies can be overlooked, there are dramatic implications of equity to students when crafting policies (Johnson, 2019; Petland, 2019) concerning policies from staffing to collection development. From the findings in this study, each school and state had different funding approaches for the staffing and school librarians and library staff. In addition, funding for school library materials and supplies vastly varied. Even the terminology varied from school library to library media specialist. All schools had a collection development policy on file, but not all had a school library job description. The inconsistency of job descriptions for librarians is a pattern in the literature in the field (Elkins, 2018; Merga, 2020b; Whitton, 2019).

While all organizations can experience having budgets with limitations, student achievement should not be a sacrifice. From the researcher's perspective, it is hard that the school librarian's job had to be defined, but not the jobs of a principal or English language arts teacher. Just as you would be hard-pressed to find a school without a principal or an English language arts teacher, you should have a similar experience finding a school without a certified school librarian. Possibly, these staffing shortages are based on misconceptions regarding the role of school library programs and school librarians, but these misconceptions were not present at the

participating sites. All principals from the sites supported their library programs and were thrilled with the performances of their librarians, which diverged from prevailing perspectives concerning administrators in the field (Kachel, 2019; Wiegand, 2021). All four participating sites display an incredibly positive perception of their librarians and library programs. Three of the four participating sites have their librarians serving more than one school building. The librarian at Site One was also in charge of three other school librarians in the district. Site Two has their librarian primarily at their building, but they also serve in the other building. At Site Two, the library program has a library assistant at each building. For Site Three, the librarian is split between two elementary sites in the district with a flexible schedule. Site Four has two certified librarians and one library assistant full-time. Budget shortfalls or perceptions have been found to impact school library positions and funding levels from the research literature (Lance & Callison, 2005; Merga, 2020a, 2020b).

Implications for Practice

Implications for practice can benefit stakeholders, instructors, the school board, and the DOE as they reflect upon the role of school librarians. From the sites, there are a lot of positive qualities of the school library program that practitioners and stakeholders might not have considered, including the library environment, the excitement and motivation from the librarian, the promotion of the reading program, substantial collections, technology, and clear organization of materials. Further, the librarian ensures collaboration, equity, and a safe space for students and staff in the school to address academics. While the librarian and library program have much to offer in improving academics, there are some barriers that practitioners might not realize. These challenges include time, funding, lack of staff, lack of space, or even furniture that needs to be replaced or updated. These challenges could also be considered threats in addition to the

misperceptions of the role of librarians, censorship, or technology access identified by the participants.

The participating sites offered numerous examples of innovative programming that could be tried in different schools. Perhaps the library will consider holding a reading event such as a book fair, author visit, reading-duel, reading field trip, reading program, readathon, reading minute challenge, reading stations, and reading Bingo. Practitioners could consider different reading celebrations, the use of Little Free Libraries, and partnerships with the public library for collaborations. So many fantastic programming ideas were shared by the participants, and detailed statements from site visits were given to participants to consider. As special literacy lunch events, such as those shared at Site Two, encourage students, the library program can further engage with the school community (Dickey, 2023). Having incentive programs such as this in the library foster school-wide goals while further modeling culture. Further, the participants want to see opportunities added to their library, such as additional resources, more cross-curricular opportunities, reading time, and “One Book, One School” programs. The school culture of supporting library contests and school-wide reading goal setting supports positive findings regarding the effectiveness of having various goals to support motivation to achievement and additional growth in self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). Concerns regarding funding for school library programs, librarians, staff, time, and budget for materials were also shared. The researcher would like to believe that the dissertation can be a practical study for those in education, those involved with education policies, and future educators. Marie, from Site Two, details the importance of librarians promoting reading:

If they can promote reading, reading goes into your science, into your social studies, it helps in so many different areas. It's not just reading, so I think by the library promoting reading you then naturally are going to close the gap in all content areas.

The motivation that students gain regarding reading and research is paramount from literature in the field (Merga, 2020a; Toste et al., 2020). Capturing the motivation for reading can be displayed on the school website as it was on all four sites from the research study, and one site also had social media pages for the library to display students engaged in library events. Students working towards reading goals and reading programs support Bandura's (1997) goal theory.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The research study was conducted after the literature review was completed and approved. It is practical to revisit critical research and theory implications and apply them to the findings from the research study. Next, empirical and theoretical implications will be addressed. Focusing on empirical implications will detail leadership, reading programs, school library schedules, and staffing. Theoretical implications will explore library organization, self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and collaboration.

Empirical Implications

The importance of relationships between students and staff necessitates the school librarian's leadership (Brown, 2020; Soulen, 2020; Soulen & Wine, 2018). During the site visits, librarians displayed leadership, including leading professional development, initiating collaborative lessons, and establishing innovative reading. Participating librarians found incentives to support school-wide programs as demonstrated in research (Lance & Kachel, 2018). While it has been found librarians' skills could be overlooked by colleagues (Fitzgerald, 2022), this did not occur from the data collection methods in the dissertation.

A school such as Site One might find impactful growth in student learning with the reading goals aspect of AR (Bloomer, 2020; Toppin, 2018). Site Four encouraged students to read by supporting choices such as Free Voluntary Reading (Krashen, 2011; Patrick, 2019). Regardless of the reading programs offered at a school, the library collection should include student interests and abilities (American Library Association, 2004; M. Lewis, 2020). The more librarians can embolden students to partake in reading initiatives, the more likely that the skills gained will result in more extraordinary academic achievement (Merga & Ferguson, 2021; Merga et al., 2021).

Having the school library open and staffed with a certified school librarian can be one of the most effective interventions (Dukper et al., 2018), but this was not applied at all participating school sites. For all students and staff to access their librarian, the librarian must have a flexible schedule (Kammer & Moreland, 2020; Lance & Kachel, 2018; Merga et al., 2021; Roberson, 2019; Scholastic, 2006). A flexible schedule was observed at Site Four, with two certified school librarians and a full-time library assistant. The library staff is not assigned any additional duties. The staffing of certified librarians and a library assistant supports the research findings, but this did not occur at all sites. Ann, a librarian at Site Four, is pleased with the administration's support for the library program while also acknowledging the concern that many librarians do not experience support from the administration, which is supported by research (McPherson, 2020).

The library schedule for Lori, the librarian at Site Two, was semi-flexible. On Mondays, Lori had two sixth-grade classes and a fifth-grade, kindergarten, third-grade, and second-grade class for library class. On Tuesdays, there was one class of sixth grade, fifth grade, kindergarten, third grade, and first grade. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, Lori was assigned to the high school

library. Between Wednesday and Thursday, Lori has kindergarten, two first-grade classes, one first-grade class, one second-grade class, and two fourth-grade classes. On Friday, Lori has a fifth-, fourth-, and second-grade class. Lori was available to work on the library program and collaborate with teachers when there were no fixed classes. Each week, Lori taught 21 sections of kindergarten through sixth grade. Lori was not assigned any additional daily duties, such as hall, lunch, or bus duty.

Elsa had a fully flexible library schedule between two elementary libraries at Site Two. She typically alternated between the schools every other day, but this could change due to teacher requests. In between this time, she is scheduled to attend regularly scheduled committee meetings and updates with the technology director. Elsa uses Google Calendar to mark all meetings and lessons, as she has no official schedule. The media secretary, Karen, is at the library, where Elsa is not for the day. Elsa did not find herself being pulled from the library for additional duties. Karen shared that the principals are excellent about not pulling her to teach as she holds that license, and they try to keep the library time consistent.

The librarian's schedule for Mary at Site One included a flexible schedule on Monday and Friday so she could be available to go to the other three libraries in the district. Still, the goal was for her to continue servicing the school community at Site One. On Tuesdays, students in Grade 4 had an hour-long lesson in the library. Wednesdays were for Grade 3, and Thursdays were for Grade 5 library hour lessons. The schedule did not have additional duties such as hall, office, or lunch duties throughout the day; however, Mary was assigned to be outside when the buses arrived. Mary shared that they would prefer to have the library open before school, but due to the scheduled bus assignment, they cannot provide library access at that time. As the

principals from the studies valued the school librarians' role, they were less likely to be assigned non-instructional duties (Torres, 2022).

