

A CASE STUDY TO IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
USED IN THE ELEVENTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM TO ASSIST
DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN PREPARING FOR THE STATE READING
ASSESSMENT

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 1997
M.S., Kansas State University, 2000

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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College of Education

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Abstract

This case study explored multiple teachers' instructional strategies in several eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one successful Midwest school. A "successful" Midwest school was defined as having attained AYP at least three consecutive years. The study focused on the specific instructional strategies and activities used when preparing disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. The strategies were implemented with disadvantaged students who were difficult to motivate, were slower learners, and were categorized in at least one subgroup. Interviews were conducted with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to determine (a) the strategies used when motivating and preparing disadvantaged students for state assessments, (b) the formative practice assessment data used, (c) the instructional changes made based on the formative practice assessment results, (d) the perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement, and (e) the recommendations of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in preparation for the state reading assessment.

Furthermore, this case study explored the perspectives of administrative leaders on the preparation of eleventh grade Language Arts teachers preparing eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. Interviews were conducted with the administrative leaders to determine (a) the resources available in the school district to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in preparation for the state reading assessment (b) the workshops and conferences that the school district allowed eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to attend in order to increase their understanding of different strategies, and (c) the recommendations of the administrative leaders in preparation for the state reading assessment.

Data support that the components of the framework (*recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*) were implemented by all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in a variety of ways. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers also implemented research-based strategies in the classroom to strengthen the framework. The research-based strategies included: structured lessons, relevant curriculum, comprehensive instruction, collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, formative assessment, drill and practice, test-taking strategies, hands-on experience, special privileges, and extra time.

Furthermore, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers administered four formative practice assessments. With the results of these assessments, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers determined what the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students understood and what the students did not understand. Based on the formative practice assessment results, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers changed their strategies and focused on the components in which the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were weak.

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Dedication

To Cedrik and Connor – May you know that you can accomplish your goals and dreams with dedication and hard work.

To the disadvantaged students – Your voices are heard, and you have advocates.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

In this chapter, topics related to the study will be briefly presented and discussed. Sections of Chapter 1 include (a) overview of the issues, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions, (e) significance of the study, (f) limitations of the study, (g) definitions of terms, and (h) summary.

Overview of the Issues

“This is the test of your lives!” (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 16). This quote may have been heard in thousands of schools across the nation. With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the federal government determined that schools must improve K-12 education because of “the changing demands of an unpredictable world [that requires] an educational system capable of delivering world-class learning to all students” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). The stated goal of NCLB was to have every student in all subgroups (defined by socioeconomic background, race and ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability) successfully and consistently reach the adequate yearly progress (AYP) objectives for that state (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). The purpose of AYP was to “ensure that ‘all schools’ and ‘all students’ met the same academic standards in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 academic year” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). Each state was required to develop its own AYP and performance scale, with the standards rising each year, and every state was expected to perform at 100% proficiency in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Many schools across the nation struggle to reach the required AYP standard because of subgroups. Attaining AYP is difficult for schools that are considered high-poverty and racially

diverse because “they rely on mean proficiency scores and require all subgroups to meet the same goals for accountability” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). Because NCLB defines diversity in terms of subgroups, AYP is not measured for each student, but rather on each defined group within the school. Thus, for schools that are equivalent in size, the more subgroups the school has, the less chance of success that school has of reaching AYP (Lawton, 2006). Furthermore, if students are classified in more than one subgroup, their chances of success decrease. Minority students are “more likely than White students to be counted in multiple subgroup categories, including race, ethnicity, economic disadvantage, and limited English proficiency” (Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005, p. 26). This “diversity penalty” increases the likelihood that heterogeneous individual schools and districts will have a harder time attaining AYP (Lawton, 2006).

In theory, the goal of NCLB seems promising because students of all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic levels, disabilities, and levels of English proficiency are expected to demonstrate performance at grade level. However, in practicality, NCLB has created discord among educators, parents, students, and community members. Many teachers have been at a loss as to how to motivate and teach students, especially students who are considered disadvantaged. Many teachers have divided students into three categories: the “accountables,” the “bubble” kids, and the “unaccountables” (Booher-Jennings, 2006). The term *educational triage* has taken hold in many classrooms. Educational triage is “the process through which teachers divide students into safe cases, cases suitable for treatment, and hopeless cases and ration resources to focus on those students most likely to improve a school’s test scores” (Booher-Jennings, 2006, p. 758). Many teachers have been told to focus on the students that will make the standards (the “accountables”) and the students that can make the standards with a little help (the “bubble” kids); however, in

doing this, the teachers may give less attention to the students who, they believe, will not make the standards (the “unaccountables”). If students arrive from another school district, and their scores will not count towards AYP, those students may not receive the attention they deserve because the teacher has to prepare the students who can and will succeed on the state assessment. Ironically, the students NCLB is designed to help are often the ones pushed farther to the side (Booher-Jennings, 2006).

Furthermore, many teachers feel they are not able to be creative in their classrooms because they are expected to focus on the standards being tested. Nichols and Berliner (2008) stated that a number of teachers eliminate hands-on projects and teach more by repetition, and many teachers say that there is “little time to engage in creative interdisciplinary activities or project-based inquiry” (p. 15). According to Centolanza (2004), teachers described their practice by saying they usually taught to the test because there was little time to teach creatively, and they were bored with the continual process of preparing for state assessments.

Unfortunately, what works for some students does not work for other students (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Teachers need foundational skills in differentiation to understand how each student best learns the curriculum (Brimijoin, 2005). Many disadvantaged students are more successful in an environment when movement is not restricted, and they can work in cooperative groups (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Likewise, a number of disadvantaged students frequently understand the curriculum better when the teacher makes “classroom lessons relevant to their everyday lives” (Garcia, 2006, p. 703). For many students, school is boring; for disadvantaged students, school is “worse than ever” when they do not have the opportunity for hands-on learning (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 14). Many educators inadvertently send the message to

students that learning new and exciting things is not nearly as important as doing well on the test (Nichols & Berliner, 2008).

Many disadvantaged students do not have the cognitive skills to process the information needed to succeed on the state assessment because they do not have the prior knowledge or experience to make the necessary connections (Garner, 2008). Many educators believe it is crucial that students have the basic skills mastered before going to higher-order thinking (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005); however, many disadvantaged students have not mastered the basic skills (Garner, 2008). Because higher levels of thinking and problem-solving skills are required on state assessments (Hanzlicek, 2006), disadvantaged students tend to have less of a chance of attaining the proficient rating on the state assessment.

Without the individualized attention that they need, students are in danger of underachieving in school. When students do not feel successful in the classroom, they feel “less joyful” about school (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 14). Students come to “devalue learning and schooling” because they do not feel successful in the classroom (Marchant, 2004, p. 3). When feelings of failure are repeatedly experienced in the classroom, disadvantaged students tend to stop working in class or stop attending class. In 2006, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released a report that explained reasons why students dropped out of school. Of the students who had dropped out, 47% reported they were uninterested in school, and nearly 70% reported they were not inspired in school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006).

High-stakes testing tends to increase students’ feelings of worthlessness. High stakes tests “attempt to assess students’ strengths and weaknesses in specific subject areas” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 7), but many disadvantaged students focus on their weaknesses and do not see their strengths. As students practice, prepare, and take the assessment, they perceive that they

are “dumber” than their peers (Marchant, 2004, p. 3). These negative perceptions can lead to further academic problems. Many disadvantaged students experience “lowered academic self-concept” because of the underachievement on high-stakes tests (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 8).

Negative academic self-concept can lead to “attitudes of resentment, anxiety, cynicism, and mistrust,” and students who exhibit these attitudes are more inclined to loaf and cheat (Marchant, 2004, p. 4). Furthermore, many students experience “headaches, upset stomachs, irritability, increased aggression, and ‘freezing’” during the state assessment (p. 4). Because of the pressure to score well on high-stakes tests, disadvantaged students who continue to feel hopeless eventually stop caring about school and stop trying in the classroom. Many disadvantaged students believe they are incapable of learning, so they stop trying to learn the information the teacher is presenting (Stiggins, 1999).

One study found that there was a 300% increase in the dropout rate because of high-stakes testing and the indifferent treatment of disadvantaged students (Marchant, 2004). According to a study by the Center for Social Organization of Schools, 2,000 high schools across the nation have been found to have dropout rates of 40% or higher. Many of these dropouts leave school after the ninth or tenth grade because they fail required high-stakes tests (Goldberg, 2005).

Before NCLB was enacted, if students did not succeed on state assessments, there were few, if any, consequences (Orlich, 2004; United States Department of Education, 2008). However, with NCLB, teachers are held accountable for all students meeting the same standards on the state assessment during the same testing period. As a result, teachers search for strategies

to motivate and teach disadvantaged students so the students can score as high as or higher than their peers who are not considered disadvantaged.

Unfortunately, the trend in schools across the nation has been to “assign our weakest teachers to our weakest students” (Chubb et al., 2005, p. 14). Research has continually showed that “low-achieving students are generally assigned to the least experienced and qualified teachers” (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 1051). When disadvantaged students are taught by inexperienced and unqualified teachers, the students’ chances of meeting standards on the state assessment are extremely low. The majority of poverty-ridden schools have a high minority population (Beers, 2005). In this scenario, disadvantaged students frequently are categorized in two subgroups (disadvantaged and racial-ethnic minorities), lessening their chances and the schools’ chances for meeting standards; if the disadvantaged students have an inexperienced teacher, their chances become even lower. Research shows that attaining AYP is extremely difficult when there is an at-risk school (characterized by high poverty), with disadvantaged students (characterized by the subgroups on the state assessment), being taught by inexperienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

One of the accountability requirements of NCLB is to “close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (Sunderman et al., p. 23). Because this gap is difficult to close when students are not being taught by experienced and qualified teachers, NCLB requires all states to have highly qualified teachers in the core areas (Haskins and Loeb, 2007). According to Haskins and Loeb, “Teacher quality is the single most important feature of the schools that drives student achievement” (p. 53). Sunderman et al. (2005) similarly noted the importance of teacher quality

in the ability of disadvantaged students to make substantial progress each year (Sunderman et al., 2005).

In a study by Sanders and Rivers (1996), it was demonstrated that “the single most dominant factor affecting student academic gain is teacher effect” (p. 6). Additionally, this study revealed that “as teacher effectiveness increases, lower achieving students are the first to benefit” (p. i). A follow-up study conducted by McMurrer (2007) showed that regardless of income level, race or ethnicity, being an English language learner, or having disabilities, a teacher’s dispositions determine whether disadvantaged students will succeed in the classroom. When disadvantaged students have quality teachers, they tend to feel and see success in the classroom and on assessments, regardless of the subgroup in which they are categorized or whether they have been labeled as *disadvantaged* (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; McMurrer, 2007; Rivers & Sanders, 2000).

Although the terms “disadvantaged student” and “at-risk student” are very similarly defined, there is a difference between the two terms. The Kansas State Department of Education refers to disadvantaged students as being in a subgroup for state assessments. The following subgroups are used to classify students on the state assessment (Kansas State Department of Education, 2008a):

- Students who are economically disadvantaged (which include students who receive free and reduced lunch)
- Students with disabilities (this does not include students who are gifted or on a Section 504 Plan)
- Students who are English language learners (ELLs) or who process limited English proficiency (LEP)

- Students who are in a racial-ethnic groups

On the other hand, the Kansas State Department of Education defines at risk students as those who are not performing at grade level. Such students have an increased chance of being retained a grade or not graduating from high school. At-risk students usually are disadvantaged students and are frequently categorized in at least one subgroup on the state assessment.

This study focused on disadvantaged students who were categorized in at least one of the following subgroups: economically disadvantaged, disabilities, English language learners, and racial-ethnic groups. Most disadvantaged students who are economically disadvantaged are frequently categorized in at least one of the other three subgroups (Sunderman et al., 2005). Poverty has repeatedly been recognized as a factor for student failure in the classroom (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). At a roundtable discussion in 2006, Dr. Lewis Solmon, former president of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), stated, "...when we look at the proficiency levels of the kids eligible for free and reduced lunch vs. not eligible for free and reduced lunch, there's a huge difference" (p.59); students who are economically disadvantaged score much lower than their advantaged peers.

Nationally, more schools and districts have failed to attain AYP because the standards have risen each year (National Education Association, 2008a). In the 2004-2005 school year, 20,948 schools did not attain AYP; whereas, in the 2007-2008 school year, 26,896 schools did not attain AYP (National Education Association, 2008b). According to the National Education Association (2008a), in several states, the number of schools that failed AYP in the 2007-2008 school year doubled, tripled, and quadrupled. According to the National Education Association (2008b), more schools and districts will fail to attain AYP in the future because of the proficiency percentage that increases each academic year. Statistics from the American

Association of School Administrators (2009) revealed that since 2003-2004, half of the Midwestern states have had the highest percentages of schools that attain AYP across the nation (see Figure A-1). Yet these six high-performing Midwestern states will find it increasingly difficult to meet their respective state goal each year as the goal continues to increase towards 100% proficiency.

As the stakes increase each year for schools to pass AYP and every student to reach standards, teachers need to be informed about the strategies needed when working with disadvantaged students. These strategies seem to be the key to disadvantaged students' success. Administrative leaders have an important role in informing teachers about the strategies needed to work with disadvantaged students. Administrative leaders should offer professional development activities to expose teachers to the best practices used with disadvantaged students (McColskey & McMunn, 2000). In a study conducted by Levine and Levine (2000), successful administrative leaders provided teachers with professional development activities that focused on instructional strategies and resources for disadvantaged students. Furthermore, students tended to be more successful on assessments when administrative leaders collaborated with teachers to ensure current instructional strategies were used in the classroom (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Demoss, 2002).

Quality teachers are not born, but they have been taught and given the skills needed to assist disadvantaged students. Research (e.g., Brimijoin, 2005; Brooks & Brooks, 2004; Garcia, 2006; Garner, 2008; Keene, 2008; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005) identified general instructional strategies for working with disadvantaged students in high-stakes testing situations; however, specific and detailed instructional strategies for working with disadvantaged students in the general classroom have not been identified. Therefore,

specific and detailed instructional strategies and activities that quality teachers implement in their classrooms need to be made public for all teachers to utilize in their classrooms.

One of the requirements of NCLB is annual testing in the third grade through the eighth grade and in high school (United States Department of Education, 2008). All states are expected to “develop and use valid and reliable standards-based assessments to determine how well students in grades 3-8 and high school have learned the required content standards” (Duran, 2005, p. 76). Although states annually test students in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, social sciences, science, and computer technology, only the reading and mathematics scores are used to determine if a schools and districts attain AYP (United States Department of Education, 2008). At the high school level, the reading state assessment is administered in Grade 11.

In eleventh grade, students have one last opportunity to succeed on state assessments in reading. In the eleventh grade, students are tested in reading. The assessment is given in their Language Arts class; therefore, the responsibility lies with the Language Arts teachers to prepare eleventh grade students for the state assessment. Students’ attainment levels are more important in the eleventh and twelfth grades than in earlier grades (Rivers & Sanders, 2000) because these are the last two years of schooling before students enter post-secondary education or the workforce. These final two years in high school are the last chance students have to be exposed to classroom teaching that might assist them in the future.

Statement of the Problem

The goal of this study was to explore the implementation of specific and detailed instructional strategies used when working with disadvantaged students to prepare them for the eleventh grade state reading assessment. Because of NCLB, schools are under pressure to demonstrate success by attaining AYP. Not only do schools need to attain AYP annually, but all

students are expected to meet the proficiency standards on the state assessments in 2014. Disadvantaged students have the most challenging time meeting the annual proficiency standards. Many times, disadvantaged students are categorized in two or more subgroups. Many poverty-stricken schools do not have the resources to hire and maintain highly qualified teachers. As a result, many disadvantaged students are taught by inexperienced or unqualified teachers. Most inexperienced and unqualified teachers do not have the knowledge or resources to implement instructional strategies to assist disadvantaged students. Yet use of such strategies in the classroom is essential, especially in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, as the eleventh grade is the last time that students are tested on the state assessment. Although research provides general strategies for working with disadvantaged students, there was a void in the research concerning the implementation of specific instructional strategies used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment.

Purpose of the Study

This case study explored multiple teachers' instructional strategies in several eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one successful Midwest school. A "successful" Midwest school was defined as having attained AYP at least three consecutive years. The study focused on the specific instructional strategies and activities used when preparing disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. The strategies were implemented with disadvantaged students who were more difficult to motivate, were slower learners, and were categorized in at least one of the subgroups. Interviews were conducted with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to determine (a) the strategies used when motivating and preparing disadvantaged students for state assessments, (b) the formative practice assessment data used, (c) the instructional changes made

based on the formative practice assessment results, (d) the perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement, and (e) the recommendations of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in preparation for the state reading assessment. Additionally, researcher observations were discussed in relation to the instructional strategies implemented and the teachers' specific use of the strategies. The researcher was further informed by field notes, formative practice assessment scores, and state assessment test results.

Furthermore, this case study explored the perspectives of three administrative leaders. The perspectives focused on the administrative leaders' preparation of eleventh grade Language Arts teachers preparing eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. Interviews were conducted with the administrative leaders to determine (a) the resources available in the school district to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in preparation for the state reading assessment (b) the workshops and conferences that the school district allowed eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to attend in order to increase their understanding of different strategies, and (c) the recommendations of the administrative leaders in preparation for the state reading assessment.

This study was designed to identify strategies to enhance the performance of disadvantaged students on the state reading assessment administered in the eleventh grade Language Arts class. The eleventh grade is crucial in the testing process because it is the last opportunity for students to succeed on the high-stakes, state reading assessment.

Research Questions and Subquestions

The research for this case study, including interviews and observations, was conducted in multiple eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school in 2009. The confidentiality of the school and participants was protected by assigning anonymous names to

the school and participants involved in the research. Furthermore, the researcher followed the policies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University. The primary research question guiding this case study was:

What instructional strategies were used with disadvantaged students in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school?

The subsequent research questions for this study were as follow:

1. What formative practice assessment data were used in preparation for the state reading assessment?
2. What instructional changes were made based on the formative practice assessment results?
3. What were the perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement?
4. Based on the findings of this study, what recommendations can be made to assist teachers of disadvantaged students to improve performance on the state reading assessment in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom?

Upon completion of the observations and interviews with the participating teachers, the researcher interviewed a district leader, a building leader, and a teacher leader. The teacher leader was responsible for placing the formative data in a database that allowed teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Furthermore, the teacher leader was responsible for compiling the state assessment data and presenting the data to the teachers, the building leader, and the district leaders.

The subsequent research questions for the administrative leaders were as follows:

1. What resources were available in your school district to assist disadvantaged students in preparation for the eleventh grade state reading assessment?

2. To which workshops and conferences did the school district send eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in order to increase their understanding of different strategies?
3. What recommendations can be made to assist administrative leaders who are involved in the state assessment process?

Significance of the Study

Overall, there was a void in the research regarding the implementation of specific successful instructional strategies that assisted eleventh grade disadvantaged students when they were preparing for the state reading assessment in the eleventh grade. Although there was research indicating ways teachers could motivate and teach their students, the research was discussed in broad terms (Brimijoin, 2005; Garner, 2008; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005). Marzano et al. (2001) and Garner (2008), for example, identified the following broad instructional strategies to be used in the classroom to assist disadvantaged students:

- *Recognition*
- *Memorization*
- *Conservation of constancy*
- *Classification*
- *Spatial orientation*
- *Temporal orientation*
- *Metaphorical thinking*

However, for teachers to adequately teach disadvantaged students, specific strategies and activities are needed. Teachers need to know specific strategies and activities that other teachers have implemented successfully in the classroom. Merely reading about the general research-based instructional strategies may not be enough information for teachers to implement the

strategies into the classroom, especially for new teachers. Instead, teachers need to know what specific strategies and activities are implemented in the classroom that has shown to be successful for the students.

In this case study, the researcher observed and interviewed the teachers of multiple eleventh grade classrooms in one successful Midwest school to determine which instructional strategies teachers were implementing and how these strategies were being used in the classrooms. The “successful” Midwest school was defined as attaining AYP at least three consecutive years.

The results of this case study will help provide eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who work with disadvantaged students specific strategies to motivate and prepare students for the state reading assessment. Additionally, the results of this case study will guide administrative leaders in providing the resources that are needed in preparation for the state reading assessment. The goal of NCLB is to prove every student can learn. If eleventh grade Language Arts teachers have specific strategies to assist disadvantaged students, then this goal will be more attainable.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there were limitations that must be addressed. The following were limitations of this case study:

1. This case study was limited to Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school.
2. This case study was limited to eight Language Arts teachers in one Midwest school.
3. The researcher conducted her observations in March and April, rather than the entire school year.
4. The researcher was not making a causal relationship between the strategies and improved student performance. Rather, the researcher made observations.

5. The activities that were used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms were used with all of the eleventh grade Language Arts students in the classrooms even though the case study focused on eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.
6. Participation in this case study was voluntary.
7. Archival documents were limited to existing data from the Kansas State Department of Education and the school district's archival documents related to state assessments.

Definitions

Adequate yearly progress (AYP). As defined by the Kansas State Department of Education (2006), AYP is a method for determining if schools, districts, and states have made adequate progress in improving student achievement. Annual targets for participation and performance on state assessments, as well as attendance rates and graduation rates are established.

At-risk student. As described by the Kansas State Department of Education (2008a), an at-risk student can be defined by one or more criteria. Primarily, this term is used to refer to a student who is not working at grade level in reading or mathematics. However, an at-risk student can meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Is not working at grade level
- Is not meeting the requirements necessary for promotion to the next grade
- Is not meeting the requirements necessary for graduation from high school
- Has insufficient mastery of skills or is not meeting state standards
- Has been retained
- Has a high rate of absenteeism

- Has repeated suspensions or expulsions from school
- Is homeless and/or a migrant
- Is identified as an English language learner

Bubble kids. Bubble kids are students who are close to the proficiency standard on the state assessment (Booher-Jennings, 2006).

Classification. The ability to identify, compare, and order information to create meaning on the basis of relationships of parts to one another and parts to the whole (Garner, 2008).

Collaborative learning. When students interact with one another around a variety of texts (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Comprehensive instruction. Instruction in the strategies and processes that proficient readers use to understand what they read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Conservation of constancy. The ability to understand how some characteristics change while others stay the same (Garner, 2008).

Differentiation. Differentiation is a conceptual approach to teaching and learning that involves careful analysis of learning goals, continual assessment of student needs, and instructional modifications in response to data about readiness levels, interests, learning profiles, and affects (Tomlinson, 1999, 2003).

Diversity. The *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* defines diversity as "1. a state or instance of difference; unlikeness."

Disadvantaged Student. According to the Kansas State Department of Education (2008a), a disadvantaged student is one who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Qualifies for the free or reduced price lunch programs (also called low-income students)

- Is considered a member of a racial or ethnic minority
- Is an English language learner
- Has a disability

Drill and practice. A technique to increase disadvantaged students' scores that requires repeatedly teaching the material (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005).

Educational triage. Educational triage is “the process through which teachers divide students into safe cases, cases suitable for treatment, and hopeless cases and ration resources to focus on those students most likely to improve a school’s test scores” (Booher-Jennings, 2006, p. 758).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The ESEA, a federal educational reform initiative, was signed into law on April 9, 1965, by President Lyndon B. Johnson in his fight against poverty (Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 2001).

Extra time. Allowing students extra time to complete tasks (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005).

Formative assessment. An informal, often daily, assessment of how students are progressing (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Hands-on experience. When students kinesthetically interact with the material being taught (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005).

High-stakes tests. High-stakes tests are defined as “mandated tests, the results of which are automatically used to make inferences, decisions, or characterizations about students or the systems by which they are educated” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006).

Highly qualified teacher. A highly qualified teacher is defined by the No Child Left Behind Act as “one who (1) has at least a bachelor’s degree, (2) has full state licensure or certification, and (3) demonstrates competence in each subject he or she teaches” (Coble & Azordegan, 2004, p. 2).

Instructional strategies. Strategies that assist students become proficient readers (Carbo, 2008).

Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA). The IASA was signed into law in 1994 by President Bill Clinton as an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. A major provision of the law was to provide more funding to Title I schools for assisting disadvantaged students to hold schools equally accountable for the results of disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students (Redfield & Sheinker, 2004).

Kansas Assessment of Modified Measures (KAMM). The KAMM is a grade-level assessment based on modified achievement standards. This assessment is intended for those students who meet eligibility requirements, as determined by the students’ IEP teams. A student’s IEP goals must be based on grade-level content standards for any content area assessed using the KAMM (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006).

Local educational agency (LEA). LEAs are assigned by the Chief State School Officer as a liaison between state and federal education officers (United States Department of Education, 2008).

Memorization. The ability to store information (Garner, 2008).

Metaphorical thinking. The ability to understand the meaning by emphasizing similarities and overlooking differences (Garner, 2008).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB, a national educational reform initiative, was signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002 (United States Department of Education, 2008).

Quality teacher. A quality teacher has a strong rapport with students, ability to work as a team, strong commitment to teaching, and a love for children. A quality teacher is perceived through personal qualities and attitudes, not the content knowledge and degrees he/or she possess (McMurrer, 2007).

Recognition. The ability to identify a match or fit between two or more pieces of information (Garner, 2008).

Relevant curriculum. Attaching relevance to the curriculum to better engage students and help students understand the material (Brooks & Brooks, 2004).

Spatial orientation. The ability to identify relationships among objects and places (Garner, 2008).

Special privileges. Granting students special privileges (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005).

Strategic tutoring. Instruction that compensates for the fact that students frequently do not have good skills or strategies for learning, and that simultaneously shows students ways to compensate for their lack of skills or strategies to learn information independently (Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2004).

Structured lessons. Lesson plans that challenge students' suppositions (Brooks & Brooks, 2004).

Subgroup. For purposes of determining AYP, the United States Department of Education (2008) defines a subgroup as a specific number of students in a group who can be identified by

characteristics related to ethnicity, income level, special needs, or English proficiency. Each state is responsible for determining the number of students in a subgroup.

Test-taking strategies. Strategies to assist disadvantaged students when they are taking tests (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005).

Temporal orientation. The ability to process information by comparing events in relationship to when they occur (Garner, 2008).

Title I. Title I, formerly known as Chapter 1, was initiated in 1965 as a component of the ESEA. The original purpose of Title I was to provide additional resources to states and localities for remedial education for children in poverty. The 1994 reauthorization of Title I shifted the program's emphasis from remedial education to helping all disadvantaged children reach rigorous state academic standards expected of all children (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2008).

Summary

Research describing specific instructional strategies to assist disadvantaged students was limited. With NCLB's 2014 requirements bearing down on districts, and many schools continually failing AYP due to inadequately performing subgroups (e.g., students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are members of a racial-ethnic group), research should be conducted to determine instructional strategies that assist struggling students in the classroom. Thus, this study examined eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school where specific instructional strategies were used to assist disadvantaged students in preparing for the state reading assessment. The school in which the research was conducted had demonstrated success in improving the reading scores of disadvantaged students.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review established a foundation for this case study. The research-based review served to outline for the way American schools have been reshaped by NCLB. Sections of Chapter 2 include: (a) high-stakes testing, (b) No Child Left Behind, (c) Adequate Yearly Progress, (d) disadvantaged students and the achievement gap, (e) highly qualified teachers, (f) instructional strategies for disadvantaged students, (g) instructional strategies to promote proficient readers, (h) the importance of administrative leadership, and (i) summary.

High-Stakes Testing

High-stakes tests are defined as “mandated tests, the results of which are automatically used to make inferences, decisions, or characterizations about students or the systems by which they are educated” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 6). High-stakes tests are not a new phenomenon to education; however, over the years, the tests have had different names. High-stakes tests, known then as achievement tests, were first introduced to the United States in the mid-1800s when the nation began to educate students in masses, and the teacher needed to know where to appropriately place students (Jones et. al., 2003). Furthermore, at this time, students were given standardized tests as “a way to measure whether all children were receiving an equitable education” (Jones et.al., 2003, p. 14).

Over the decades, high-stakes testing has been used for many different purposes including: (1) discovering talent among students, (2) providing entrance into programs, (3) accepting or rejecting individuals from the military, and (4) confirming superiority or inferiority of races, ethnic groups, and social classes (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). High-stakes

testing influences “all major actors in the educational system” (Natriello & Pallas, 1999, p. 2), and in more recent years high-stakes testing has dominated “the discourse about schools and their accomplishments” (Amrein & Berliner, 2002, p. 3).

Because of the belief in the 1970s that the achievement of students in the United States was lagging behind other countries, politicians wanted “a minimum competency testing movement to reform our schools” (Amrein & Berliner, 2002, p. 3). The goal of these tests was to ensure that all students would learn the minimum skills needed to become productive citizens (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). Thus began the “minimal competency testing movement...to place a performance floor under the educational enterprise” (Natriello & Pallas, 1999, p. 1).

In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. This report stated that the United States was in a poor economic state and schools were responsible for this economic trouble. The document also stated that the U.S. public school system was in need of a major reform because of the crisis (Jones et. al., 2003). As a result of this study, “widespread standardized testing, increasingly connected to consequences beyond the test report alone, became a staple of educational policy makers in their quest to raise and maintain high standards” (Natriello & Pallas, 1999, p. 1). Thus, the high-stakes testing movement began to raise the nation’s standards of achievement (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

In the 1990s, high-stakes testing was responsible for driving the reform movement to align the curriculum, standards, and assessments of individual districts with federal and state government (Natriello & Pallas, 1999). During this time, statewide testing was conducted throughout the majority of the states as a way to determine academic achievement status. During the 1994-1995 academic year, seven states did not conduct any statewide assessments; however, by the year 2000, only one state did not conduct statewide assessments (Jones et. al., 2003). Even

at this time, “stakes associated with testing were high and included funding gains and losses, loss of accreditation, warnings, and eventual state takeover of schools” (Jones et. al., 2003, p. 17).

With the new millennium came a new federal law. In his presidency, President George W. Bush enacted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). NCLB stated that all schools “must have clear, measurable goals focused on basic skills and essential knowledge” (Jones et. al., 2003, pp. 17-18). These goals were to be measured annually with the “intention of reforming public education and improving student achievement throughout the United States” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). Student achievement was to be measured using a high-stakes state assessment.