The school library schedule directly impacts librarians' ability to collaborate with teachers and support student information literacy skills (Arredondo, 2021; Crary, 2019; Dipetso & Moahi, 2019; Scholastic, 2016). Collaboration between librarians and teachers can yield higher educator efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Lower levels of self-efficacy impact the desire to work with others to avoid exposure to weaknesses (Craver, 2019). The sites visited displayed a collaborative nature and were referenced during numerous interviews, demonstrating the strong self-efficacy of the sites. While research shows the importance of a flexible schedule and collaboration for librarians to bolster student achievement, flexible schedules are inconsistent for school library programs. A reason for the inconsistency and staffing in the study can be that requirements and roles can vary (Merga, 2020b; Whitton, 2019) and can negatively impact equity for a librarian in a school (Kachel, 2021). As the library program staffing varied considerably between the sites, so did the job description. At Site One, there is no job description for school librarians. The school library job falls under the exact description of a classroom teacher. An extensive handbook from the Board of Education outlines the description of the District Library Media Coordinator, revised in 2013 for Site Two. There are over 30 roles and responsibilities for kindergarten through Grade 12 teachers, while the District Library Media coordinator has over 63 roles articulated. Site Three has a long-range library services plan approved by the school board and has been on file with the state Department of Education since 2023, which outlines the objectives and goals of the library program. The school district has a specific job description for librarians at Site Four. This fits one page and reviews the general

definition of work, essential functions/typical tasks, skills, abilities, education and experience, and special requirements. This was last updated in 2015.

Theoretical Implications

Research literature has detailed changes regarding the library organization of materials (Clarke, 2021; Engelson, 2019; Moeller & Becnel, 2019). While all sites had a digital catalog (Follett/Destiny Discover), books were arranged differently in the four sites. The organization included the DDC, AR reading level, ZPD, and genrefication. The organization of materials has implications that link to Bandura. The ability to locate resources independently supports the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). At each site, the researcher observed students at all grade levels identifying and locating books they desired to read. The library environment was welcoming to support students, asking librarians or library staff members for book suggestions or assistance with selection. This environment also benefited from having positive relationships in the school community. Different research literature points to one organizational structure over the other, such as genrefication building student confidence (Clarke, 2021; Sultanik, 2020; Witteveen, 2019), but from the experience of the study, the research found that so long as students and staff have the familiarity of the process and clear signage is in place, success in locating resources will ensure. This statement diverges from much of the professional literature referenced. Observing library usage and design in action at the site visit was essential. Each library had a different organization of library materials, but students successfully found books in each arrangement. As with the AR program, it was found that implementation fidelity had a huge correlation to success (Bloomer, 2020), and this same concept can be correlated to the success of locating materials based on the organizational structure consistency of library materials.

The organization of library material from the perspective of Bandura's (1977) theory was unique and well-suited to the researcher's perspective. Teachers and students alike could locate materials during the site visit, supported by educators having higher self-efficacy to build an environment where all students achieve and lend to higher collective-efficacy throughout the school building (Bandura, 1977). One participant member mentioned that their school was not always known for closing achievement gaps, but it is reasonable to consider that high levels of self-efficacy found in educators fostered perseverance through challenging situations (Bandura, 1989), and success was achieved as a result of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977).

Constructivism from the lens of Vygotsky could also be applied to the success of school librarians and library programs to address the academic achievement gap. One of Vygotsky's key concepts is the ZPD (Schunk, 2020), also featured in the AR program used in many schools and libraries. In addition, the makerspace movement is burgeoning in school libraries. While each makerspace varied greatly from the four sites, it would be novel to see the continued impact of the spaces concerning academic growth. From the researcher's perspective, constructivism first requires efficacy to be actualized.

Looking at successful school sites in reaching the NBRS award meant that all schools had a chance to feel honored for the work of the entire school community. I think this positive accomplishment from the school community led all team members to understand further that everyone had an important role in closing the achievement gap. When individuals feel confident in their abilities and those of their colleagues, they can be inclined to trust their colleagues further and collaborate. This trust in others is linked to collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The positive nature of collaboration and support between the school librarian and teachers is

supported by literature in the field (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Durodolu, 2018; Lance & Callison, 2005; Lo et al., 2018).

Limitations and Delimitations

Despite all the best intentions, studies will have limitations and delimitations. While my research was successful in sharing experiences and perspectives concerning school librarians and school library programs and their role in addressing academic achievement from NBRS sites, upon completing the study, it was evident that it included both limitations and delimitations. The following sections will review the limitations and delimitations of the research study.

Limitations

Regarding limitations, there was a low percentage participation rate for the sites meeting the study criteria. Once the sites were approved, a team of at least five members, including the school librarian, principal, and English language arts teachers, needed to participate. The paucity of consenting sites from previous award years led the research to wait for the next annual winners which were released in September 2023 to contact recent NBRS locations. Another limitation was that after the researcher defended her dissertation proposal and completed the IRB approval, it was December 2022. Schools were contacted in December 2022, but this was near holiday vacations and could have harmed participation. Another possibility that adds to the limitation of the potential participating sites is the statistical loss of school library positions across the United States (Craver, 2019) and that 61% of schools do not have a full-time certified school librarian (Ahlfeld, 2019b). Some sites expressed interest while wishing me well on my dissertation but reported that they could not participate due to not having a school librarian on the staff.

In addition, the researcher's work schedule can be a barrier to completing the study. The researcher works full-time as a school librarian and used personal and unpaid leave to complete the site visits. A study of this nature requires time and additional expenses for the researcher, including travel to sites, transportation, and lodging. I am grateful to have met inspiring educators and uplifting sites during my experience. Initially, I thought I would focus on secondary schools that closed the academic achievement gaps since I had been a middle school librarian for numerous years, but I did not have enough participating sites. Yet, I am thankful to have a full complement of schools, including kindergarten through Grade 12. I have served as a librarian at every grade level and represented our entire library department as the chairperson. There were times during this research when I thought that I would have to completely change the research design or topic, as gaining participants was one of the most onerous aspects of the entire dissertation process in my situation. The schools and locations were new to the researcher, nor did they ever have contact with the participants before the study, and this ensured that there was not an imbalance of power between the researcher and participants (Yin, 2018). As this is original research, another researcher could have a dissimilar experience in gaining sites and participants for the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations include the study's structure based on the researcher's choices. First, the research study was designed to uncover the perception of the role of school librarians and library programs in schools recognized for closing the achievement gap as a NBRIS. Participants completing the sites include school librarians, library assistants, principals, English language arts teachers, and reading specialist teachers who worked at the school during the NBRIS process. Site visits took place to capture perspectives in a natural setting and uphold the goal of observation in

qualitative study designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study is most appropriate for this study as the participants and sites were bound to be reflective of sampling (Yin, 2018). Data collection includes an assortment of documents including policies, job descriptions, and social media presence regarding the library program and having this type of data added to triangulation (Yin, 2018).

Recommendations for Future Research

Since it was challenging to have multiple sites participate, another consideration could be having a single case study with more content and specialty area teachers. I had a better response when I sent invitations the following week after the National Blue Ribbon award announcements. In my experience, timing mattered. If possible, I would suggest contacting sites soon after the award announcement. A qualitative case study allows for more individual experiences to be detailed and adds to the body of knowledge. Having individuals from various schools and states provides additional insights into the research topic. If an individual were interested in a quantitative approach, he or she could look at NBRS as a whole to determine the staffing of school library programs or compare the staffing between Exemplary High Performing Schools and Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing schools and analyze the similarities and differences Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2022) and future releases can be a valuable source of information. In addition, this approach can consider state regulations and guidelines for school library programs, as it was not possible to discuss them at length to ensure anonymity for participants and sites. A quantitative study would be it would be ineffective in learning more about Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory without conducting individual interviews and learning from the site. Consequently, a researcher could be inclined to attempt a mixed method study. It is conceivable that the DOE might be interested in a

collaborative research study of the school library staffing and services offered from the NBRS sites and further consider the application of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory.

Conclusion

The entire qualitative multi-site case study provides an opportunity to further explore the perceptions of school librarians and library programs to address the academic achievement gap in recent NBRS while considering the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). While there is evidence from the participant interviews in sites of a lack of financial support in staffing and material and supplies budgets negatively impacting the school librarian program, these sites had abundant support from the principals and teachers from the study. Educational professionals in the study display positive working relationships strengthened by their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). These relationships might facilitate a more substantial collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997), leading to increased student academic results. Librarians and library assistants share a collective zeal towards the profession and best serving the students, teachers, and school community. Equal examples of funding the staffing for library programs or budgets for the library materials were not exhibited. While you would find it unthinkable that a school would not have a principal on staff, there are mixed levels of state guidance and funding for staffing and materials for school library programs involved in the qualitative case study. The fact that the school library program is now mentioned in the NBRS application is an improvement from the past. Under the section "other curriculum area" the fourth item addresses "technology/library/media" in 200 words (NBRS, 2023). This is the only time that the library is found in the application, and media is referenced only one other time but as school social media. The NBRS application could be further detailed to include the staffing and qualifications of the individuals

in their library program while also considering the application of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory.