With the enactment of NCLB, there was a greater desire to motivate and educate all students, with the goal that all students meet the required standards. High-stakes testing has had a tremendous impact on students and schools across the nation because of the idea that success is measured through the test scores (Casbarro, 2005). According to Altshuler and Schmautz (2006), high-stakes tests “attempt to assess students’ strengths and weaknesses in specific subject areas” (p. 7). Many students of underachieving groups have a difficult time meeting standards on high-stakes tests because poverty, language, access, and culture contribute to the lower scores of under-achieving groups (Jones et. al., 2003). Most disadvantaged students are at-risk of not meeting standards on the state assessment. As noted by McCloskey and McMunn (2000), more support is needed for low-performing students.

Already, most disadvantaged students struggle in the classroom because they are not performing at the same academic level as their peers (KSDE, 2008a). When disadvantaged students prepare for and take the state assessment, many disadvantaged students are anxious (Cizek & Burg, 2006). This anxiety can result in “headaches, upset stomachs, irritability,

increased aggression, and ‘freezing’ during parts of the test” (Marchant, 2004, p. 4).

Furthermore, students have been reported to cry, vomit, miss school, and refuse to take the state assessment (Marchant, 2004). In a recent poll, the North Carolina Association of Educators found that 63% of teachers and administrators reported a significant rise in students’ anxiety levels because students were administered the state assessment (Jones et. al., 2003). In another survey, 61.2% of the teachers reported student anxiety was directly related to high-stakes testing (Jones, Jones, Hardin, et al., 1999; Jones et. al., 2003). In yet another study, 83% of the teachers reported that students showed symptoms of anxiety (Adams & Karabenick, 2000; Jones et. al., 2003).

In addition to feeling anxious, most disadvantaged students feel unsuccessful in the classroom because they do not believe they will meet the standards on the state assessment (Jones et. al., 2003). These students are “less joyful” about attending school, and for some reluctant learners, school “is worse than it has ever been” (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p.14). This unsuccessful feeling leads many disadvantaged students to “devalue learning and schooling” (Marchant 2004, p. 3). Disadvantaged students frequently “fail to develop a desire for learning,” which impedes the “progress toward creating a population of life-long learners who can adapt to changing needs and conditions” (Natriello & Pallas, 1999, p. 3). Feelings of worthlessness are exacerbated when the results of practice formative tests as well as those of state assessment indicate to students “whether they are ‘smarter’ than their friends, or perhaps more importantly are ‘they dumber’” (Marchant, 2004, p. 3).

A continual barrage of unsuccessful moments related to testing can lead students to experience additional struggles in the classroom. Altshuler and Schmautz (2006) argue that underachievement on high-stakes tests leads disadvantaged students to develop a “lowered

academic self-concept,” which can have lasting negative effects on academic achievement (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 8). A lowered academic self-concept also can lead to “attitudes of resentment, anxiety, cynicism, and mistrust” (Marchant, 2004, p. 4). When students continually feel hopeless, worthless, resentful, and doomed to fail, they stop caring about school and many give up or drop out (Nichols & Berliner, 2008).

Many disadvantaged students also feel unsuccessful in the classroom when teachers do not teach to their learning styles. Marie Carbo (2008), executive director of the National Reading Styles Institute, argued that disadvantaged students “tend to be global, tactile, and kinesthetic learners” (p. 60). Carbo stated, “Many students are at risk because they don’t receive the kind of instruction and materials that enable them to learn easily” (p. 59). However, because of the pressure of high-stakes testing, many teachers feel the most efficient way for students to learn is to engage in repetitious instruction (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). This way of teaching usually does not allow for movement in the classroom, nor does this structure enable students to work easily in groups (Carbo, 2008). With the increase in time devoted to talking about, preparing for, and taking high-stakes tests, there simply is “little time to engage in creative interdisciplinary activities or project-based inquiry” (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 15). Therefore, when learning is solely defined by the expectations of high-stakes tests, students most at risk of academic failure tend to suffer.

No Child Left Behind

Federal educational reform initiatives are not a new phenomenon to the United States. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). This act was a response to President Johnson’s war on poverty and “provided federal funding for Chapter 1 in order to provide

supplemental educational services and resources to students who were at risk of academic failure” (Duran, 2005, p. 80). Schools that received the federal money were required to provide assessment results that evaluated their programs (Duran, 2005).

In 1994, the ESEA was reauthorized by the Clinton Administration (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). President Bill Clinton signed the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) into federal law and “required states to measure student performance at least once between grades 3-5, 6-9, and in high school” (Duran, 2005, p. 80). However, the IASA only required Title I schools to administer state assessments and report the results; non-Title I schools gave a different assessment (Duran, 2005). The model of accountability used for Title I schools allowed high scores in one subject area to compensate for low scores in another subject area. Because schools administered different assessments to Title I and non-Title I schools, it was difficult to compare the results (Duran, 2005). Moreover, this overall model of assessment and accountability did not require 100% of the nation’s students to meet a minimum standard (Kim & Sunderman, 2005).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed by President George W. Bush with “the intention of reforming public education and improving student achievement throughout the United States” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). NCLB was a federal mandate that allowed federal control of the nation’s schools. NCLB reauthorized and amended the ESEA and IASA (Apple, 2006; Duran, 2005; Linn et al., 2005; Sunderman et al., 2005). The Bush Administration argued that educational equity would be achieved if public schools were responsible for eliminating achievement disparities between high- and low-performing students, including minority and non-minority students (Sunderman et al., 2005).

With over 1,000 pages, NCLB contained requirements that defined expectations for improving instruction and learning for all students (Duran, 2005). These provisions included requirements of each state “to develop content and performance standards that apply equally to all students” (Duran, 2005, p. 76). Thus, each state was required to administer a state assessment that measured the degree to which students met the standards the state created and implemented. The assessment was used to determine whether students were performing at a proficiency level established by the state (Duran, 2005).

NCLB demanded “accountability standards for schools, districts, and states with measurable adequate yearly progress (AYP) objectives for all students and subgroups of students defined by socioeconomic background, race-ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability” (Linn et al., 2002, p. 3). States were required to disaggregate the results of the annual assessments by socioeconomic background, race-ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability (Apple, 2006; Carlson, 2004; Costello, 2008; Goldberg, 2004; Orlich, 2004). Furthermore, states were required to disaggregate results of the race-ethnicity subgroup into the following subgroups: White, Black, Native American, Hispanic, Asian, and Multiethnic. Additionally, each group and subgroup was disaggregated by gender (Costello, 2008; Orlich, 2004).

The Bush Administration argued that the key to “racial equity and economic success” (Sunderman et al., 2005, p. xxv) was through “consequence-based educational assessments” (Altshuler and Schmautz, 2006, p. 5) that were administered annually to determine if students were making the required proficiency level. Because the ultimate goal of NCLB was for all students, regardless of socioeconomic level, race-ethnicity, English speaking proficiency, or disability, to reach a minimum level of proficiency on the state assessments (Duran, 2005), the

Bush Administration argued that disaggregating the data was necessary to be certain that no child was left behind (Sunderman et al., 2005).

With the enactment of NCLB, students were exposed annually to a large number of tests (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Each state determined the standards for which the students would be tested (Duran, 2005), and these standards applied to all schools and students within that state (Apple, 2006). Furthermore, every state and district was required to “plot a path from current levels of achievement to 100% proficiency within 12 years” (Karp, 2003, p. 24). NCLB mandated that by the 2005-2006 academic year, all schools administer annual state assessments in reading and mathematics from grades 3-8 and at least once in grades 9-12 (Apple, 2006; Karp, 2003; Orlich, 2004). Furthermore, by the 2007-2008 academic year, schools were required to assess students in science once between grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12 (Apple, 2006; Karp, 2003; Orlich, 2004). Additionally, beginning in the 2008-2009 academic year, students in grades 6, 8, and 11 were administered an assessment in social studies (KSDE, 2006). NCLB further required that, for each assessment administered, at least 95% of all students in each school be tested (Apple, 2006).

Because all students were expected to attain the minimum standard of proficiency each year, the annual assessments given were standardized tests (Cawelti, 2006). These tests were multiple-choice tests that had a “set of rules for administration” (Marchant, 2004, p. 2). The standardized tests were created to target one specific grade, and when the distribution of scores was determined, educators knew each student’s performance level (Marchant, 2004). Annually, states reviewed the tests and a new “cut-off” score was determined to be the new proficiency level for that year (Marchant, 2004).

NCLB acknowledged that quality teachers were imperative in promoting student achievement (Coble & Azordegan, 2004); therefore, NCLB mandated that by the 2005-2006 academic school year, all core academic subjects were to be taught by a highly qualified teacher (Apple, 2006). NCLB defined a highly qualified teacher as a teacher who “(1) [had] at least a bachelor’s degree, (2) [had] full state licensure or certification, and (3) [demonstrated] competence in each subject he or she teaches” (Coble & Azordegan, 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, NCLB required that paraeducators who were paid through Title I funding “pass a rigorous test or...document that they have at least two years of postsecondary education” (Apple, 2006, p. 89). Because of the belief in highly qualified teachers, programs were established to “recruit, retain, and provide professional development to teachers and administrators” (Apple, 2006, p. 89).

Adequate Yearly Progress

One critical aspect of NCLB that currently is the topic of much conversation among educators is AYP. AYP was intended to “ensure that ‘all schools’ and ‘all students’ met the same academic standards in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 academic year” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). AYP was based on the idea that by 2014, every child in the nation would be at a minimum proficiency standard on the state reading and mathematics assessment (KSDE, 2006). AYP functions as a “unit of analysis” (Duran, 2005, p. 81) rather than on an individual basis; thus, students are classified in groups and subgroups according to their socioeconomic status, race-ethnicity, English language proficiency skills, and disabilities (Apple, 2006; Carlson, 2004; Costello, 2008; Goldberg, 2005; Orlich, 2004). AYP is calculated on the percent of students scoring at the proficient level and above on the reading and mathematics assessments (KSDE, 2006).

All elementary, middle schools/junior highs, and high schools across the nation are expected to attain AYP each year by meeting the AYP targets “both overall and for various subgroups of students” (Policy Analysis for California Education, 2004, p. 7). All students and disaggregated groups are required to meet or exceed the annual measurable objective, or target, in a content area that is measured for AYP (KSDE, 2006). Knowing that subgroups are so important to attaining AYP, Stephen Lawton (2006), professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, stated, “‘Correct identification’ may become the catchword for many schools seeking to attain AYP” (p. 32).

NCLB also states that participation, attendance, and graduation are vital when determining AYP. To attain AYP, 95% of the students are required to participate in the reading and mathematics assessments across the school, district, and state (Kim & Sunderman, 2005; KSDE, 2006; Linn et al., 2002). Although NCLB requires a certain percentage of students to attend elementary and middle school/junior high, and a certain percentage of seniors to graduate from high school, each state determines their own percentages (KSDE, 2006).

Many schools across the nation have failed to make AYP since the enactment of NCLB (Cortese, 2006). Each year a greater percentage of students is required to attain proficiency, and if schools do not reach this level of proficiency, the schools are labeled “‘in need of improvement,’ another way of saying ‘failing’” (Orlich, 2004, p. 8). A school can fail AYP two consecutive years before a school improvement plan is created (Orlich, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). In the third year, which is the first year of school improvement, the school is required to consult with parents, school staff, the local educational agency, and other experts to develop a two-year school improvement plan. The LEA must approve the school’s improvement plan (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Additionally, parents have the option to transfer

their students to a school that attained AYP (Orlich, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Wallis & Steptoe, 2007). The school requiring improvement receives technical assistance from the LEA to address its academic achievement problems (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

In year four of AYP failure, which is year two of improvement, parents still have the option to transfer their students to a school that attained AYP. However, more supplemental services are offered to students from low-income families (Orlich, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Wallis & Steptoe, 2007). Furthermore, the LEA continues to offer technical assistance to implement the plan of improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Failing year five can result in dramatic changes for the school or district. This year, which is year three of improvement, is called “Corrective Action” (Orlich, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). As in the previous year of improvement, the LEA continues to offer technical assistance, supplemental services are provided, and parents can move their students to another school. However, a meaningful change must be implemented, including one or more of the following (Orlich 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Wallis & Steptoe, 2007):

- The school staff members relevant to the school’s failure to make AYP are replaced.
- New curricula are instituted, including professional development for staff.
- The school’s administration has decreased management authority.
- An outside expert is appointed to advise the school.
- The school day and year are extended.
- The school’s internal organizational structure is restructured.

Failure to meet AYP in year six can result in further changes for the school and district (Orlich, 2004). During this crucial year, which is year one of restructuring, the LEA is required

to create a plan and make the necessary arrangements to initiate the plan. The following changes may be instituted if the LEA finds the changes necessary (Orlich, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008):

- Students are transferred to another public school.
- Supplemental educational services are continued.
- The school is reopened as a charter school.
- The entire school staff is replaced.
- The school district enters into a contract with a private management company to operate the school.
- The operation of the school is turned over to the state educational agency (SEA).

For schools and districts that do not attain AYP, there is a “Safe Harbor” provision (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). The goal of Safe Harbor is to “reduce failure rates in schools with multiple subgroup targets” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 4). Safe Harbor applies to any group that does not meet the target for that year (KSDE, 2006). In order for a school or district to qualify for Safe Harbor, the following statements must be true (KSDE, 2006): (1) group participation in the state assessment is at least 95%, (2) the attendance rate of elementary schools and districts is at least 90% or reflects a reasonable improvement, (3) the graduation rate of high schools and districts is at least 75% or reflects reasonable improvement, and (4) the group making Safe Harbor (that did not meet standards on the state assessment) decreased by at least 10% from the previous year’s results.

Disadvantaged Students and the Achievement Gap

More than two-thirds of the nation’s minority students attend predominately minority schools, and one-third of Black and Latino students attend intensely segregated schools (Darling-

Hammond, 2004). Minority students “are far more likely than other students to...score lower on standardized tests” (Adams, 2008, p. 26). Furthermore, minority students score remarkably lower on national reading and math assessments than do White students (Adams, 2008). Most minority students are already significantly behind academically than their more advantaged peers when they enter kindergarten, and the gap only worsens through the school years (Haskins & Rouse, 2006).

However, being a minority student is not the primary cause of scoring lower on tests; poverty is the primary reason for lower test scores, and most minority students live in poverty (Beers, 2005). There is a high correlation between poverty and student achievement, and the higher the poverty level the more at-risk the student is for failure (Beers, 2005; Duran, 2005). This also suggests a high correlation between race and poverty (Kim & Sunderman, 2005; Orfield, 1996; Orfield & Lee, 2005). Dr. Kylene Beers (2005), Senior Reading Advisor to Secondary Schools with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and President of National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), stated, “...our students of color are most often our students of poverty” (p. 80).