References

- Agee, S. (2019). Equal access + equal opportunity = Success for all learners. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(2), 24–29. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1233107.pdf>
- Agundu, U.-V. C., Amanambu, O. V., Ekechukwu, L. E., Mbelede, N. G., Ohia, N. C., Ololo, K. O., Ugboogu, C., & Ejimonye, C. O. (2021). Perceived role of school principal and school-based management committee in school library administration and management: Implications for school library policy. *Library Philosophy & Practice*, 1–28. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=12315&context=libphilprac>
- Ahlfeld, K. (2019a). Lifting the curtain: Examining the importance of the shared foundation IV: Curate in the national school library standards for learners, school librarians, and school libraries. *Journal of Library Administration*, 59(4), 442–454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2019.1593712>
- Ahlfeld, K. (2019b). They paved paradise: School librarians and school libraries are disappearing and we won't know what we've lost until it's gone. *Journal of Library Administration*, 59(8), 927–938. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2019.1661747>
- Alley, K. M. (2018). Picturing school: Exploring middle school students' perceptions of what supports and hinders academic success. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, 12(1), 67–81. <https://www.infoagepub.com/products/Middle-Grades-Research-Journal-12-1>
- Alman, S. W. (2017). *School librarianship: Past, present, and future*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Altenburger, E. (2021). Rural high school libraries: Places prone to promote positive school climates. *Journal of Learning Spaces*, 10(1), 1–14. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1292884.pdf>

- American Association of School Librarians. (2018). *National school library standards for learners, school librarians, and school libraries*. <https://alastore.ala.org/content/national-school-library-standards-learners-school-librarians-and-school-libraries-aasl>
- American Association of School Librarians. (2021). *Best digital tools for teaching & learning*. <http://www.ala.org/aasl/awards/best>
- American Library Association. (2004). *The freedom to read statement*. <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>
- American Library Association. (2018). *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*. <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/federallegislation/schoollibraries/essa>
- Arredondo, J. L. (2021). Literacy's alive in a tapestry: Engaging our teachers, librarians, and students. *English Journal*, 110(4), 62-68. <https://publicationsncte.org/content/journals/10.58680/ej202131129?crawler=true>
- Atteberry, A., Bischoff, K., & Owens, A. (2021). Identifying progress toward ethnoracial achievement equity across U.S. school districts: A new approach. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 14(2), 410–441. https://d33wubrfki0l68.cloudfront.net/d91523bb-2174-4489-8e71-ddf32b02c93f/Atteberry_Bischoff_Owens_2021_prepub.pdf
- Awards. (2013). *Computers in Libraries*, 33(5), 29. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1372419736>
- Baker, S., Decman, J., & Willis, J. M. (2020). Talk or walk: School principals and shared instructional leadership. *School Leadership Review*, 15(1), Article 17. <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1173&context=slr>

- 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.84.2.191>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175–1184. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.9.1175>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: an agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>
- Bandura, A. (2012). On the functional properties of perceived self-efficacy revisited. *Journal of Management*, 38(1), 9–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311410606>
- Baron, N. S. (2017, October 9). Reading in a digital age. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(2), 15–20. <https://kappanonline.org/reading-digital-age/>
- Bayar, A., & Karaduman, H. A. (2021). The effects of school culture on students academic achievements. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(3), 99–109. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9i3.3885>
- Beard, K. S. (2019). “Getting on track”: Aligning the achievement gap conversation with ethical educational practice. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 22(1), 30–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2018.1503821>
- Bell, T. H. (1981). Improving educational performance. *National Forum: Phi Kappa Phi Journal*, 61(4), 33–35. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1201066.pdf>
- Berg, K., Kramer, J., & Werle, M. (2019). Implementing and evaluating instructional partnerships. *Knowledge Quest*, 47(3), 32–38.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1201066.pdf>

Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A research synthesis of the associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 425–469.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669821>

Bishop, R. S. (1990). “Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors.” *Perspectives: Choosing and using books for the classroom*, 6(3), ix–xi.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/506033060/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors>

Blakemore, M. (2018). Problem scoping design thinking and close reading: Makerspaces in the school library. *Knowledge Quest*, 46(4), 66–69.

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1171732.pdf>

Blessinger, K., & Comeaux, D. (2020). User experience with a new public interface for an integrated library system. *Information Technology & Libraries*, 39(1), 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v39i1.11607>

Bloomer, B. (2020). Renaissance’s accelerated reader: Does it really work? *North Carolina Libraries*, 78(1). <https://doi.org/10.3776/ncl.v78i1.5372>

Bowen, A. (2018). The visual effect: A literature review of visual design principles as they apply to academic library websites. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 23(3/4), 67–88.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10875301.2019.1702133>

Bowler, L., Julien, H., & Haddon, L. (2018). Exploring youth information-seeking behaviour and mobile technologies through a secondary analysis of qualitative data. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 50(3), 322–331.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000618769967>

- Bray, M., & Hollandsworth, R. (2011). School library media specialists: What's in a name? A lot it seems... *TechTrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning*, 55(4), 19–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-011-0507-7>
- Brown, S. (2020). *School librarian's technology playbook: Innovative strategies to inspire teachers and learners*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Burns, E. A. (2018). Advocating for change in school library perceptions. *Teacher Librarian*, 46(1), 8–14.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1316&context=stemp_fac_pubs
- Burns, E. A. (2020). AASL national school library standards: Progress toward implementation. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 26(1), 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.29173/slsw8245>
- Burress, R., Atkins, C., & Burns, C. (2018). Learning commons as a catalyst for instructional partnerships. *Teacher Librarian*, 45(4), 28–31.
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Learning+Commons+as+a+Catalyst+for+Instructional+Partnerships.-a0537982250>
- Burress, R., Atkins, C., McDonald, B., & Burress, D. (2023). The power of full-time certified school librarians in Missouri: Boosting student achievement across disciplines. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 28(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slsw8695>
- Byrd, M. (2020). Capitalizing on differences: Keys to unlocking the academic achievement gap. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, 15(2), Article 20190003.
<http://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2019-0003>

- Calvert, K. (2019). Beebe badger bookmobile...Blazing a reading trail. *Knowledge Quest*, 47(4), 8–14. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1207618.pdf>
- Calzada, B. (2019). “Librarying” outside the library. *Knowledge Quest*, 47(4), 36–43. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1207621.pdf>
- Capotosto, L. (2021). Examining the use of reader engagement strategies in middle school summer reading lists. *Teacher Librarian*, 48(4), 8–13. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a90c880c98b69d2f92e0f4cd098e722d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=38018>
- Carson, T. E., & Davies, R. A. (1948). Teaching and the library. *The School Review*, 56(2), 92–95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1083107>
- Cellucci, A., & Harland, P. (2022). Do you know your administrator’s priorities for the school library? *Knowledge Quest*, 50(3), 44–49.
- Clarke, R. I. (2021). Library classification systems in the U.S.: Basic ideas and examples. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 59(2/3), 203–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2021.1881008>
- Coghlan, D., & Brydon-Miller, M. (2014). *The SAGE encyclopedia of action research* (Vols. 1–2). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446294406>
- Coleman, M. C. (2020). School librarians take the lead collaborating on professional development. *Knowledge Quest*, 49(2), 10–18. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1281727.pdf>
- Crary, S. (2019). Secondary teacher perceptions and openness to change regarding instruction in information literacy skills. *School Library Research*, 22, 1–26. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1221655.pdf>

- Craver, K. W. (2019). *School libraries in a time of change: How to survive and thrive*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dawkins, A. M., & Eidson, E. (2021). A content analysis of district school library selection policies in the United States. *School Library Research*, 24, 1-27.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1329025.pdf>
- Dawkins, A. M., & Gavigan, K. W. (2019). E-book collections in high school libraries: Factors influencing circulation and usage. *School Library Research*, 22, 1–21.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1218481.pdf>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2013). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Deskins, L. (2020). *Content-area collaborations for secondary grades*. ALA editions.
- Dickey, S. (2023). School librarians as innovators. The tradition endures and expands. *Knowledge Quest*, 51(3), 28–33.
- Dietrichson, J., Bøg, M., Filges, T., & Klint Jørgensen, A.-M. (2017). Academic interventions for elementary and middle school students with low socioeconomic status: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 243–282.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316687036>
- Dipetso, C. M., & Moahi, K. H. (2019). Information literacy skills of high school students in Botswana: A case study of a high school in Gaborone, Botswana. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 25(1), 99–115. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slww8237>
- Dukper, K. B., Agyekum, B. O., & Konlan, B. (2018). School libraries and students' academic achievements in Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo district of northern Ghana. *Library Philosophy &*

Practice, 1–13.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4926&context=libphilprac>

Durodolu, O. O. (2018). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of information literacy skills. *Mousaion*, 36(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.25159/0027-2639/3873>

Elkins, A. J. (2018). Mind the gaps: School librarians' job descriptions and the professional standards for school librarians in the United States. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 24(1), 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slww8219>

Emerson, L., Macaskill, A., Rawlins, P., Greenhow, A., Kilpin, K., Lamond, H., White, S., Doughty, C., Feekery, A., & O'Connor, R. (2019). Teacher and librarian perspectives on information literacy, and the secondary-school library's relationship to information literacy in the classroom. *Curriculum Matters*, 15, 59–88.

<https://doi.org/10.18296/cm.0037>

Encyclopedia Britannica. (2022). Library. In *Britannica Academic*.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/library>

Engelson, L. A. (2019). Sufficiency of cataloging education: School librarians respond. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 60(4), 285–311.

<https://doi.org/10.3138/jelis.2018-0072>

Erbeli, F., & Rice, M. (2021). Examining the effects of silent independent reading on reading outcomes: A narrative synthesis review from 2000 to 2020. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2021.1944830>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2021.1944830>

Farmer, L. S. J. (2019). News literacy and fake news curriculum: School librarians' perceptions of pedagogical practices. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 11(3), 1–11.

<https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2019-11-3-1>

- Farmer, L. S. J., & Phamle, S. (2021). Transitioning to college: Impact of high school librarians. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 47(1), 1-5.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102262>
- Fitzgerald, L. (2021). Inquiry learning and the teacher librarian - You can't have one without the other! *Access*, 35(3), 16-22.
- Fitzgerald, L. (2022). What a school library can be in 2022. *Access*, 36(1), 9-14.
- Fontichiaro, K. (2018). Making as self-soothing: The power of stitches. *Teacher Librarian*, 45(5), 53-55.
- Foote, C. (2019). Future ready library spaces: A team approach to designing. *Knowledge Quest*, 47(3), 8-13.
- Ford, T. G., Lavigne, A. L., Fiegner, A. M., & Si, S. (2020). Understanding district support for leader development and success in the accountability era: A review of the literature using social-cognitive theories of motivation. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(2), 264-307.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319899723>
- Frings, D., Gleibs, I. H., & Ridley, A. M. (2020). What moderates the attainment gap? The effects of social identity incompatibility and practical incompatibility on the performance of students who are or are not Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 23(1), 171-188. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-019-09531-4>
- Fry, A. (2018). Factors affecting the use of print and electronic books: A use study and discussion. *College & Research Libraries*, 79(1), 68-85.
<https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/article/view/16613/18059>

- Gabaldón, B. (2020). Regard more, not regard less: Welcoming all to the sanctuary of the school library. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(3), 18–23.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction*. (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Golden, J. (2020). Teachers' attitudes toward library use. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 26(1), 13–30. <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/slw/index.php/slw/article/download/8246/5090>
- Gruer, T. S., & Perry, K. M. (2020). Yes, school librarians teach reading: Reading skill reinforcement and the school librarian. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(5), 40–47.
- Hadad, R., Thomas, K., Kachovska, M., & Yin, Y. (2020). Practicing formative assessment for computational thinking in making environments. *Journal of Science Education & Technology*, 29(1), 162–173. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-019-09796-6>
- Hand, D. (2018). Students need libraries--In HISD and every school district. *Knowledge Quest*, 46(3), 9–13. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1165239.pdf>
- Harada, V., & Donham, J. (1998). Information power: Student achievement is the bottom line. *Teacher Librarian*, 26(1), 14–17.
- <https://www.proquest.com/openview/592b730ee244db494a39d3ec62dab452/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=38018>
- Haycock, K. (2000). School libraries make a difference. *Teacher Librarian*, 28(1), 39.
- Hinton, M. (2020). Hip-hop EDU: *Use music to spark students' creativity and learning*. School Library Journal. <https://www.slj.com/story/Hip-Hop-EDU-music-Sparking-students-Creativity-and-Learning-libraries-literacy>
- Horan, T. (2019). The dynamic display: Creating interactive museum-style exhibits in the school library. *Teacher Librarian*, 46(3), 30–34.

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+Dynamic+Display%3a+Creating+Interactive+Museum-Style+Exhibits+in...-a0580343620>

- Ivory, A., & Viens, L. (2019). Databases, collection development, and student learning. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(2), 17–23. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1233093.pdf>
- Johnson, D. (2019). Empathetic skills and school libraries: Critical for both students and librarians. *Teacher Librarian*, 46(5), 8–13.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/0c66bba1d9ffb34fb98e85ea343e806b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=38018>
- Jones, D., & Grote, A. (2018). The library as learning commons. *Planning for Higher Education*, 46(3), 56–64. https://www.acentech.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PHEV46N3_PlanningStory_Library_As_Learning_Commons_Jones-Grote.pdf
- Jorgenson, S., & Burrell, R. (2020). Analyzing the diversity of a high school library collection. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(5), 48–53.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1252581.pdf>
- Kachel, D. E. (2019). Advocating for collaboration. *Teacher Librarian*, 46(4), 48–50.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/da66973a1d0aef31f302848f470a542f/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=38018>
- Kachel, D. E. (2020). The library website as an advocacy tool. *Teacher Librarian*, 47(4), 61–63.
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+Library+Website+as+an+Advocacy+Tool.-a0626295680>
- Kachel, D. E. (2021). Data speaks addressing equity of access to school librarians for students. *Teacher Librarian*, (48), 49–52, 63.

- Kachel, D. E., & Lance, K. C. (2018). Changing times: School librarian staffing status. *Teacher Librarian*, 45(4), 14–19.
- Kachel, D. E., & Lance, K. C. (2020). The role of school library organizations in developing advocacy capacity. *Teacher Librarian*, 47(5), 16–20.
- Kachel, D. E., & Lance, K. C. (2021). The status of state support of school library programs. *Teacher Librarian*, 48(5), 8–13.
- Kalyuga, S., Chandler, P., & Sweller, J. (1998). Levels of expertise and instructional design. *Human Factors*, 40(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1518/001872098779480587>
- Kammer, J., & Moreland, D. (2020). School and public library collaboration: A phenomenology of working together. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 26(1), 31–47.
<https://doi.org/10.29173/slww8249>
- Kammer, J., Kiwoolsng, M., Donahay, A., & Koeberl, H. (2021). Strategies for successful school librarian and teacher collaboration. *School Library Research*, 24, 1–24.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1292862.pdf>
- Kerby, M. (2019). *An introduction to collection development for school librarians*. ALA Editions.
- Kimmel, S. C., Mardis, M. A., Pribesh, S., Pasquini, L. A., Schultz-Jones, B., Jones, F. R., Wine, L. D., & Colson, L. M. (2019). The preparation and certification of school librarians: Using causal educational research about teacher characteristics to probe facets of effectiveness. *School Library Research*, 22, 1–32.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1267&context=stempubs_fac_pubs

- Kous, K., Pušnik, M., Heričko, M., & Polančič, G. (2020). Usability evaluation of a library website with different end user groups. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 52(1), 75–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000618773133>
- Krashen, S. D. (2011). *Free voluntary reading*. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400653810>
- Kunkel, A. B. (2020). Putting literacy first. *Teacher Librarian*, 48(1), 40–43. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/8830381182b2d4544292194aae558df5/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=38018>
- Lamb, A. (2020). Labs, stations, and studios: A dozen spaces to explore social studies themes. *Teacher Librarian*, 47(5), 58–62. <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/7baaac1b-6b4c-4ce2-b919-141b4b3e91f1/content>
- Lance, K. C. (1994). The impact of school library media centers on academic achievement. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 22(3), 167–170. https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/edchoice/SLMQ_ImpactofSchoolLibraryMediaCentersonAcademicAchievement_InfoPower.pdf
- Lance, K. C. (2002). What research tells us about the importance of school libraries. *Knowledge Quest*, 31(1), 17–22. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234631242_What_Research_Tells_Us_about_the_Importance_of_School_Libraries
- Lance, K. C., & Callison, D. (2005). Enough already?: Blazing new trails for school library research: An interview with Keith Curry Lance, director, library research service, Colorado State library & University of Denver. *School Library Media Research SLMR*, 8,

1-39.

https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol8/SLMR_EnoughAlready_V8.pdf

Lance, K. C., & Hofschire, L. (2012). School librarian staffing linked with gains in student achievement, 2005 to 2011. *Teacher Librarian*, 39(6).