Socioeconomic status is the greatest predictor of academic achievement (Futrell & Rotberg, 2002; Jones et. al., 2003; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005). Students qualify for free/reduced lunch according to the guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and students who qualify are usually the most at-risk students because they are at or below the poverty indicator (Gass, 2008; Kim & Sunderman 2005; KSDE, 2008a). Solmon (2006) stated, “...when we look at the proficiency levels of the kids eligible for free and reduced lunch vs. not eligible for free and reduced lunch, there’s a huge difference” (p. 59). The students who are more advantaged have usually been exposed to “richer experiences” and “have been

read to, been exposed to printed materials and pictures, have visited museums, and have watched educational television” (Jones et al., 2003, p. 118). To the contrary, poorer families may not believe education to be a priority “because their primary concern is to find basic means for daily survival” (Duran, 2005, p. 11). Poorer families usually do not have adequate health care, housing, food, clothing, and school supplies (Beers, 2005).

Critics argue that state assessments base their questions on the knowledge and skills that students from a privileged background are likely to learn outside of school (Kohn, 2000; Kornhaber & Orfield, 2001). Therefore, disadvantaged students without the required skills and prior knowledge or experience are unlikely to fare well on the state assessment. As Garner (2008) noted, many disadvantaged students have not mastered the basic skills of “finding patterns and relationships, identifying rules, and generating abstract principles that are relevant in different applications” (p. 32). Because even higher levels of thinking and problem-solving skills are required on state assessments (Hanzlicek, 2006), disadvantaged students have a lower chance of meeting the proficiency level on those assessments.

Disadvantaged students also usually attend schools with the fewest resources (Beers, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Beers (2005) summarized this situation saying:

Our children of poverty are most likely to attend schools that are best described as lacking: lacking equipment...lacking cleanliness; lacking computers and Internet access; lacking parental involvement; lacking extracurricular activities; lacking high student achievement; and, lacking enough highly qualified teachers. (p. 82)

Disadvantaged students usually do not have access to the quality programs (Futrell & Rotberg, 2002; Kornhaber & Orfield, 2001) that are available to students in wealthier schools. Although NCLB allows students to transfer to another school (KSDE, 2006; Orlich, 2004; Wallis &

Steptoe, 2007), “low-income parents do not have very good information on their options, and studies of school choice over the years have shown it works best for more educated and affluent parents” (Sunderman et al., 2005, p. xxxi). Furthermore, there may be a long and undesirable commute to a more privileged school, as “high-poverty schools exist because the majority of families in their surrounding neighborhood are poor” (Duran, 2005, p. 11).

Meeting AYP poses the greatest challenge, therefore, to high poverty schools, which traditionally have done poorly on standardized tests (Duran, 2005; Jones, Jones, & Hardin et. al., 1999; Jones et. al., 2003; Kim & Sunderman, 2005; Madaus & Clarke, 2001). Schools with the largest number of minorities often have the highest levels of poverty (Beers, 2005; Booher-Jennings, 2006). High poverty schools “enroll [a] large concentration of Black and/or Latino students whose average test scores are likely to fall below the minimum proficiency level required to meet AYP” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 4). Moreover, because NCLB defines diversity in terms of subgroups, AYP is measured and reported for each defined group within the school (Lawton, 2006).

Dr. Robert Linn, professor of education at the University of Colorado and co-director of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, stated, “Schools with a sufficient number of students in each of several targeted groups are less likely to meet AYP targets than schools of the same size and similar performance but with a homogeneous student body” (Chubb et al., 2005, p. 7). Because diverse schools have more demographic subgroups that are expected to make achievement gains, AYP is usually more difficult for these schools to attain (Policy Analysis for California Education, 2004). Lawton (2006) similarly stated, “. . .homogeneous schools have an advantage in that they have few or no subgroups while heterogeneous schools with many [subgroups] have a higher probability of failure” (p.29).

In addition, minority students “are more likely than White students to be counted in multiple subgroup categories, including race, ethnicity, economic disadvantage, and limited English proficiency” (Sunderman et al., 2005, p. 26). For example, in 2003, 40% of Hispanic students lived in poverty (Rumberger, 1991). These students were classified in two subgroups: racial/ethnic and disadvantaged students. If these students performed poorly in one subgroup, they performed poorly in the other subgroup (Jones et. al., 2003). Furthermore, if these students were limited English proficient and/or in the special education program, these students were classified in even more subgroups and “counted multiple times for AYP purposes” (Policy Analysis for California Education, 2004, p. 7). According to Lawton (2006), this kind of scenario resulted in a “diversity penalty.”

One requirement of NCLB was to “close ‘the achievement gap between high-and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers’” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). Although the achievement gap is narrowing, the gap is still substantial between advantaged and disadvantaged students (Azzam, 2007; Beers, 2005). For the achievement gap to continue narrowing, “low-performing schools will have to make larger improvements than higher performing schools since all schools are required to meet the same goals” (Sunderman et al., p. 25). Closing the achievement gap requires extraordinary progress (Solmon, 2006). Antonia Cortese (2006), former executive vice president and current secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), stated:

...even if the kids at the lower level are learning at the same rate as the kids who are in the schools that are doing better, they’re never going to catch up. There’s always going to

be a gap. Regardless of the progress of the poorest achieving students, they will always be behind. (cited in Solmon et al., 2006, p. 69)

Highly Qualified Teachers

With the enactment of NCLB came a provision that by the 2005-2006 school year, highly qualified teachers would teach academic core classes (Coble & Azordegan, 2004; Duran, 2005; Haskins & Loeb, 2007). Highly qualified teachers (1) have at least a bachelor's degree, (2) have full state licensure or certification, and (3) demonstrate competence in the subjects they teach (Coble & Azordegan, 2004; Gass, 2008). Teacher quality makes a difference in how much students learn (Fielder, 2003). In fact, teacher quality is the most important attribute that drives student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; Gass, 2008; Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Andy Hargreaves, the Thomas More Brennan Chair in Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, stated, "If we want high-level, deep learning for students, we have to have highly skilled and intellectually able teachers" (cited in Seed, 2008, p. 587).

Teacher qualifications are vital for student learning (Goldberg, 2004). Unfortunately, "many children...lack the benefit of effective teaching at some point in their K-12 years" (Rivers & Sanders, 2000, p. 21). For students who have had numerous years of ineffective teaching, the negative residual effects of low achievement remain for many years (Fielder, 2003; Rivers & Sanders, 2000). In their study, Rivers and Sanders (2000) concluded that "if students are assigned to consecutive ineffective teachers, the impact on student achievement in the short and long terms can be devastating" (p. 13). They further noted that "the children who have these teachers quite possibly are not receiving the opportunity to get a good education" (p. 22).

Although teachers are essential to student success, Chubb et al. (2005) argued that schools across the nation “assign our weakest teachers to our weakest students” (p. 7). Research repeatedly shows that disadvantaged students are usually assigned to the least experienced and qualified teachers (Beers, 2005; Chubb et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Futrell & Rotberg, 2002; Gass, 2008; Jones et al., 2003; Karp, 2003; National Center for Education Statistics, 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Spellings, 2006; Strunk, 2006; Sunderman et al., 2005; Walsh, 2001). In larger districts, many beginning teachers start their employment in inner-city schools (Rivers & Sanders, 2000). However, many teachers prefer not to work in the inner-city schools (Jones et al., 2003). One superintendent noted that with few exceptions, “Teachers don’t want to work in those [high-poverty] schools” (Jones et al., 2003, p. 143). In fact, “the best teachers gravitate toward middle-class suburban or high-quality urban schools and not toward troubled inner-city schools where they are desperately needed” (Goldberg, 2004, p. 10). There are more uncertified teachers teaching in high-poverty schools than in the more affluent schools (Gass, 2008; Walsh, 2001), and this undermines the academic talent of disadvantaged students (Berliner, 2006; Gass, 2008).

Across the United States there is also a “tremendous loss of teachers within the first five years of teaching” (Sanders, Hentschke, Stroup, Wildavsky, & Zelman, 2006, p. 228). There are many reasons teachers leave the profession, including: high stress, low salary, lack of influence over school policy, a sense of collegial isolation, student-related factors, poor working conditions, inadequate administrative support, personal circumstances, lack of career advancement opportunities, and lack of respect and recognition (Jones et al., 2003). However, teachers who serve in high-poverty schools tend to leave either the school or the teaching profession in disproportionate numbers (Sunderman et al., 2005).

Researchers have found that teacher turnover is higher in low-income schools (Heck, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Scafidi, Stinebrickner, & Sjoquist, 2003; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). Furthermore, research indicated that teachers are more likely to resign or transfer to another in-district school if the student body at their school is largely minority (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002; Scafidi et al., 2003; Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Theobald, 1990). In fact, teachers leave high-poverty schools more often because of the large number of minorities than because of their salaries (Hanushek et al., 2002; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). In the end, poor and minority students are “almost twice as likely to have teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience” (Heck, 2007, p. 404). Katharine Omenn Strunk (2006), Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at the University of California, summarized the implications of this research saying:

The lowest achieving and most disadvantaged students are more likely to have teachers new to the school and to the profession. If less experienced teachers are...less proficient and/or effective...these disadvantaged students are more likely to have lower quality teachers. (pp. 73-74)

The turnover rate is so high in high-poverty schools, and higher quality teachers primarily leave these schools. When high quality teachers leave the school, lower quality teachers are usually placed with the neediest students (Strunk & Robinson, 2006).

NCLB requires that all states have highly qualified teachers in the core areas (Coble & Azordegan, 2004) because quality teachers are better equipped to help disadvantaged students make substantial progress each year (Sunderman et al., 2005). Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that “the single most dominant factor affecting student academic gain is teacher effect” (p. 6). These researchers also found that “as teacher effectiveness increases, lower achieving students

are the first to benefit” (p. i). Moreover, research indicated that when taught by quality teachers, disadvantaged students benefit more than their non-disadvantaged peers (Gass, 2008; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

A study conducted by the Center on Education Policy revealed that disadvantaged students, regardless of income level, race or ethnicity, being an English Language learner, or having disabilities, will succeed in the classroom if the teacher has a strong rapport with students, can work as a team, has a commitment to teaching, and has a love for children (McMurrer, 2007). Successful teachers understand their students’ abilities, interests, prior experiences, and relationships (Brimijoin, 2005), and with this knowledge they can “elicit significant gains from students of all ethnicities and income levels” (Rivers & Sanders, 2000, p. 13). Effective teachers are usually effective with all students, regardless of the subgroup(s) in which the students are classified (Rivers & Sanders, 2000). Ted Sanders (2006), Executive Chairman of Cardean Learning Group and former U.S. Secretary of Education, argued that in just one year, an effective teacher can make a great difference in the classroom and assist low-achieving students in being successful.

According to McMurrer (2007), “several state and district officials observed that the qualifications [of highly qualified teachers] emphasized by the NCLB definition [do] not speak directly to teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom” (p. 35). Such officials believe that NCLB’s definition of highly qualified is too narrow because the definition focuses on teachers’ content knowledge (McMurrer, 2007). An educator in Clark County, Nevada, observed that “highly qualified teachers and quality teachers are ‘two different things.’ Not all highly qualified teachers are highly effective” (McMurrer, 2007, p. 21). High quality teachers have not only a bachelor’s degree, state licensure or certification, and competence in the subject they teach but also the

defining characteristics that make them effective with disadvantaged students (Smith, 2008). Highly effective teachers inspire students to think critically, promote problem solving skills, and engage them in active participation (Airasian, 1988; Diamond, 2007; Garcia, 2006; Jones et al., 2003; Kohn, 2000). Furthermore, effective teachers hold students to high expectations and make them accountable for their work (Garcia, 2006). In a recent study, Garcia (2006) found that students also believed teachers were effective when they “knew their family members and acknowledged and valued their identities, communities, and histories by making the classroom lessons relevant to their everyday lives” (p. 703). Because of the enactment of NCLB, schools are taking steps to place highly qualified teachers in the classrooms to better serve the disadvantaged population (Coble & Azordegan, 2004).

The Importance of Administrative Building Leadership

Since the enactment of NCLB, the overwhelming responsibility of building leaders has continued to grow. Such leaders must be knowledgeable of objectives, curriculum, and assessments in the building (Ediger & Emeritus, 2007). Building leaders “need to be conscientious individuals who have the pupil’s interest as the focal point in teaching and learning situations” (Ediger & Emeritus, 2007, p. 152). Because principals are directly and indirectly responsible for what occurs in their buildings, they are the key to accountability (Cooley & Shen, 2003).

Building leaders must be instructional leaders (Cotton, 2003; Ediger & Emeritus, 2007). As such, they should be aware of the curriculum being taught in the classroom and the strategies that are used to prepare the students. Building leaders should continually monitor instruction and make efforts to improve instruction as needed (Demoss, 2002). For building leaders to effectively monitor instruction, they must visit classrooms and observe the teachers and their

teaching strategies. Eisner (2002) stated that principals should observe classrooms one third of the time and strive to develop teacher leaders. Building leaders who are aware of the curriculum being taught and the instructional strategies being used to teach the objectives are able to “collaborate with teachers to ensure that learning goals are linked to instructional strategies” (Cooley & Shen, 2003, p. 11). Furthermore, building leaders who possess knowledge of the curriculum are able to make suggestions to assist teachers in becoming teacher leaders (Ediger & Emeritus, 2007).

Professional development opportunities are important for the growth of both building leaders and teachers. Districts should provide “targeted, sustained professional development for acting school principals,” enabling building leaders to be better prepared for working with teachers and for initiating and sustaining school improvement efforts (Demoss, 2002, p. 130). In turn, building leaders need to support “teachers’ professional development and experimentation” (Cotton, 2003, p. 56). Teachers’ professional development opportunities must effectively support their instructional efforts with students (Demoss, 2002). In a 2000 study by Levine and Levine, the researchers discovered that successful principals “provided professional development activities focused on classroom arrangements and instructional strategies and resources,” which were especially beneficial for the disadvantaged student population (p. 5). According to Cooley and Shen (2003), professional development that focuses on administrator and teacher skills must be conducted, and both groups should be required to provide evidence of change.

Principals also are responsible for student outcomes and achievement (Lyons & Algozzine, 2006). Principals have been removed from their leadership positions because of poor state assessment results, and most principals’ annual evaluations mention the impact they have had on assessment results (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). Therefore, building leaders need to

understand the importance of test results and the impact these results can have on the students, teachers, principal, and district (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Building leaders need to not only monitor and report student progress data (Cotton, 2003), but also analyze test data to identify areas that need attention and share this information with district-level staff (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). Once the data is analyzed, building leaders should use the data to improve the instructional program, and individual student performance data should be used to plan future instruction (Cotton, 2003). Because the goal is to maintain “a focus on raising student achievement,” principals need to continually foster an attitude of change toward a vision of improvement (Cotton, 2003, p. 56). Principals need to develop action plans to improve student achievement, and it is equally important that principals share their plans with district-level leaders to protect communication in the district (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Instructional Strategies for Disadvantaged Students

According to Brimijoin (2005), NCLB emphasizes “one-size-fits-all accountability” and assumes that all students have access to the same curriculum, instruction, and resources (p. 254). However, in any given classroom there is a wide range of learners, and teachers “struggle to provide all students access” because students have different learning styles and backgrounds (p. 254). Strategies that work for some students do not work for other students (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Teachers who have disadvantaged students in their classrooms may have a much harder time preparing these students for state assessments because these students usually have less confidence in themselves (Stiggins, 1999). Therefore, teachers must build the students’ confidence and competence through “knowledge of content, a broad repertoire of assessment tools, creativity in finding sources, continual reflection, and collaborative support” (Brimijoin, 2005, p. 255).