Lance, K. C., & Kachel, D. E. (2018). Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(7), 15–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718767854>

Lance, K. C., & Maniotes, L. K. (2020). Linking librarians, inquiry learning, and information literacy? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 101(7), 47–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721720917542>

Lance, K. C., Rodney, M. J., & Hamilton-Pennell, C. (2000). *Measuring up to standards: The impact of school library programs & information literacy in Pennsylvania schools*.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED446771.pdf>

Lechtenberg, K., Grigsby, S., Spiering, J., Chen, D., & Habley, J. (2021). *Position statement on labeling practices*. American Association of School Libraries.

https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/advocacy/statements/docs/AASL_Labeling_Practices_Position_Statement_2021a.pdf

Lee, V. R., Rogowski, A., Shehzad, U., & Recker, M. (2021). Unplugged-to-plugged computer science at the library. *Teacher Librarian*, 48(3), 34–39.

<https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10315449>

Lewis, M. (2020). Advocating for the school library through relationships. *Knowledge Quest*, 49(1), 46-51. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1272785.pdf>

- Lewis, M. A. (2019). Administrators' instructional leadership perspective of the role of instructional coaches and teacher librarians: A comparative examination. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 25(2), 16–33. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slww8240>
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Bryman, A., & Liao, F. T. (2004). *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589>
- Li, X. (2021). Young people's information practices in library makerspaces. *Journal of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 72(6), 744–758. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24442>
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Linn, R. L., Baker, E. L., & Betebenner, D. W. (2002). Accountability systems: implications of requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. *Educational Researcher*, 31(6), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X031006003>
- Lo, P., Rogers, H., & Chiu, D. K. W. (2018). *Effective school librarianship: Successful professional practices from librarians around the world*. Apple Academic Press.
- Loh, C. E. (2016). Levelling the reading gap: A socio-spatial study of school libraries and reading in Singapore. *Literacy*, 50(1), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12067>
- Loh, C. E., & Sun, B. (2019). "I'd still prefer to read the hard copy": Adolescents' print and digital reading habits. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(6), 663–672. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.904>
- Loh, C. E., Gan, S., & Mounsey, S. (2022). What do children want to read? A case study of how one primary school library supported reading for pleasure. *Journal of Library Administration*, 62(7), 931–945. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2022.2117955>

- Loh, C. E., Hamarian, E. B. M., Qi, L. L. Y., Lim, Q., & Zee, S. N. Y. (2021). Developing future-ready school libraries through design thinking: A case study. *IFLA Journal*, 47(4), 505–519. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03400352211028897>
- Loh, C. E., Sundaray, S., Merga, M., & Gao, J. (2021). Principals and teachers' perspectives of their school libraries and implications for school library policy. *Journal of Library Administration*, 61(5), 550–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2021.1924532>
- Mann, L. (2018). Making a place for makerspaces in information literacy. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 58(2), 82–86. <https://alatmp.sfulib5.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/rusq/article/view/6927/9380>
- McGuire, B. (2009). *Active reading: Activities for librarians and teachers*. Libraries Unlimited.
- McNair, J. C., & Edwards, P. A. (2021). The lasting legacy of Rudine Sims Bishop: Mirrors, windows, sliding glass doors, and more. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice.*, 70(1), 202–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23813377211028256>
- McPherson, M. (2020). The influence of teacher librarians' personal attributes and relationships with the school community in developing a school library programme. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 26(1), 136-150. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slw8254>
- Merga, M. K. (2020a). School librarians as literacy educators within a complex role. *Journal of Library Administration*, 60(8), 889–908. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2020.1820278>
- Merga, M. K. (2020b). School libraries fostering children's literacy and literature learning: Mitigating the barriers. *Literacy*, 54(1), 70–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12189>
- Merga, M. K. (2021). Libraries as wellbeing supportive spaces in contemporary schools. *Journal of Library Administration*, 61(6), 659–675. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2021.1947056>

- Merga, M. K., & Ferguson, C. (2021). School librarians supporting students' reading for pleasure: A job description analysis. *Australian Journal of Education*, 65(2), 153–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944121991275>
- Merga, M. K., & Mason, S. (2019). Building a school reading culture: Teacher librarians' perceptions of enabling and constraining factors. *Australian Journal of Education*, 63(2), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944119844544>
- Merga, M. K., Roni, S. M., Loh, C. E., & Malpique, A. (2021). Revisiting collaboration within and beyond the school library: New ways of measuring effectiveness. *Journal of Library Administration*, 61(3), 332–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2021.1883370>
- Mersand, S. (2021). The state of makerspace research: A review of the literature. *TechTrends*, 65(2), 174–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-020-00566-5>
- Mertens, D. (2017). *An introduction to the transformative paradigm: Epistemology & methodology* [Video]. SAGE Publication. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473998636>
- Miller, S. & Bass, W. L. (2019). *Leading from the library: Help your school community thrive in the digital age*. International Society for Technology in Education.
- Million, A. J. (2018). Help needed: Best practices, collaborative advantage, and library websites. *International Information & Library Review*, 50(4), 312–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2018.1526851>
- Moeller, R. A., & Becnel, K. E. (2019). “Why on earth would we not genrefy the books?”: A study of reader-interest classification in school libraries. *Knowledge Organization*, 46(3), 199–208. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2019-3-199>
- Montiel-Overall, P. (2005). A theoretical understanding of teacher and librarian collaboration (TLC). *School Libraries Worldwide*, 11(2), 24–48. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slw6962>

- Moorefield-Lang, H., & Dubnjakovic, A. (2020). Factors influencing intention to introduce accessibility in makerspace planning and implementation. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 26(2), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slww8258>
- Morehart, P. (2018). 2018 library design showcase. *American Libraries*, 49, 22–29. <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/0918-american-libraries.pdf>
- Morehart, P. (2019). 2019 library design showcase. *American Libraries*, 50, 32–38. <https://digital.americanlibrariesmagazine.org/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=fb1abbb2-ee6e-4493-a8d2-53c84745b4d7>
- Morehart, P. (2020). 2020 library design showcase. *American Libraries*, 51, 28–34. <https://digital.americanlibrariesmagazine.org/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=787be77f-666a-48cb-b17b-6f1b7758ca82>
- Morehart, P. (2021). 2021 library design showcase. *American Libraries*, 52, 20-25. <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/0921.pdf>
- Moreillon, J. (2018). Reading champions: A leadership opportunity for school librarians. *Knowledge Quest*, 47(1) 52-60.
- Moreland, D., & Kammer, J. (2020). School and public library collaboration: Opportunities for sharing and community connections. *Knowledge Quest*, 49(1), 40–44. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1272606.pdf>
- Muhammad, O. S., & Aziz, M. (2019). Achievement goals and academic achievement: The mediating role of learning strategies. *Foundation University Journal of Psychology*, 3(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.33897/fujp3.11>

Murray, S. A. P., Davis, D. G., & Basbanes, N. A. (2012). *The library: An illustrated history*. Skyhorse Publishing.

National Blue Ribbon Schools. (2021, September 21). *2021 exemplary achievement gap closing schools*. U.S. Department of Education.

https://nationalblueribbonsschools.ed.gov/assets/reports/2021/2021_exemplary_achievement_gap_closing_schools.pdf

National Blue Ribbon Schools. (2022). *2022 exemplary achievement gap closing schools*. U.S. Department of Education.

https://nationalblueribbonsschools.ed.gov/assets/reports/2022/2022_exemplary_achievement_gap_closing_schools.pdf

National Blue Ribbon Schools. (2023). *2023 exemplary achievement gap closing schools*. U.S. Department of Education.

https://nationalblueribbonsschools.ed.gov/assets/reports/2023/2023_exemplary_achievement_gap_closing_schools.pdf

National Blue Ribbon Schools. (2024). *Previous NBRIS awardees*.

<https://nationalblueribbonsschools.ed.gov/awardwinners/history>

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2022). *Understanding gaps*.

https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/understand_gaps.aspx

Nichols-Besel, K., Scharber, C., O'Brien, D., G., & Dillon, D. R. (2018). A space for boys and books: Guys read book clubs. *Children & Libraries*, 16(2), 19–26.

<https://doi.org/10.5860/cal.16.2.19>

Nzomo, P., & Fehrmann, P. (2020). Advocacy engagement: The role of information literacy skills. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 14(1), 41–65. <https://doi.org/10.11645/14.1.2695>

- O'Donnell, Alina. (2019). Windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors: The enduring impact of Rudine Sims Bishop's work. *Literacy Today* (2411-7862), 36(6), 16–19.
- Oltmann, S. M. (2018). Ethics, values, and intellectual freedom in school libraries. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 24(1), 71–86. <https://doi.org/10.29173/slw8218>
- Overduin, T. (2019). “Like a robot”: Designing library websites for new and returning users. *Journal of Web Librarianship*, 13(2), 112–126.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19322909.2019.1593912>
- Owate, C. N., Afolabi, M., & Akanwa, P. C. (2017). Demographic variables and students use of learning resources in public secondary schools libraries in rivers state of Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 9(2), 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEAPS2016.0487>
- Pace, T. (2020). Reading adventures. *Science and Children*, 57(5), 30–34.
<https://www.nsta.org/science-and-children/science-and-children-january-2020/reading-adventures>
- Pashkova-Balkenhol, T., Lenker, M., Cox, E., & Kocevar-Weidinger, E. (2019). Should we flip the script?: A literature review of deficit-based perspectives on first-year undergraduate students' information literacy. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 13(2), 92–111.
<https://doi.org/10.11645/13.2.2619>
- Pasini, N. (2018). A collective impact approach to the reading achievement gap. *Journal of Library Administration*, 58(6), 605–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2018.1491186>
- Patrick, M. (2019). Free voluntary reading and comprehensible input. *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 20(39), 78–82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631019000126>

- Pentland, C. (2019). Ensuring equitable access to books in the school library. *Teacher Librarian*, 46(5), 18–21.
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Ensuring+Equitable+Access+to+Books+in+the+School+Library.-a0600917397>
- Phillips, A. L., Recker, M., & Lee, V. (2019). How librarians enact innovative activities: A framework for characterizing 21st century school librarianship. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 25(1), 21–34.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359334497_A_Framework_for_Characterizing_21st_Century_School_Librarianship/fulltext/638019067b0e356feb7ef1c9/A-Framework-for-Characterizing-21st-Century-School-Librarianship.pdf
- Prensky, M. (2012). *From digital natives to digital wisdom: Hopeful essays for 21st century learning*. Corwin, <https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781483387765>
- Ranellucci, J., Rosenberg, J. M., & Poitras, E. G. (2020). Exploring pre-service teachers' use of technology: The technology acceptance model and expectancy-value theory. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 36(6), 810–824. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12459>
- Robertson, N. D. (2019). Expanding school library collections: The makerspace edition. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(2), 8–14. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1233105.pdf>
- Robinson, D. E., & McNary, S. W. (2021). School library instruction: Does teaching experience matter? *School Library Research*, 24, 1-27.
https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/pubs/slr/vol24/SLR_SchoolLibraryInstruction_V24.pdf
- Rowley, K. J., Edmunds, C. C., Dufur, M. J., Jarvis, J. A., & Silveira, F. (2020). Contextualising the achievement gap: Assessing educational achievement, inequality, and disadvantage in

- high-income countries. *Comparative Education*, 56(4), 459–483.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2020.1769928>
- Rutherford, L., Merga, M. K., & Singleton, A. (2018). Influences on Australian adolescents' recreational reading. *Australian Journal of Language & Literacy*, 41(1), 44–56.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF03652005>
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Scholastic. (2016). *School libraries work: A compendium of research supporting the effectiveness of school libraries*. <https://www.scholastic.com/SLW2016/index.html>
- School Library Journal Staff. (2022). *SLJ average book prices 2022*.
<https://www.slj.com/story/slj-average-book-prices-2022>
- Schrik, P., & Wasonga, T. A. (2019). The role of a school leader in academic outcomes: Between self-efficacy and outcome expectations. *Athens Journal of Education*, 6(4), 291–306. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1235230.pdf>
- Schunk, D. H. (2020). *Learning theories: an educational perspective* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- 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>
- Singer, L. M., & Alexander, P. A. (2017). Reading on paper and digitally: What the past decades of empirical research reveal. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(6), 1007–1041.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317722961>
- Sire, J. W. (2009). *The universe next door: A basic worldview catalog*. Intervarsity Press.
- Smith, S. J. (2020). *Windows into the history and philosophy of education*. Kendall Hunt.

Soulen, R. R. (2020). School librarian interventions for new-teacher resilience: A class II field study. *School Library Research*, 23, 1-51.

https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/pubs/slr/vol23/SLR_SchoolLibrarianInterventions_V23.pdf

Soulen, R. R. (2021). Enabling collaboration through mentorship: Examining the role of the school librarian. *School Library Research*, 24, 1-35.

https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/pubs/slr/vol24/SLR_EnablingCollaboration_V24.pdf

Soulen, R. R., & Wine, L. D. (2018). Building resilience in new and beginning teachers: contributions of school librarians. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 24(2), 80–91.

<https://doi.org/10.29173/slw8230>

Stephens, W. (2021). *Mindful school libraries: Creating and sustaining nurturing spaces and programs*. Libraries Unlimited.

Stewart, P. (2018). School library design, facilities and resources for sustainable cognitive and social development of students: An evaluative case study. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 24(2), 30–45.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2165566513?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&sourcecetype=Scholarly Journals>

Stoltzfus, K. (2016). Digital generation eschews e-books for pleasure reading. *Education Week*, 36(12), 21.

https://ew.edweek.org/nxtbooks/epe/ew_11092016/index.php?startid=5#/p/20

- Stripling, B. K. (2020). Advocating for the "why" of school libraries: Empowering students through inquiry. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(4), 14–20.
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1250013.pdf>
- Suleiman, Y., Hanafi, Z. B., & Tanslikhan, M. (2018). Perceived influence of library services on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy & Practice*, 1–38. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1744>
- Sultanik, A. G. (2020). Genrefying the children's fiction collection. *School Library Research*, 23, 1–23.
https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/pubs/slr/vol23/SLR_GenrefyingChildrensCollection_V23.pdf
- Sutton, C. (2019). Reading, writing, and reform. *The Learning Professional*, 40(2), 57–60. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2231819999?pq-origsite=primo&sourcetype=Scholarly Journals>
- Tella, A. (2022). Revitalizing the library through usability features of the university library websites. *Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship*, 34(1), 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1941126X.2022.2028425>
- Thompson, J. (2021). Cultivating our self-efficacy as school librarians. *Knowledge Quest*, 50(2), 50–52. https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/KNOW_50_2_Research_50-52.pdf
- Thompson, J., Barthlow, M., & Paynter, K. (2021). School librarians' teacher self-efficacy: A predictor of reading scores? *School Library Research*, 24, 1–14.
https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/pubs/slr/vol24/SLR_SchoolLibrariansTeacher_V24.pdf

- Todd, R. J., & Kuhlthau, C. C. (2005). Student learning through Ohio school libraries, part 1: How effective school libraries help students. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 11(1), 63–88.
<https://doi.org/10.29173/slww6958>
- Topping, K. (2018). Implementation fidelity in computerised assessment of book reading. *Computers & Education*, (116), 176–190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.09.009>
- Torres, J. (2022). Powerful partnerships. *Literacy Today*, 39(4), 26-29.
- Toste, J. R., Didion, L., Peng, P., Filderman, M. J., & McClelland, A. M. (2020). A meta-analytic review of the relations between motivation and reading achievement for K-12 students. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(3), 420–456.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320919352>
- Trudeau, A. A. (2023). Leading from the heart in the school library. *Knowledge Quest*, 51(3), 34–39. <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=library&id=EJ1384428>
- Tytova, N., Bogoliubov, V., Yefymenko, V., Makarenko, L., Mova, L., & Kalientsova, N. (2021). Axiological concept of informatization of education in the age of globalization challenges. *Journal of Management Information & Decision Sciences*, 24(2), 1–9.
<https://www.abacademies.org/articles/axiological-concept-of-informatization-of-education-in-the-age-of-globalization-challenges-10117.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2022a). *Every student succeeds act (ESSA)*.
<https://www.ed.gov/esea?msclkid=91829279b91411ecba48deb7e760631a>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2022b, September 16). *U.S. Department of Education announces 2022 national blue ribbon schools* [Press release]. <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-2022-national-blue-ribbon-schools>