A major weakness for many disadvantaged students is their lack of cognitive structures. Cognitive structures are “basic, interconnected psychological systems that enable people to process information by connecting it with prior knowledge and experience, finding patterns and relationships, identifying rules, and generating abstract principles that are relevant in different applications” (Garner, 2008, p. 32). Dr. Betty Garner (2008), an educational consultant and author, believed that teachers could use everyday lessons to develop students’ cognitive structures, which include (pp. 34-38):

- *Recognition*. The ability to identify a match or fit between two or more pieces of information.
- *Memorization*. The ability to store information.
- *Conservation of constancy*. The ability to understand how some characteristics of a thing can change while others stay the same.
- *Classification*. The ability to identify, compare, and order information to create meaning on the basis of relationships of parts to one another and parts to the whole.
- *Spatial orientation*. The ability to identify relationships among objects and places.
- *Temporal orientation*. The ability to process information by comparing events in relationship to when they occur.
- *Metaphorical thinking*. The ability to understand the meaning by emphasizing similarities and overlooking differences.

Similarly, Marzano et al. (2001) believed that cognitive skills may have been the most important part of all learning. They asserted that comparing similarities and differences, classifying information, and creating metaphors and analogies are critical skills that must be taught, modeled, and practiced in the classroom.

To further support Garner's theory, constructivists believed that "learners' ever-transforming mental schemes play in their cognitive growth" (Brooks & Brooks, 2004, p. 184). Although learners control what they learn, educators should "develop classroom practices and negotiate the curriculum to enhance the likelihood of student learning" (Brooks & Brooks, 2004, p. 187). Brooks and Brooks (1993) identified five central tenets of constructivism, which can also assist teachers in preparing students for state assessments (Brooks & Brooks, 2004, p. 188):

- Teachers seek and value students' points of view.
- Teachers structure lessons to challenge students' suppositions.
- Teachers recognize that students must attach relevance to the curriculum.
- Teachers structure lessons around big ideas, not small bits of information.
- Teachers assess student learning in the context of daily classroom investigations, not as separate events.

In another study, a group of disadvantaged students were placed in a low-tracked homogenous program to determine if they would improve their academic performance (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005). The results of the study showed an increase in the disadvantaged students' scores. The program strategies used to promote students' academic performance included (pp. 35-37):

- Drill and practice
- Manipulatives
- Study skills program
- Test-taking strategies
- Hands-on experience

- Special privileges (non-restricted movement around the classroom, opportunities to talk, eating in class, free time, and computer use)
- Extra time to complete tasks
- Cooperative groups
- Involving students in the planning of the curriculum and activities

In addition to general instructional strategies, literacy instructional skills are important to assisting disadvantaged students to read, interpret, and comprehend better. Because students need strong literacy skills in school, and approximately eight million students struggle to read at grade level, (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), representatives of the Carnegie Corporation chose a panel of five nationally recognized educational researchers to establish a set of recommendations for assisting students' development of literacy skills. The panel recommended the following nine instructional improvements to increase literacy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 4):

- Direct, explicit comprehensive instruction. Instruction in the strategies and processes that proficient readers use to understand what they read, including summarizing and keeping track of one's own understanding.
- Effective instructional principles embedded in content. Content-area teachers provide instruction and practice in reading and writing skills specific to their subject areas.
- Motivation and self-directed learning. Building motivation to read and learn and providing students with the instruction and supports needed for independent learning.
- Text-based collaborative learning. Students interacting with one another around a variety of texts.
- Strategic tutoring. Provide students with intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed.

- Diverse texts. Texts at a variety of difficulty levels and on a variety of topics.
- Intensive writing. Instruction connected to the kinds of writing tasks.
- Technology component. Technology as a tool for and a topic of literacy instruction.
- Ongoing formative assessment of students. Informal, often daily, assessment of how students are progressing.

Many researchers (e.g., Deshler et al., 2004; Lenz et al., 2004) support the nine elements of instructional improvement listed by the Carnegie Corporation. Lenz et al. (2004) believed direct, explicit comprehensive instruction should include methods or routines that are “thoroughly explained to and demonstrated for students through easily understood examples and familiar information” (p. 70). Teachers need to be clear about their goals and outcomes of instruction, and expectations should be shared with students.

Teachers should regularly use modeling as a way to “think aloud,” describing the process to be learned in easy steps (Lenz et al., 2004), and they should require students to use the strategy in their assignments (Deshler et al., 2004). In modeling, “instruction is ‘structured’ when information is divided into pieces that are manageable for the student to learn” (Deshler et al., 2004, p. 98). Many disadvantaged students have difficulty processing large amounts of information, and direct, explicit comprehensive instruction allows students to break the information into smaller, less overwhelming chunks, which is less overwhelming (Deshler et al., 2004).

Many disadvantaged students need more individualized, intense instruction (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Strategic tutoring, which is defined as “instruction that compensates for the fact that students frequently do not have good skills or strategies for learning, and that simultaneously shows students ways to compensate for their lack of skills or strategies to learn information

independently” (Lenz et al., 2004, p. 70), is often used with students who have literacy problems and receive specialized, intensive instruction from the classroom teacher or a teacher in a specialized area (Deshler et al., 2004). This intense instruction is usually provided in a pull-out educational setting and requires much time and resources (Lenz & Deshler, 2004). The specialized tutoring should be used regularly and consistently which requires students to be attentive to the material being taught (Deshler, 2005).

Because teachers must teach students the information and skills contained on state assessments, ongoing formative assessment in the classroom is imperative (Deshler & Schumaker, 2006). Deshler et al. (2004) described continuous and ongoing assessment as, “an element of responsive instruction in which the teacher regularly monitors students’ performance to determine how closely it matches the instructional goal” (p. 96). Formative assessment allows teachers to know which instructional procedures need to be changed or modified to be more effective, and, for disadvantaged students, daily formative assessments are best (Deshler et al., 2004).

According to Booher-Jennings (2006), many teachers have been told to focus on students that will make the standards (the “accountables”) and students that can make the standards with a little help (the “bubble” kids). In doing this, teachers may give less attention to students who, they believe, will not make the standards (the “unaccountables”). However, given the appropriate instructional strategies, teachers may be able to dismiss the concept of educational triage. Instead of mentally grouping the students into three categories—the “accountables,” the “bubble” kids, and the “unaccountables”—teachers can use instructional strategies to assist all students and focus especially on the “bubble” kids and “unaccountables.”

Instructional Strategies to Promote Proficient Reading

In addition to instructional strategies that can be used to assist students on different benchmarks of state assessments, there are strategies that can be used specifically to assist disadvantaged students in becoming more proficient readers. Carbo (2008) believed that educators needed to help change the negative perceptions that students had about reading. Students need to build on their strengths rather than concentrate on their weaknesses. According to Cotton (1999), teachers should encourage disadvantaged students by comparing their poor past performance with their current higher-performing performance. Because many disadvantaged students tend to be kinesthetic learners, these students “benefit from high-interest, challenging reading materials; structured choices; powerful modeling of texts; increasingly difficult stories; hands-on skill work; opportunities for mobility; and opportunities to work in groups” (Carbo, 2008, p. 58). Furthermore, by modeling reading methods, teachers can help struggling readers “bypass the decoding process, read frequently, and concentrate on meaning” (p. 59).

Reducing the stress that many students experience with reading is yet another strategy (Carbo, 2008). Carbo believed many disadvantaged students feel “sad, fearful, and angry” because they struggle when they read; however, when these students feel success, these feelings subside (p. 59). When disadvantaged students see their individual efforts improved their results, they feel successful (Cotton, 1999). Many students do not “receive the kind of instruction and materials that enable them to learn easily;” however, when students receive instruction and materials that they find interesting and that are at their reading level, they are more inclined to read (Carbo, 2008, p. 59). Keene (2008) suggested high-interest, low readability books to engage disadvantaged students in reading.

Carbo (2008) also suggested using Carbo recordings, in which a passage is recorded while the passage is read aloud at a slow pace and with much expression. The student listens to the recording, following along a few times. Then the student reads a portion aloud to the teacher. A discussion of the passage follows (Carbo, 2008). Because disadvantaged students tend to be self-conscious and frequently feel like failures, teachers should provide a student-responsive environment. As Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005) suggested, such an environment might allow for movement in the classroom, provide comfortable seating and varied lighting, and ensure that students have opportunities to work in groups (Carbo, 2008).

Summary

Over the years, with different presidential administrations, the federal government has implemented numerous laws to assist disadvantaged students in attaining academic success. However, no other federal initiative can compare to the impact that NCLB has had, and continues to have, on states, districts, and schools. With NCLB, the federal government demands accountability for all students. As the standard level of performance rises each year, many schools across the nation fail to meet AYP. If districts and schools do not attain AYP for different subgroups of students, there are serious consequences that can affect stakeholders.

Attaining AYP is hardest for disadvantaged students, who traditionally do not perform as well as their peers on high-stakes assessments. Preparing and retaining highly qualified teachers in schools, especially in schools with large populations of disadvantaged students, will move the nation closer to the goal of 100% of students reaching a minimum standard of proficiency by the year 2014. Although research names general instructional strategies that assist disadvantaged students, there is a void in the research regarding specific instructional strategies that assist disadvantaged students in preparing for the state assessment.

In district efforts to improve student achievement, building leaders are crucial. Principals and teachers must work together to use the results of state assessments to modify curriculum, instruction, and strategies to meet the academic needs of students, especially those who are disadvantaged. Key to this entire process is professional development for building leaders and teachers alike.

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This research proposal was offered to identify instructional strategies being used in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school to assist disadvantaged students on the state reading assessment. In particular, the study focused on specific instructional strategies and activities being used in successful eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to assist disadvantaged students. The strategies targeted disadvantaged students who are difficult to motivate, are slow learners, and are categorized in at least one of the subgroups. A case study approach was chosen for the research design and methodology to learn what instructional strategies are used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, to examine what specific strategies and activities are being used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, to understand the perceived impact on student improvement while preparing for the state reading assessment, and administrative leaders' role in preparing for the state reading assessment. Sections of Chapter Three include (a) the overview of the importance, (b) research questions and subquestions, (c) case study design, (d) site selection, (e) participant selection, (f) data collection, (g) data analysis, (h) credibility of data, (i) background and role of the researcher, (j) ethical considerations, and (k) summary.

Overview of the Importance

This case study was designed to identify existing instructional strategies being utilized in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school to assist disadvantaged students, identified by qualifying for free or reduced lunch, being a racial or ethnic minority, being an English language learner, and/or having disabilities. Disadvantaged students fall into at

least one subgroup on the state assessment, and since the enactment of NCLB in 2001, the subgroups have continued to fail at attaining AYP in most states across the nation (Spellings, 2006). Many educators continue to worry that their students will not meet standards, and educators fear they may be seen as failures or even lose their jobs (Booher-Jennings, 2006). Furthermore, with NCLB mandating that in the 2013-2014 academic school year, all students will be required to meet standards on the state assessment. Teachers should disregard the notion of *educational triage*, which is mentally grouping students into three categories: the students who will meet standards, the students who may meet standards with some guidance, and the students who will not meet standards (Booher-Jennings, 2006). No longer should teachers mentally group students into three groups: the “accountables,” the “bubble” kids, and the “unaccountables” (Booher-Jennings, 2006) because every student is expected to meet standards in the 2013-2014 academic year. NCLB states that all students can learn, and it is the teacher’s and district’s obligation to ensure that every student meets standards on the state assessment.

The higher accountability has teachers unsure how to motivate disadvantaged students and what strategies tend to be successful in the classroom because students’ experiences are not limited to the current school year (Kohn, 2000). Teachers have always inherited their students’ experiences and what the students have and have not learned in the years preceding the current school year. Kohn (2000) stated, “...it seems difficult to justify holding a fourth-grade teacher accountable for her students’ test scores when those scores reflect all that has happened to the children before they even arrived in her class” (p. 320). Thus, when disadvantaged students arrive in the eleventh grade, the eleventh grade teachers have inherited many different experiences and learning styles.

Furthermore, the eleventh grade is the last time students are assessed on state assessments. At the eleventh grade, students are administered the state reading assessment in their Language Arts class. Students need to perform well in the eleventh grade on the state reading assessment because it is the last time students will be exposed to state assessments. Because many disadvantaged students can retain more information if strategies are used, it is imperative that instructional strategies are presented and taught in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. However, there was a void in the research concerning the implementation of specific instructional strategies used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state assessment.

Research Questions and Subquestions

The research for this case study was conducted in multiple eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school because this school, which had a steady average of disadvantaged students making up 39% of the eleventh grade reading population, proved successful in attaining AYP the last three years in Language Arts. The following research question provided focus to this study:

What instructional strategies were used with disadvantaged students in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school?

The subsequent research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What formative practice assessment data were used in preparation for the state reading assessment?
2. What instructional changes were made based on the formative practice assessment results?

3. What were the perceived impacts on student improvement related to the process of preparing for state reading assessments?
4. Based on the findings of this study, what recommendations can be made to assist teachers of disadvantaged students to improve performance on the state reading assessment in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom?

The subsequent research questions for district leaders were as follows:

1. What resources were available in your school district to assist disadvantaged students in preparation for the eleventh grade state reading assessment?
2. To which workshops and conferences did the school district send eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in order to increase their understanding of different strategies?
3. What recommendations can be made to assist administrative leaders who are involved in the state assessment process?

Case Study Design

A case study is one of several ways of conducting social science research (Yin, 1989). However, Yin (1989) stated that a case study has “long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods. Investigators who do case studies are regarded as having deviated from their academic disciplines; their investigations...” (p. 10). In the 1920s and 1930s, the case study method was popular, but in the 1960s, the method was seen as a “one shot” method which minimized the validity and reliability of the research (Campbell & Monson, 1994; Hardy, 2000). In the 1980s, the case study method became widely used as the case study method entered the methodological mainstream (Campbell & Monson, 1994; Hardy, 2000). The use of the case

study method was renewed because of the emphasis being placed on single case designs, the problems of research design, and the conduct of fieldwork (Yin, 1989, 1993; Hardy, 2000).

Case studies have become one of the most common ways of conducting qualitative research (Stake, 2000). A case study is designed to “describe in detail the pattern and interrelation of the variables which are active in a particular concrete instance” and “gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information” (Hardy, 2000, p. 39). The purpose of a case study is to “catch the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Although the name suggests that the answer to a question can be learned from a single case, researchers may use other names for a case study (Stake, 2000). When asked what he called his own studies, one researcher reluctantly said, “Fieldwork” (Stake, 2000, p. 435). Regardless of the name, a case study is a “bounded system” that draws attention to an object (Stake, 1995, 2000; Creswell, 1998) “over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).

Case studies have become popular in education and social work (Stake, 1995), as well as psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, and economics (Yin, 1989). Yin (1989), Miles and Huberman (1984), and Marshall and Rossman (1999) further stated that case study research had become extensively used in less traditional areas, including: linguistics, program evaluation, urban planning, public administration, public policy, and management sciences. For the qualitative researcher, everyday life is the laboratory, and research “cannot be contained in a test tube, started, stopped, manipulated, or washed down the sink” (Morse, 1994, p. 1). Conducting good case studies is not a small task (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Miles and Huberman (1984) believed “collecting data is a labor-intensive operation, traditionally lasting for months if not years. Field notes mount up astronomically, so that data overload can occur. “It

may take from many months to several years to complete a thoughtful analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 15). Case studies can be simple and only a few paragraphs to a complicated booklet with a lot of data and detail (Hardy, 2000).