- Valenza, J. K., Dalal, H., Mohamad, G., Boyer, B., Berg, C., Charles, L. H., Bushby, R., Dempsey, M., Dalrymple, J., & Dziedzic-Elliott, E. (2022). First years' information literacy backpacks: What's already packed or not packed? *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 48 (4), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2022.102566>.
- Visone, J. D. (2018). Developing social and decisional capital in US national blue ribbon schools. *Improving Schools*, 21(2), 158–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480218755171>
- Visone, J. D. (2020). Teacher leadership for excellence in US national blue ribbon schools. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1811897>
- Visone, J. D. (2022). Collaborative professionalism in US national blue ribbon schools. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2022.2107240>
- Weeks, A. C., DiScala, J., Barlow, D. L., Massey, S. A., Kodama, C., Hall, R., Jarrell, K., Jacobs, L., Moses, A., & Follman, R. (2017). The lilead survey: A national study of district-level library supervisors: Roles, responsibilities, challenges, and professional development needs. *School Library Research*, 20, 1–27. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1131167.pdf>
- Whitton, C. A. (2019). A study of school librarian job advertisements and the inclusion of AASL standards. *Teacher Librarian*, 46(4), 26–29.
- Wiegand, W. A. (1996). *A biography of Melvil Dewey: Irrepressible reformer*. American Library Association.
- Wiegand, W. A. (2021). *American public school librarianship*. John Hopkins.

- Willis, J., Hughes, H., & Bland, D. (2019). *Students reimagining school libraries as spaces of learning and wellbeing*. In: Hughes, H., Franz, J., Willis, J. (eds) *School spaces for student wellbeing and learning*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-6092-3_7
- Wisdom, S., Leavitt, L., & Bice, C. (2019). *Handbook of research on social inequality and education*. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-9108-5>
- Witteveen, A. (2019). Flipping for genrefication. *School Library Journal*, 65(8), 40–44. https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=GBIB&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE|A597858917&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon&asid=3b332e6a
- Woods, S., & Hsu, Y.-C. (2020). Making spaces for STEM in the school library. *TechTrends*, 64(3), 388–394. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-019-00460-9>
- Woolls, B., & Coatney, S. (2018). *The school library manager: Surviving and thriving*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Yoon, B., & Uliassi, C. (2022). "Researcher-as-instrument" in qualitative research: The complexities of the educational researcher's identities. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(4), 1088-1102. <http://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5074>
- Yuen, K., & Liew, C. L. (2022). Examining public library collaborative partnerships with school makerspaces and “Making Programmes.” *Journal of Library Administration*, 62(6), 793–809. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2022.2102381>

Appendix A

IRB Approval



December 7, 2022

Beth McGuire
Jose Puga

Re: IRB Conditional Approval - IRB-FY22-23-427 The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement-Gap Closing Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Case Study

Dear Beth McGuire, Jose Puga:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been **conditionally** approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Conditional approval means that your complete approval is pending our receipt of certain items, which are listed below:

Documented approval from each research site you are enrolling in your study. Acceptable forms of documentation include a letter on official letterhead or a time-and-date stamped email from a person with the authority to grant permission.

Please keep in mind that you are not permitted to begin recruiting participants or collecting data until you have submitted the above item(s) and have been granted complete approval by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well as you continue working toward complete approval.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 10, 2023

Beth McGuire

Jose Puga

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-427 The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement-Gap Closing Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Case Study

Dear Beth McGuire, Jose Puga,

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).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

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, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Hello, my name is Beth McGuire. I appreciate your participation in the study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the perceptions of the role of school librarians and school library programs in addressing the academic achievement gap. How was your day today?
2. Please share your experiences in the education profession and the roles you have served in your career.
3. Please describe your experiences regarding school library programs.
4. How would you describe the hours of the library program in your building?
5. How would you describe the staffing of the library program in your building?
6. How would you describe the materials of the library program in your building?
7. What have you observed regarding perceived staff perceptions regarding their school library program?
8. What have you observed regarding students' perceptions of their school library program?
9. Why do you believe that The Department of Education thought there was an academic achievement gap in their school before the award year?
10. What reasons do you believe support the school's academic achievement gap before the award year?
11. What choices did the school make to ensure students could close the academic achievement gap?

12. How do you experience the role of the school library program and school librarians in your building in addressing the achievement gap?
13. SWOT is often used to analyze a program. SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. What do you think is the overall strength of your school librarian and library program to address the achievement gap?
14. What do you think is the overall weakness of the school librarian and library program for your school to address the achievement gap?
15. What do you think is the overall opportunity of your school librarian and library program to address the achievement gap?
16. What is the overall threat to your school librarian and library program to address the achievement gap?
17. Thank you for discussing all of the questions that I asked. Do you have additional information that you would like to share about the research topic that I failed to ask?

Appendix C
Site Visit Note Chart

Site	Date	Observation Start	Observation End
Topic	Yes or No	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Makerspace			
Recording studio			
Computers			
Laptops			
Audiobooks/Playaways			
Research databases			
Books			
Organization of materials (classification system)			
Structured floor plan			
Passive activities			
Collaborative teaching spaces			
Student seating spaces			
Decorations			
Meeting room			
Gaming area			

Special collections			
Posting of policies			
Special displays			
Student work			
Security features			
Location of the library about the school building			
Bulletin boards			
Library/staff workspace			
Observations of a librarian with faculty/staff			
Observations of a librarian with students			

Appendix H

Recruitment (Verbal)

Hello Potential Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarian and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS), and if you meet my participation criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be principals, English language arts teachers, and school librarians from NBRS awarded for closing the achievement gap. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in a digital interview with the researcher using Microsoft Teams. The audio and video will be recorded. The planned time for the interview is thirty minutes. Participants in the study will share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap. Locating information from the building to share with the researcher should not exceed 15 minutes.

One participant in the study will provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day. The time to present a tour should not exceed 10 minutes. Participants will review the data as a form of member checking. Reviewing the data should not exceed 15 minutes. It should take approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you like to participate? [Yes] Great, could I get your email address so I can send you the consent form? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document will be provided. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document within two weeks of the receipt of the recruitment letter and return it to my email address.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Appendix D
Permission Request

Fall 2022

Recipient

Title

Company

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarian and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS).

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in/at your school. I wish to include the librarian (s), principal(s), and three English language arts teachers at your site who worked at the school when the NBRS distinction was earned. Your assistance in verifying if the principal(s), librarian(s), and English language arts teachers worked at your school at the time of the award is essential to gain perceptiveness into the perceptions. Access to school schedules and archival material of library programs is needed to understand your school's library program better.

Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview through Microsoft Teams, share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap, provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day, and review the data collected. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participants and sites will be assigned pseudonyms in the study to protect confidentiality in responses. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Candidate

Site One Permission Request

Permission Request

McGuire, Beth <bmcguire20@liberty.edu>

Mon 3/6/2023 8:00 AM

To:

1 attachments (28 KB)

3/6/2023

Dear [REDACTED]

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarian and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS).

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in/at your school. I wish to include the librarian(s), principal(s), and three English language arts teachers at your site who worked at the school when the NBRS distinction was earned. Your assistance in verifying if the principal(s), librarian(s), and English language arts teachers worked at your school at the time of the award is essential to gain perceptive into the perceptions. Access to school schedules and archival material of library programs is needed to understand your school's library program better.

Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview through Microsoft Teams, share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap, provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day, and review the data collected. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participants and sites will be assigned pseudonyms in the study to protect confidentiality in responses. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Candidate

Site Two Permission Request

Permission Request

McGuire, Beth <bmcguire20@liberty.edu>

Mon 9/25/2023 8:01 AM

To:

1 attachments (28 KB)

9/25/2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Congratulations on earning the distinction of a [REDACTED] National Blue Ribbon Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School! As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarian and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS).

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in/at your school. I wish to include the librarian(s), principal(s), and three English language arts teachers at your site who worked at the school when the NBRS distinction was earned. Your assistance in verifying if the principal(s), librarian(s), and English language arts teachers worked at your school at the time of the award is essential to gain perspective into the perceptions. Access to school schedules and archival material of library programs is needed to understand your school's library program better.

Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview through Microsoft Teams, share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap, provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day, and review the data collected. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participants and sites will be assigned pseudonyms in the study to protect confidentiality in responses. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Candidate

Site Three Permission Request

Permission Request

McGuire, Beth <bmcguire20@liberty.edu>

Mon 9/25/2023 8:01 AM

To

1 attachments (28 KB)

9/25/2023

Dear

Congratulations on earning the distinction of a National Blue Ribbon Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School! As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarian and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS).