A case study is a system with working parts (Stake, 2000), and the researcher must study the particularities and the complexities (Stake, 1995). The project has a plan and organization that must be well-developed by the researcher (Stake, 2006). Each case study is special to the researcher; however, Stake (2006) believed that cases are nouns, things, or entities. Therefore, researchers conducting case studies study objects, including but not limited to: students, schools, nurses, managers, production sites, labor and delivery rooms, training sessions for voters, etc. In case studies, the researcher has little control over events and answer “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1989). Yin (1993) believed case studies are appropriate when researchers want to (1) define topics broadly and not narrowly, (2) cover contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of the study, and (3) rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence. Yin (1989) warned researchers to proceed with caution when designing and conducting case studies to overcome the traditional criticisms.

For this study, a multi-case study design was used. The researcher selected Stake’s (1995) model for case study design, which included: (a) selecting the cases to be studied, (b) developing the research questions, (c) gathering the data, (d) analyzing and interpreting the data, (e) validating the data, and (f) presenting the findings. Multi-case studies are embedded in real life situations, and the results are often significant and holistic. Merriam (1998) believed that case studies have an important role in advancing the knowledge base of a particular field because information learned from case studies can influence policy, practice, and future research. The researcher used a case study design because she wanted a real life situation where teachers were

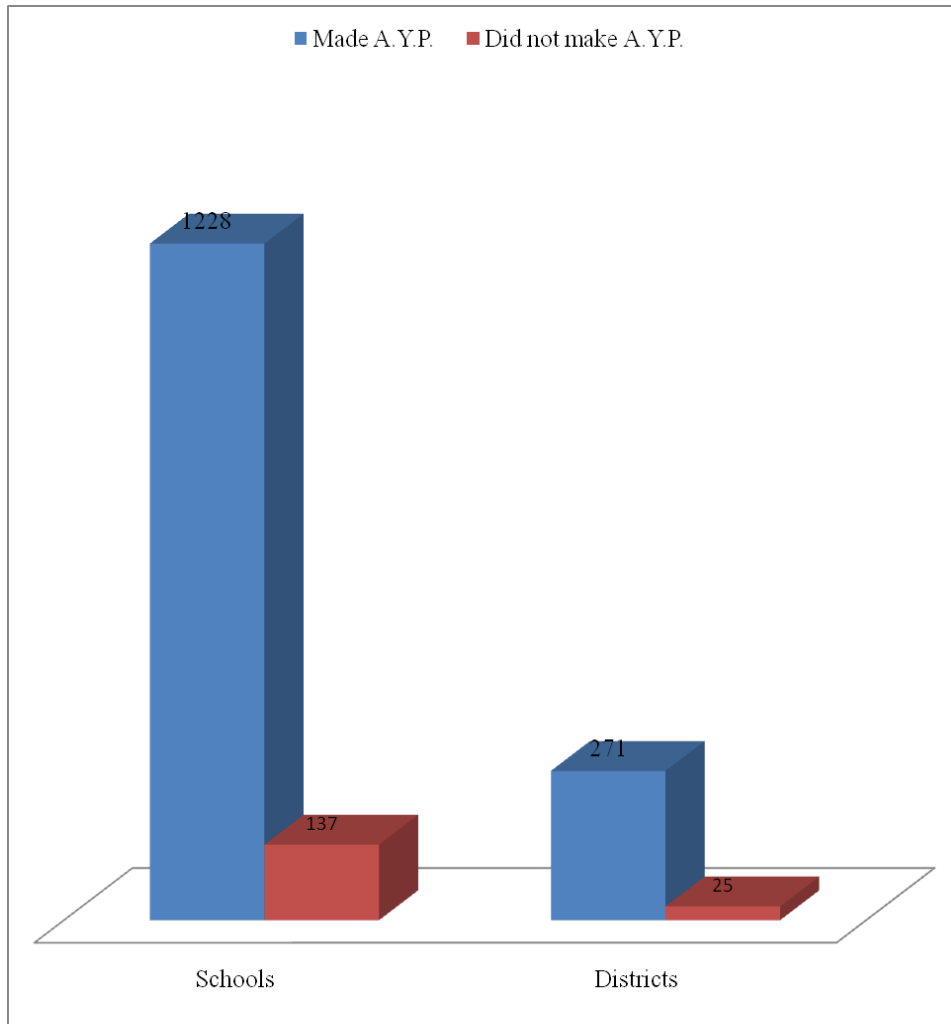
actively teaching to the disadvantaged eleventh grade population in order to learn what research-based instructional strategies were being utilized in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom; to examine what specific strategies and activities were being used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom; and to understand the perceived impact on student improvement while preparing for the state reading assessment.

Site Selection

Marshall and Rossman (1999) believed choosing a research site was crucial because the site needs to be realistic and accessible. They believed there were four characteristics for a realistic site (Marshall and Rossman, 1999): (a) entry is possible, (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest are present, (c) the researcher can build a trusting relationship with participants in the study, and (d) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured.

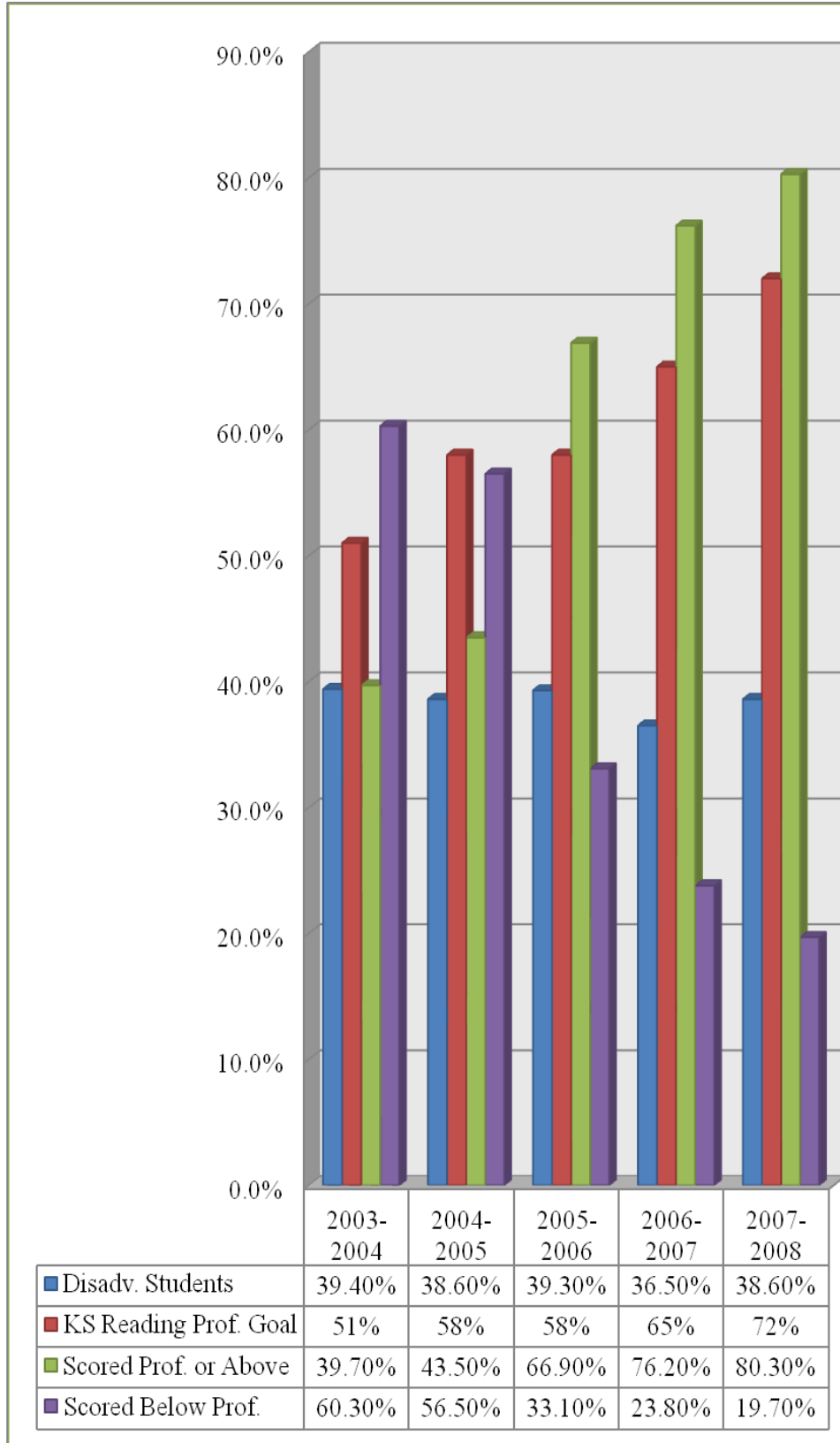
For these reasons, the researcher chose a 6A school with 1,228 students (Kansas State High School Activities Association, 2009), which was located in the Midwest and refers to the school as Echo High School. Typically, schools with larger student populations have more subgroups, including a higher percentage of students who are economically challenged (Sunderman et al., 2005; Lawton, 2006). According to the Kansas State Department of Education (2008b), on average, Echo High School has had a steady average of disadvantaged students making up 39% of the eleventh grade reading population; Echo High School was one of 1,228 Kansas schools that made AYP during the 2007-2008 school year. Figure 3-1 illustrates the number of Kansas schools and districts that attained AYP and did not attain AYP during the 2007-2008 school year.

Figure 3-1 – Number of Kansas Schools and Districts that Attained AYP and Did Not Make AYP in 2007-2008



According to the Kansas State Department of Education (2008b), over the last five testing years, this school has never failed to meet the eleventh grade reading proficiency goal. This is a successful school, and in the last three years the disadvantaged students' scores at Echo High School has continuously risen. Figure 3-2 illustrates Echo High School's Reading Grade 11 building report card between 2003 and 2008.

Figure 3-2 – Reading Grade 11 Report Card for Echo High School between 2003 and 2008



In choosing a school, the researcher made a list of the 6A schools in a 90 mile radius; the researcher explored nine schools (see Appendix Q). Next, she obtained each school's report card for the last five years on the Kansas State Department of Education's website. The researcher looked at the following information for each school: the percentage of disadvantaged students and how many consecutive years the school had attained AYP. The researcher wanted a school with a relatively high population of disadvantaged students and a school that had attained AYP the last three consecutive years with the state reading assessment scores rising each year. Although the first two years were assessed, the researcher did not base her decision on the first two years, as NCLB and AYP were new mandates in education. Only two schools fit the two criteria, and the researcher chose the school with the larger disadvantaged student population.

For this case study, the researcher gained access to this school by following the necessary protocol outlined in the district's handbook and the IRB protocol form approved by Kansas State University. The researcher was required to complete modules on-line concerning ethical and procedural obligations. After the modules were completed, the researcher completed the necessary paperwork regarding the case study and was given approval by the IRB at Kansas State University.

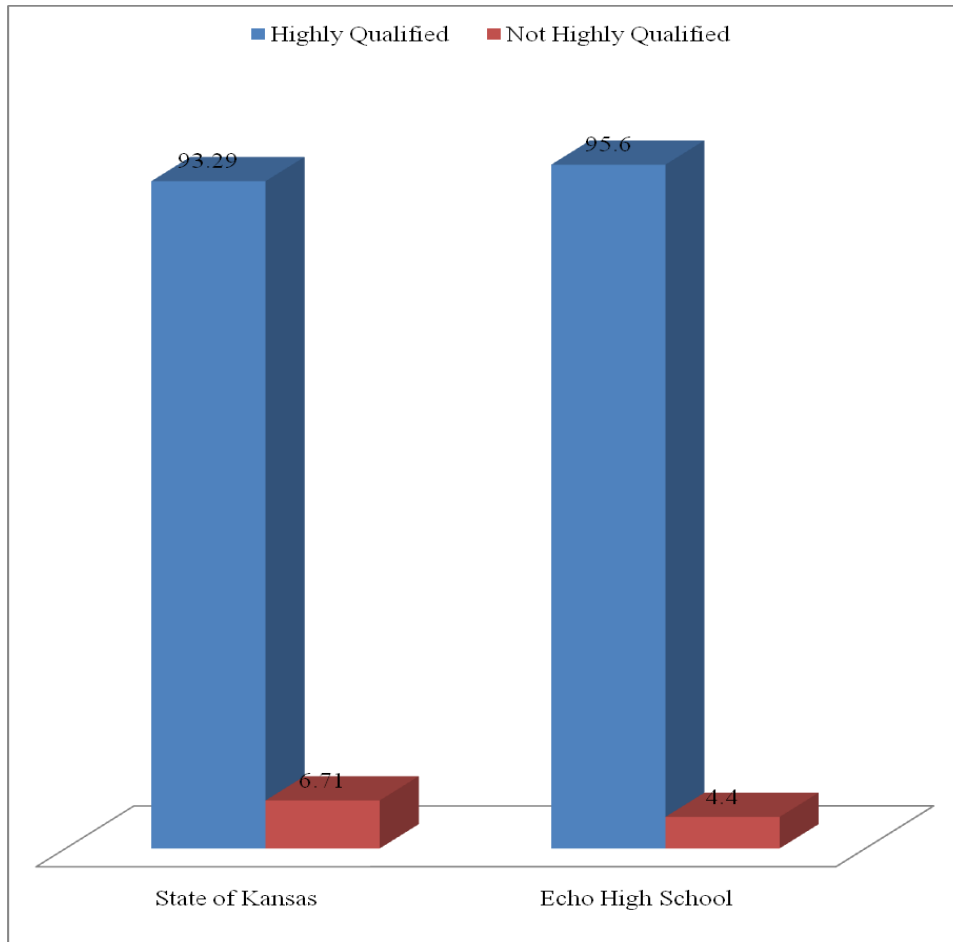
Participant Selection

There are several types of sampling in case studies. The goal of sampling is to study a certain group representative of that population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). In qualitative research, sample sizes are generally small, and the participants are purposefully selected to provide the detailed information the researcher desires to know (Stake, 1995). For this study, the researcher used nonrandom, purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as described by Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), is when researchers "use their judgment to select a sample that they believe,

based on prior information, will provide the data they need” (p. 99). In this case study, the researcher observed the sample (eleventh grade Language Arts teachers teaching in a successful 6A school) and documented what instructional strategies and specific activities were being used by teachers to assist disadvantaged students prepare for the state reading assessment.

For this case study, the purposive sample was also based on the NCLB definition of a highly qualified teacher. Therefore, the participants were eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who had at least a bachelor’s degree, had a full state licensure or certification, and had demonstrated competence in each subject he or she teaches (Coble & Azordegan, 2004). The Kansas State Department of Education (2008b) reported that during the 2007-2008 school year, Kansas employed 93.29% of highly qualified Language Arts teachers. Furthermore, KSDE reported that 95.6% of Echo High School’s Language Arts teachers were highly qualified. Figure 3-3 illustrates the percentage of highly qualified Language Arts teachers and non-highly qualified Language Arts teachers in the State of Kansas and Echo High School during the 2007-2008 school year.