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in/at your school. I wish to include the librarian(s), principal(s), and three English language arts teachers at your site who worked at the school when the NBRS distinction was earned. Your assistance in verifying if the principal(s), librarian(s), and English language arts teachers worked at your school at the time of the award is essential to gain perspective into the perceptions. Access to school schedules and archival material of library programs is needed to understand your school's library program better.

Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview through Microsoft Teams, share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap, provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day, and review the data collected. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participants and sites will be assigned pseudonyms in the study to protect confidentiality in responses. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Candidate

Site Four Permission Request

Permission Request

McGuire, Beth <bmcguire20@liberty.edu>

Mon 9/25/2023 8:01 AM

To

1 attachments (28 KB)

9/25/2023

Dear

Congratulations on earning the distinction of a National Blue Ribbon Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School! As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarian and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS).

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in/at your school. I wish to include the librarian(s), principal(s), and three English language arts teachers at your site who worked at the school when the NBRS distinction was earned. Your assistance in verifying if the principal(s), librarian(s), and English language arts teachers worked at your school at the time of the award is essential to gain perspective into the perceptions. Access to school schedules and archival material of library programs is needed to understand your school's library program better.

Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview through Microsoft Teams, share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap, provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day, and review the data collected. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participants and sites will be assigned pseudonyms in the study to protect confidentiality in responses. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E

Permission Response

Fall 2022

Dear Beth McGuire:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled “The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools: A Qualitative Case Study”, I/we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at our district/school and receive and utilize archival data for your research study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ [I/We] grant permission for Beth McGuire to contact principal(s), librarians(s), and English language arts teachers to invite them to participate in her research study.

☐ [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Beth McGuire, but we agree to [send/provide] her study information to potential participants on her behalf.

☐ [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Official's Name


Official's Title

Official's Company/Organization

Permission Response Site One

Permission Response

3/6/2023

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Student


Dear Beth McGuire:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools: A Qualitative Case Study", I/we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at our district/school and receive and utilize archival data for your research study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ [I/We] grant permission for Beth McGuire to contact principal(s), librarians(s), and English language arts teachers to invite them to participate in her research study.

☐ [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Beth McGuire, but we agree to [send/provide] her study information to potential participants on her behalf.


☐ [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely


Permission Response Site Two
Permission Response

September 26, 2023

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Student



Dear Beth McGuire:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools: A Qualitative Case Study", we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at our district/school and receive and utilize archival data for your research study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ We grant permission for Beth McGuire to contact principal(s), librarians(s), and English language arts teachers to invite them to participate in her research study.

☒ We will not provide potential participant information to Beth McGuire, but we agree to [send/provide] her study information to potential participants on her behalf.

☒ We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,



Permission Response Site Three

September 25, 2023

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Student

[REDACTED]

Dear Beth McGuire:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled, "The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools: A Qualitative Case Study," I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at our district and receive and utilize archival data for your research study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ I grant permission for Beth McGuire to contact the principal(s), librarians(s), and English language arts teachers to invite them to participate in her research study.

☒ I will not provide potential participant information to Beth McGuire, but agree to provide her study information to potential participants on her behalf.

☒ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.


Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Permission Response Site Four

10/10/2023

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Student



Dear Beth McGuire:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools: A Qualitative Case Study", I/we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at our district/school and receive and utilize archival data for your research study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ [I/We] grant permission for Beth McGuire to contact principal(s), librarians(s), and English language arts teachers to invite them to participate in her research study.

☐ [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Beth McGuire, but we agree to [send/provide] her study information to potential participants on her behalf.

☐ [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,


Appendix F
Recruitment (Letter)

Fall 2022

Recipient
Title
Company
Address 1
Address 2

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perception of the role of the school librarians and library programs in helping to address the academic achievement gap in National Blue Ribbon Schools (NBRS), and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be principals, English language arts teachers, and school librarians from NBRS awarded for closing the achievement gap. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in a digital interview with the researcher using Microsoft Teams. The audio and video will be recorded. The planned time for the discussion is thirty minutes. Participants in the study will share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap. Locating information from the building to share with the researcher should not exceed 15 minutes.

One participant in the study will provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day. The time to present a tour should not exceed 10 minutes. Participants will review the data as a form of member checking. Reviewing the data should not exceed 15 minutes. It should take approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at for more information.

A consent document is provided. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document within two weeks of the receipt of the recruitment letter and return it to my email.

Sincerely,
Beth McGuire
Doctoral Student

Appendix G

Recruitment (Follow up)

Fall 2022

Recipient

Title

Company

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. A letter was sent to you two weeks ago inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up communication is being sent to remind you of the invitation if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is in two weeks.

If willing, participants will be asked to participate in a digital interview with the researcher using Microsoft Teams. The audio and video will be recorded. The planned time for the interview is thirty minutes. Participants in the study will share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap. Locating information from the building to share with the researcher should not exceed 15 minutes.

One participant in the study will provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day. The time to present a tour should not exceed 10 minutes. Participants will review the data as a form of member checking. Reviewing the data should not exceed 15 minutes. It should take approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me for more information.

A consent document is provided. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it within two weeks of the receipt of the recruitment letter to the researcher.

Sincerely,

Beth McGuire
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix I

Consent

Title of the Project: The perceptions of principals, English language arts teachers, and librarians regarding the role of school librarians in their schools being identified as National Blue Ribbon Award Winning Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Beth McGuire, Doctoral Student, 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 principal, English language arts teacher, or librarian serving in a National Blue Ribbon School (NBRBS) to close the achievement gap. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

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

The purpose of the study is to explore the perception of the role of school librarians and library programs in supporting students in bridging the academic achievement gap. Studies about librarians and library programs explain the impact. Still, studies regarding the impact of librarians and library programs in NBRBS awarded for closing the achievement gap have not been conducted.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participants will participate in a digital interview with the researcher using Microsoft Teams. The audio and video will be recorded. The planned time for the interview is one hour.
2. Participants in the study will share documents regarding the role of the librarian and library program in addressing the achievement gap. Locating information from the building to share with the researcher should not exceed 30 minutes.
3. Participants in the study will provide the researcher with a tour of the building and library before a site visit observation during the school day. The time to present a tour should not exceed 10 minutes.
4. Participants will review the data as a form of member check. Reviewing the data should not exceed 1 hour.

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 increased public knowledge on the topic, improved learning outcomes, and further considerations by the Department of Education.

Liberty University
IRB-FY22-23-427
Approved on 1-10-2023

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Your data may be shared in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions 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 decide to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Beth McGuire. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at the phone number [REDACTED] and/or e-mail at bmcguire20@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chairperson, Dr. Jose Arturo Puga, at japuga@liberty.edu.

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 want to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

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

Your Consent

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

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Liberty University
IRB-FY22-23-427
Approved on 1-10-2023

Site One Participant Consents

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed/Subject Name

Signature & Date

4/5/2023

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name _____

Signature & Date _____

4-5-23


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

Your Consent

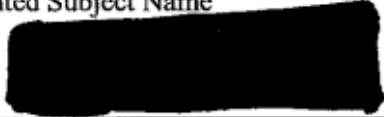
By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.



Printed Subject Name



Signature & Date

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Site Two Participant Consents

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

[Redacted Signature]

Printed Subject Name

[Redacted Signature] 10/3/2023

Signature & Date

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

10/3/23

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.


Printed Subject Name


Signature & Date

10/3/23

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


Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.


Printed Subject Name

 10-4-23
Signature & Date

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.


Printed Subject Name


Date

10/3/23

Site Three Participant Consents

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

11-8-2023

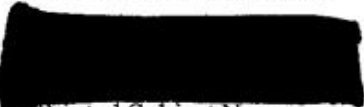
Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects research will be conducted ethically as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily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


Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.


Printed Subject Name

 11-6-23
Signature & Date

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

11-13-23


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


Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.


Printed Subject Name


Signature & Date

11/10/2023


Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects research will be conducted ethically as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed are attributed to by students and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.



12/5/23

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Print Subject Name

11-6-23

Site Four Participant Consents

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

10/25/23

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

11/1/2023

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name _____

Signature & Date _____

11-1-23


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

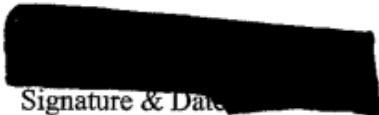
Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.


Printed Subject Name


Signature & Date

11/10/2023

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

& Date

11/27

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have questions about the study after you sign the 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, and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date