Figure 3-3 – Percentage of Highly Qualified and Not Highly Qualified High School Language Arts Teachers in the State of Kansas and Echo High School in 2007-2008



Thus, based on the data, teachers at Echo High School were highly qualified, which, as research as shown, increases disadvantaged students’ chances of meeting the AYP standards.

Upon approval of this study, the researcher sent a formal invitation letter, a short questionnaire, and an overview of the case study to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers at Echo High School (see Appendices C, D, and E respectively). The researcher considered all highly qualified eleventh grade Language Arts teachers; this included teachers who taught advanced eleventh grade Language Arts classes, regular eleventh grade Language Arts classes, and modified eleventh grade Language Arts classes. A modified Language Arts class consisted

of students in special education. For each class the researcher observed, there were disadvantaged students in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. The participating sample was identified from those who agreed to participate in the study and who met the sample criteria, as determined by the results of the short questionnaire.

Data Collection

To conduct this case study, the researcher used three sources of data: a series of observations, interviews, and results from the formative practice assessment and/or the state reading assessment. Stake (2006) believed triangulation to be conducive to a study because more than one data source can be used to compile the data, making the data more credible. If the researcher has more than one source of data, this allows for “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 1993, p. 98). Thus, the findings and conclusions are more convincing.

Observation

The definition of an observation is “the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site” (Creswell, 2008, p. 221). Observations “discover complex interactions in natural social settings” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 107). Stake (1995) believed observations allow the researcher to have a greater understanding of the case being studied. Observations let the “occasion tell its story, the situation, the problem, resolution or irresolution of the problem” (Stake, 1995, p. 62).

Once the short questionnaire was returned to the researcher, the researcher contacted the eight qualifying participants to schedule a time to review and sign the Informed Consent Form. At that time, the researcher discussed observation times with the participant. The researcher

observed each participating eleventh grade Language Arts classroom for the entire class period.

Table 3.1 illustrates the number of times the researcher observed each teacher.

Table 3.1 – Number of Times Researcher Observed Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Teachers

| Teacher | Number of Times | | Teacher | Number of Times |
|-----------|-----------------|--|-----------|-----------------|
| Teacher A | 10 | | Teacher E | 10 |
| Teacher B | 6 | | Teacher F | 10 |
| Teacher C | 10 | | Teacher G | 10 |
| Teacher D | 6 | | Teacher H | 10 |

Teacher B and Teacher D were co-teachers, and because of the large class size and minimal room to move around the classroom, the teachers preferred that the researcher did not observe more than six times.

Once the researcher was in the classroom, the researcher observed instructional strategies that occurred in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment with a checklist that documented components of the framework. The researcher described in greater detail how the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized the strategies. The researcher created the observation checklist. At the top of the page, the researcher listed all of the components of the framework. Below the list were boxes where the researcher marked the components when they were observed. Below the boxes were lines in which the researcher described the details of the observed activities (see Appendix H and Appendix I). The observations were “detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 107) of the activities and instructional strategies used to prepare

disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. When the researcher observed activities that were not components of the framework, she explained the activity briefly, but she did not document the activity in the component boxes (see Appendix P). The researcher did not include the activity in the data analysis. Furthermore, when the researcher observed an activity that was categorized in more than one component of the framework, she explained the activity in detail and marked the appropriate component boxes (see Appendix O). The researcher chose observations as a data collection tool because observations led the researcher to discover specific instructional strategies used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students on the state reading assessment.

The researcher did not videotape the observations because of the limited space in the classroom, and the researcher did not want the students to act abnormally in front of the camera. The researcher did not audiotape the observations because her notes were extremely detailed and a journal was updated after each observation with reflection notes. Furthermore, the researcher used triangulation with the observations, interviews, and archival documentation to support her findings. It did not appear as if the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers changed their teaching style because of the presence of the researcher. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers knew some of the observation periods, the teachers did not know every observation period in which the researcher observed. Furthermore, the researcher was told by a district leader that the teachers were observed frequently, and they were used to researchers observing their classrooms.

Personal Interview

The qualitative definition of an interview is “when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers” (Creswell, 2008, p. 225).

Creswell (2008) also stated that these answers are transcribed and put into a computer file for analysis. Kahn and Cannell (1957) described an interview as “a conversation with a purpose” (p.149). An interview is the best way to discover multiple realities (Stake, 1995). In qualitative research, open-ended questions are typically the best because “participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings,” and the participant can “create the options for responding” (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). An interview allows people to express how they think and feel about their world.

There are several different interview options: one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, telephone interviews, electronic e-mail interviews, and open-ended questions on questionnaires (Creswell, 2008). For each interview type, there are advantages and disadvantages, as well as different information to be gleaned. Patton (1990) discusses three types of qualitative interviewing techniques using open-ended questions. The first approach is the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview is an informal conversation that is natural and has a spontaneous flow of questions and answers. The second approach is the structured interview. In a structured interview, the researcher creates questions regarding the issues to be discussed, but the questions can be adapted depending on the interviewee’s response. The third approach is the standardized open-ended interview by multiple interviewers.

For this study, the researcher conducted an interview with each teacher participant at the end of the observation process. The interview protocol for the teachers was semi-structured (see Appendix J), allowing for a common understanding among the participants, but also allowing flexibility of differences to emerge. There were five sections in the researcher’s interview: resources, historical, preparation, strategies, and overall questions. Through each interview, the researcher gained a better understanding as to why the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers

chose certain strategies and how the teachers felt the instructional strategies benefited the disadvantaged students best. Furthermore, the researcher gained insight as to what resources the teachers had in their school and classroom and where they learned the strategies they presented to the eleventh grade Language Arts class, as well as their personal beliefs concerning student growth. Because of the close proximity to the participants, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with all of the participants.

In addition to interviewing the eleventh grade Language Arts participants, the researcher interviewed three administrative leaders at the district or building level. There were four sections in the researcher's interview for the administrative leaders: resources, historical, preparation, and overall questions (see Appendix K). Through each interview, the researcher gained a better understanding of the resources provided to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and eleventh grade Language Arts students, professional development workshops and conferences that were provided to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, and their personal beliefs concerning the student growth. Because of the close proximity to the administrative leaders, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the administrative leaders.

Archival Documentation

Another data source is archival information. Archival information can “consist of public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 230). These documents may serve as a substitute of records of activity that the researcher could not directly observe (Stake, 1995). Collecting personal documents can provide the researcher with a rich source of information (Creswell, 2008) and can be unobtrusive in gathering (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

For this case study, the researcher gathered scores from the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. These pieces of documentation allowed the researcher to gain insight into the success of the disadvantaged students in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. Through analysis of the observations and the personal interview, the researcher gathered credible evidence that documented what instructional strategies were being used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, as well as the specific strategies and activities that were implemented.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) described data analysis as “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered” (p. 157). The product of a qualitative study is descriptive, and words and pictures describe what the researcher has learned. In qualitative research, data analysis can consist of “preparing and organizing the data, exploring and coding the database, describing findings and forming themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings” (Creswell, 2008, p. 243). Analysis means to take something apart (Stake, 1995), and in qualitative research data analysis, “we take our impressions, our observations, apart” (Stake, 1995, p. 71). It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine how the “voluminous data will be recorded, managed, and analyzed” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 147).

Data management can be divided into three sections: data preparation, data identification, and data manipulation. Creswell (1998) recommended that the researcher read through all of the information thoroughly and repeatedly to gain an intimate understanding of the material. For this

study, the researcher read the memos in the margins of the transcripts and observations and wrote further notes when necessary. Furthermore, the researcher read through the reflection journal and compiled the demographic information for each of the participants.

For this study, the researcher conducted an interview with each volunteering and participating eleventh grade Language Arts teacher after the series of observations was complete. The length of each interview was approximately 30-45 minutes. There were five sections of the interview: resources, historical, preparation, strategies, and overall questions that allowed the interviewees to be more open-ended in their answers (see Appendix J). The research questions guiding this study were a part of the interview and helped the researcher better understand the teachers' planning and teaching. Furthermore, the interview was an opportunity for the teachers to present information that the researcher did not observe.

Likewise, the researcher conducted an interview with three administrative leaders. The length of each interview was approximately 30-45 minutes. There were four sections of the interview: resources, historical, preparation, and overall questions that allowed the interviewees to be subjective in their answers (see Appendix K). The research questions guiding this study were a part of the interview and helped the researcher better understand the resources provided to eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, as well as professional development activities that were provided for the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers.

The researcher transcribed the interviews from the interview tapes. However, before she transcribed the interviews, the researcher created back-up CDs with each interview copied onto a CD. All interviews were transcribed, and the reflection notes were compiled. Each interview transcription was saved in a separate file. Furthermore, the researcher read through the

transcripts multiple times, making notations of key concepts and ideas. The researcher answered seven of the subquestions using the information from the interviews. For each subquestion, the researcher highlighted responses of the interviewees that related to the subquestions. The following subquestions were gathered from the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' interviews:

1. What formative practice assessment data were used in preparation for the state reading assessment? (Highlighted pink)
2. What instructional changes were made based on the formative practice assessment results? (Highlighted green)
3. What were the perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement? (Highlighted blue)
4. Based on the findings of this study, what recommendations can be made to assist teachers of disadvantaged students to improve performance on the state reading assessment in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom? (Highlighted orange)

The subsequent research questions were gathered from the administrative leaders' interviews:

1. What resources were available in your school district to assist disadvantaged students in preparation for the eleventh grade state reading assessment? (Highlighted pink)
2. To which workshops and conferences did the school district send eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in order to increase their understanding of different strategies? (Highlighted blue)

3. What recommendations can be made to assist administrative leaders who are involved in the state assessment process? (Highlighted green)

The data from the observations were organized into major codes and sub-codes, and emerging patterns were interpreted (see Appendix H, Appendix M, and Appendix N). The researcher observed instructional strategies that occurred in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment with a checklist that documented the researched-based instructional strategies (see Appendix H and Appendix I). The researcher described in greater detail how the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized the framework. The researcher used the following framework as the major codes:

- *Recognition*
- *Memorization*
- *Conservation of constancy*
- *Classification*
- *Spatial orientation*
- *Temporal orientation*
- *Metaphorical thinking*

Upon analyzing the data, the researcher noticed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers further implemented research-based strategies in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. The researcher coded research-based strategies that were implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms (see Appendix N). The researcher described in greater detail how the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers implemented the research-based strategies. The researcher used the following research-based strategies as sub-codes:

- Structured lessons
- Relevant curriculum
- Comprehensive instruction
- Collaborative learning
- Strategic tutoring
- Formative assessment
- Drill and practice
- Test-taking strategies
- Hands-on experience
- Special privileges
- Extra time

Creswell (1998) referred to this process as the data analysis spiral. Through this process, the researcher looked for common themes. These themes provided organization to the interviews and observations. The interview and observation themes allowed the researcher to glean valuable knowledge about the strategies being used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to assist disadvantaged students with reading.

Credibility of Data

Regardless of research design, establishing the credibility of data is one of the most important aspects of research. In qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability could be achieved through close attention of the data being collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented. Qualitative research is holistic, multidimensional, and continuously changing. Furthermore, qualitative research does

not have a single correct or incorrect answer; instead, qualitative research is observed and interpreted. Firestone's (1987) research concluded that more than one source drives qualitative research, and the multiple sources persuade the reader as to the authenticity of the findings. Firestone (1987) also noted that in qualitative research there is enough detail to show the interpretations of the researcher to be credible.

In this study, the researcher established credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through the data that were collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented. By using Creswell's (1998) ideas of triangulation, audit trail, and peer debriefing, the researcher was able to achieve the trustworthiness needed to make this study grounded. For each activity, the researcher reviewed each definition of the component and the research-based instructional strategy. When the activity or instructional strategy matched the definition, the researcher categorized the activity or instructional strategy in the appropriate category. Many times the activity and instructional strategy was categorized into more than one category because the activity or instructional strategy matched more than one definition. The researcher did not need professional development, as she had access to the definitions of the components and instructional strategies. In addition, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers did not need professional development regarding the components or instructional strategies because the researcher determined what components and instructional strategies were used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. The researcher did not want the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to change their lesson plans in order to match the components or instructional strategies.

The researcher established credibility in her research because there was enough detail to show the interpretations of the researcher. The school proved to be successful in attaining AYP, and this school had a history of teaching a relatively high percentage of disadvantaged students;

therefore, the interpretations of the researcher were extracted from documentation of the specific strategies that were used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. In addition, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers completed a questionnaire to determine if they met the criteria to participate in this study. In order to have met the criteria, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had to meet the NCLB guidelines of being a highly qualified teacher.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the “process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2008, p. 266). For this study, the researcher used interviews, observations, and test results as a way of confirming the results. The researcher achieved transferability because of the nature of the participants and the pattern of data collection. Each participant was declared a highly qualified teacher (as deemed by NCLB and the Kansas State Department of Education), and each participant taught eleventh grade Language Arts at Echo High School. Therefore, it is a high probability that the results of this study will transfer to other eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms.

Audit Trail

An audit trail is “the development and maintenance of an adequate record file, allow[ing] the researcher to ensure that the data collected during the study were credible” (Hanzlicek, 2006, p. 53). An audit trail leads to dependability and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen 1993). Since this study involved human subjects, appropriate forms were completed and filed with the IRB at Kansas State University. The researcher maintained an audit trail consisting of transcripts, audiotape recordings of the interviews, research notes, observation notes, memos,

reflections, analysis documentation, and consent forms for three years concluding the study in a secure location.

Peer Debriefing

Essentially, peer debriefing is when another researcher reviews the data collected and reviews the findings and conclusions of the study. Creswell and Miller (2000) noted that other researchers add credibility to the study when they are used as peer debriefers. For this study, a peer reviewer provided support, challenged findings and assumptions, and asked questions about methods and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This peer reviewer had experience with qualitative analysis; however, the peer reviewer had an insight into the study as she was the researcher's major professor and a former high school principal. The researcher also obtained the assistance of another peer reviewer with experience in analyzing qualitative data. This peer reviewer was an outside editor for an educational company for four years and advised and mentored undergraduate students at a university.

Background and Role of Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary person for gathering and analyzing the data. The researcher has many roles, which may include: teacher, participant observer, interviewer, reader, storyteller, advocate, artist, counselor, evaluator, consultant, and others (Stake, 1995). Researchers must be aware of their surroundings and the participants in their studies because researchers make "continuous decisions about how much emphasis to give each role" (Stake, 1995, p. 91). Because these decisions are made consciously and unconsciously, the background and role of the researcher was vital to the credibility of the research and significant to the study.

During this study, the researcher was an Educational Leadership doctoral student. The researcher had been in education for ten years; eight years as a classroom teacher and two years as a principal of a 2A middle and high school. During the years the researcher taught in the classroom, she taught special education and Language Arts. The researcher worked with disadvantaged students throughout the ten years of her career and specifically taught eleventh grade Language Arts to disadvantaged students for six years.

The researcher had a passion for assisting eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students so they had a chance at academic success. The researcher was aware of the personal biases and how the biases influenced the investigation. The researcher was knowledgeable concerning the needs of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students based on the eight years of experience teaching eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. It was the goal of the researcher to compile specific instructional strategies for eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns may emerge concerning the welfare and confidentiality of the participants because of the subjectivity and intrusiveness of qualitative research. These issues emerge because of the “long-term and close personal involvement, interviewing, and/or participant observation” (Lipson, 1994, p. 333). For this study, the researcher followed Bogdan and Biklen’s (1998) guidelines of informed consent and protection from harm.

First, involvement in this study was voluntary. To allow the participants to make an informed decision, they were contacted in writing with a description of the nature and purpose of this study. Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. Furthermore, the high school that was the research site remained anonymous; any context that mentions the high

school has a fictitious name. Participants who agreed to participate in this study were asked to sign an informed consent form that detailed the purpose of the study, explained the process of guaranteeing anonymity, and granted permission for audio taping and transcribing the interview. Finally, all data collected during the course of the study were filed and were held at a secure location for at least three years.

Summary

This qualitative case study examined the strategies highly qualified eleventh grade Language Arts teachers used in their classrooms to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students prepare for the state reading assessment. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants of the study. These participants, through observations, interviews, and test scores, shared their experiences with the researcher. The data were analyzed by using major codes and sub-codes and identifying emerging themes and patterns. Credibility of the data was established through triangulation, an audit trail, and peer debriefing.

CHAPTER 4 - Findings

Data were collected for this research project to explore what instructional strategies were being utilized in one Midwest high school in multiple eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to assist disadvantaged students on the state reading assessment. In this chapter, the compiled data from short questionnaires, individual interviews, observations, and archival documentation will be presented. Sections of Chapter Four include: (a) demographics of participating teachers, (b) demographics of participating administrative leaders, (c) demographics of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, (d) identification of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, (e) framework used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, (f) research-based strategies implemented by eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, (g) formative practice assessments, (h) adjustment of teaching strategies in eleventh grade Language Arts, (i) perceived impacts of the preparation process, (j) recommendations of eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, (k) support resources provided to eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, and (l) recommendations of administrative leaders.

Demographics of Participating Teachers

The researcher observed each teacher in Echo High School that taught eleventh grade Language Arts. The eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms that the researcher observed included Advanced Placement (A.P.) Eleventh Grade English, Regular Eleventh Grade English, and Modified Eleventh Grade English. The Modified Eleventh Grade English was a class designed for students in special education.

Of the eight teachers, six were female and two were male. The majority of the teachers ranged in age from 26-35 while only one teacher was under 25 years of age and two teachers

were over 35 years of age. Table 4.1 illustrates the gender and age of the participating eleventh grade Language Arts teachers.

Table 4.1 – Gender and Age of Participating Teachers

| Teacher | Gender | Age |
|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Teacher A | Male | 46-55 |
| Teacher B | Female | 46-55 |
| Teacher C | Male | 26-35 |
| Teacher D | Female | Under 25 |
| Teacher E | Female | 26-35 |
| Teacher F | Female | 26-35 |
| Teacher G | Female | 26-35 |
| Teacher H | Female | 26-35 |

In reviewing the data, the researcher discovered only one teacher remained in the same teaching position as an eleventh grade Language Arts teacher throughout his entire teaching career. Besides one other teacher, who taught eleventh grade Language Arts at Echo High School for nine years, the other six teachers were new or relatively new to this position, having taught eleventh grade Language Arts classes at Echo High School for fewer than five years. Table 4.2 illustrates the years of teaching experience of the participating eleventh grade Language Arts teachers.

Table 4.2 – Teaching Experience of Participating Teachers

| Teacher | Total Years Teaching | Total Years Teaching Language Arts | Total Years Teaching 11th Grade Language Arts | Years in Current Language Arts Position |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Teacher A | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| Teacher B | 9 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| Teacher C | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher D | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Teacher E | 10 | 9 | 3 | 3 |
| Teacher F | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Teacher G | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher H | 13 | 13 | 9 | 9 |

With the enactment of NCLB came a provision that by the 2005-2006 school year, highly qualified teachers should teach academic core classes (Coble & Azordegan, 2004; Duran, 2005; Haskins & Loeb 2007). Highly qualified teachers are described as (1) having at least a bachelor’s degree, (2) having full state licensure or certification, and (3) demonstrating competence in the subject they teach (Coble & Azordegan, 2004; Gass, 2008). In this study, Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher F, and Teacher H held a Bachelor’s Degree in Secondary English, had full state licensure, and demonstrated competence in Language Arts. Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher F, and Teacher H proved competence upon exiting the teaching program at their respective universities. These teachers were administered a competency test that the state required of all new teachers. Passing this test indicated competence; therefore, they were determined to be highly qualified teachers. Teacher A was not administered the state competency test because 28 years ago the test was not offered. However, because of the teacher’s experience in the

classroom, the state recognized Teacher A as having demonstrated competence in the classroom; therefore, Teacher A was determined to be a highly qualified teacher.

Teacher D, Teacher E, and Teacher G held a Bachelor's Degree and had full state licensure. However, because these teachers did not hold a Secondary English license, the teachers demonstrated to the state that they were highly qualified in Language Arts. According to Kansas State Department of Education (2007), any individual who is coded as "special education" in the Licensed Personnel Report and provides "direct instruction" in a core subject has to be categorized as a highly qualified teacher. Three options are available to demonstrate subject matter competency to be categorized as a highly qualified teacher: (1) appropriate content endorsement on teaching license had been designated "HQ" or (2) pass the appropriate content test (PRAXIS II) or (3) document eleven or more checks on the Kansas HOUSSE document for special education and ESL teachers (Kansas State Department of Education, 2007). Teacher D, Teacher E, and Teacher G passed the PRAXIS II for the state administered Language Arts content test, which categorized them as highly qualified teachers in Language Arts. Table 4.3 illustrates the participating eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' position, degrees, and highly qualified status.

Table 4.3 – Position, Degree, and Highly Qualified Status of Participating Teachers

| Teacher | Teacher Position | Degrees, Certificates, or Licensures | Highly Qualified |
|----------------|---|--|-------------------------|
| Teacher A | Language Arts Teacher | BS in Secondary English | Yes |
| Teacher B | Language Arts Teacher | BS Secondary English; MS Curriculum & Instruction | Yes |
| Teacher C | Language Arts Teacher | BS Secondary English | Yes |
| Teacher D | Special Education Language Arts Teacher | BS Social Studies; MS Special Education | Yes |
| Teacher E | Special Education Language Arts Teacher | BS Elementary and Special Education; MS Reading | Yes |
| Teacher F | Language Arts Teacher | BS Secondary English; MS Curriculum & Instruction | Yes |
| Teacher G | Special Education Language Arts Teacher | BS Elementary Education K-9; MS Special Education | Yes |
| Teacher H | Language Arts Teacher | BS Secondary English; MA English | Yes |

Although only two of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had taught in the current position for a number of years, three of the teachers had at least five years experience teaching Language Arts. Of those three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who had at least five years of teaching experience, all three of the teachers had at least three years teaching eleventh grade Language Arts. Three of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers were new to teaching eleventh grade Language Arts, and two of those teachers were special education teachers. One of the eleventh grade special education Language Arts teachers co-taught with a teacher who had taught eleventh grade Language Arts for five years.

The other two new eleventh grade Language Arts teachers (a special education eleventh grade Language Arts teacher and a regular eleventh grade Language Arts teacher) were in their first year of teaching eleventh grade Language Arts. These two new teachers did not have any

experience in preparing eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. According to Haskins and Loeb (2007), “first-year teachers are the least effective” (p. 53). The most important factor affecting student achievement is “teacher effect” (Sanders and Rivers, 1996, p. 6).

In observing the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, the researcher noticed that all six of the experienced eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught the concepts of the state assessment the entire class period, and these teachers did not assign individual projects. However, the two new eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reserved much of the observed class periods to individual projects, and the eleventh grade Language Arts students were allowed time to make up previous class work. In reviewing the use of the framework in the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers’ classrooms, Teacher C addressed the framework the least number of times except for *recognition*. The percentage of class periods in which he addressed the framework was considerably lower than the other teachers. Teacher G also addressed the framework the least percentage of class periods except for *spatial orientation* and *temporal orientation*. The implication from these observations is that the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in the veterans’ classes scored higher on the state reading assessment because the students were better prepared because of the lack “free time” in the classrooms. Cotton (1999, 2000) suggests keeping non-instructional time to a minimum.

Demographics of Participating Administrative Leaders

The researcher interviewed three administrative leaders at the building or district level that worked for Echo School District. Each of the administrative leaders was employed in a different position within the Echo School District. The researcher interviewed an administrative leader at the district level, an administrative leader at the building level, and a teacher leader. All

of the administrative leaders were reported to be in the same age category. Table 4.4 illustrates the administrative leaders' gender and age.

Table 4.4 – Gender and Age of Administrative Leaders

| Leader | Gender | Age |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
| Leader A | Female | 56-65 |
| Leader B | Female | 56-65 |
| Leader C | Male | 56-65 |

The three administrative leaders that were interviewed taught in three different subjects. The two administrative leaders who taught the longest in the classroom were newest to the administrative leadership field. The leader who taught in the classroom the shortest period of time was the leader who had resided in the current position the longest. Table 4.5 illustrates the administrative leaders' past and current educational experience.

Table 4.5 – Educational Experience of Administrative Leaders

| Leader | Total Years as a Classroom Teacher | Subject Taught as a Classroom Teacher | Total Years in Current Leadership Position |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| Leader A | 8 | Science | 12 |
| Leader B | 29 | English | 3 |
| Leader C | 22 | Math | 3 |

All three administrative leaders had different educational backgrounds. Although all three administrative leaders had master's degrees, two of the administrative leaders held at least one licensure. Leader A held licensures at the building and district level, and Leader B held a reading specialist licensure at the building level. One of the administrative leaders was currently working towards a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction. Table 4.6 illustrates the administrative leaders' degrees and professional licensure.

Table 4.6 – Degrees and Professional Licensure of Administrative Leaders

| Leader | Degrees/Certificates/ Licensures |
|---------------|--|
| Leader A | B.S. in Science Education; M.S. in Secondary Curriculum; K-12 Leadership Licensure; Building Level Licensure; District Level Licensure |
| Leader B | B.S. in Secondary Education; M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction; Reading Specialist Licensure |
| Leader C | B. S. in Mathematics; M.S. in Secondary Education |

Although all three administrative leaders were involved in preparation for the state reading assessment, Leader B had more direct contact with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and the formative practice assessment and state assessment data. Leader B regularly visited with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and assisted them with instructional strategies and classroom activities. Leader B worked closely with the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were not progressing in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. Leader B was the educator with whom the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers talked when they needed “a direct answer to a question about teaching practice” (Reeves, 2008, p. 20). Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) described a teacher leader’s responsibilities to include: (1) working in the classrooms, (2) demonstrating teaching practices, (3) co-teaching, and (4) providing feedback to the classroom teachers (cited in Mangin and Stoelinga, 2008). Leader B was a teacher leader who performed these responsibilities as well as the educator to whom the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers would talk when they had questions about “special education, assessment, instruction, or classroom management....” (Reeves, 2008, p. 20).

Demographics of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students

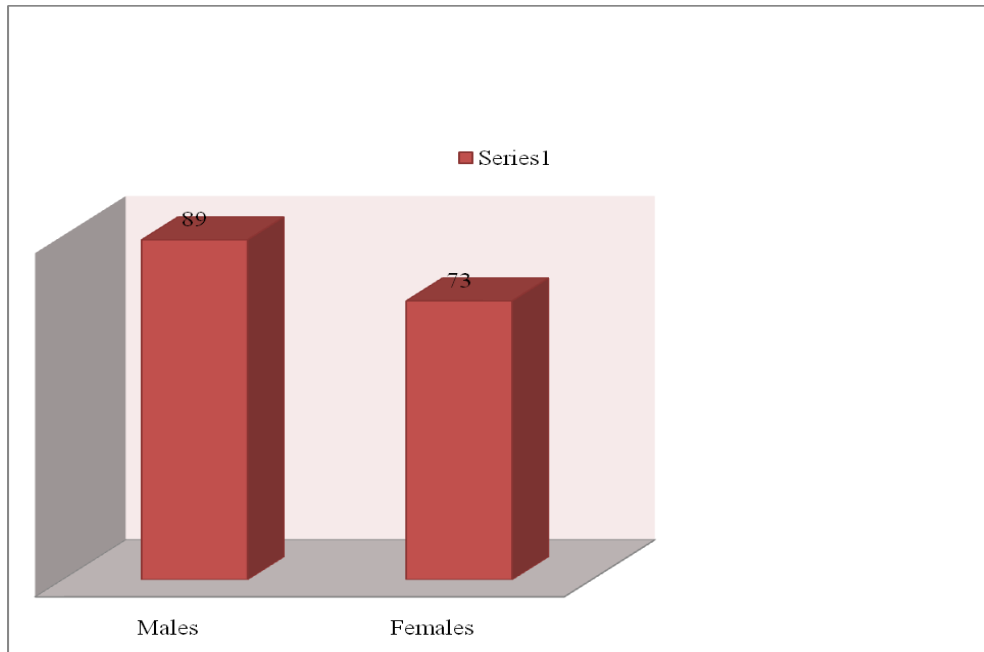
According to the Kansas State Department of Education (2008a), a disadvantaged student is one who: (1) qualifies for the free or reduced price lunch programs (also called low-income students), (2) is considered to be a racial or ethnic minority, (3) is considered to be an English language learner, and/or (4) is considered to have disabilities. Of the 384 eleventh grade Language Arts students who were administered the eleventh grade state reading assessment in Echo High School, 162 of the students were considered to be disadvantaged. The disadvantaged eleventh grade population totaled 42.2% of the entire eleventh grade student population at Echo High School during the 2008-2009 academic school year. Table 4.7 illustrates the number of eleventh grade Language Arts students who were categorized in these four subgroups. Many of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students met the guidelines of more than one subgroup.

Table 4.7 – Number of Disadvantaged Students in each Subgroup

| Category | Number of Qualifying Disadvantaged Students |
|--------------------------|--|
| Free/Reduced Lunch | 136 |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 102 |
| English Language Learner | 11 |
| Special Education | 45 |

Of the 162 eleventh grade disadvantaged students at Echo High School who were administered the eleventh grade state reading assessment, 89 students were male and 73 students were female. Figure 4-1 illustrates the number and gender of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were administered the state reading assessment. Eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were not administered the state reading assessment were not included in the graph.

Figure 4-1 - 2008-2009 Number and Gender of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students Who Were Administered the Kansas State Reading Assessment



Although there are four subgroups, an eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student may qualify for more than one subgroup; and most disadvantaged students are categorized in more than one subgroup. If a particular eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student performs poorly in one subgroup, the same disadvantaged student performs poorly in the other subgroup(s). Likewise, if a particular eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student performs well in one subgroup, the same disadvantaged student performs well in the other subgroup(s) (Jones et. al., 2003). In disaggregating the data of the disadvantaged eleventh grade student population attending Echo High School, the researcher discovered that of the 162 disadvantaged eleventh grade students who were administered the state reading assessment, 108 of the students were categorized in more than one subgroup. The only two subgroups with singletons were special education (11 students) and free/reduced lunch, (43 students). Table 4.8

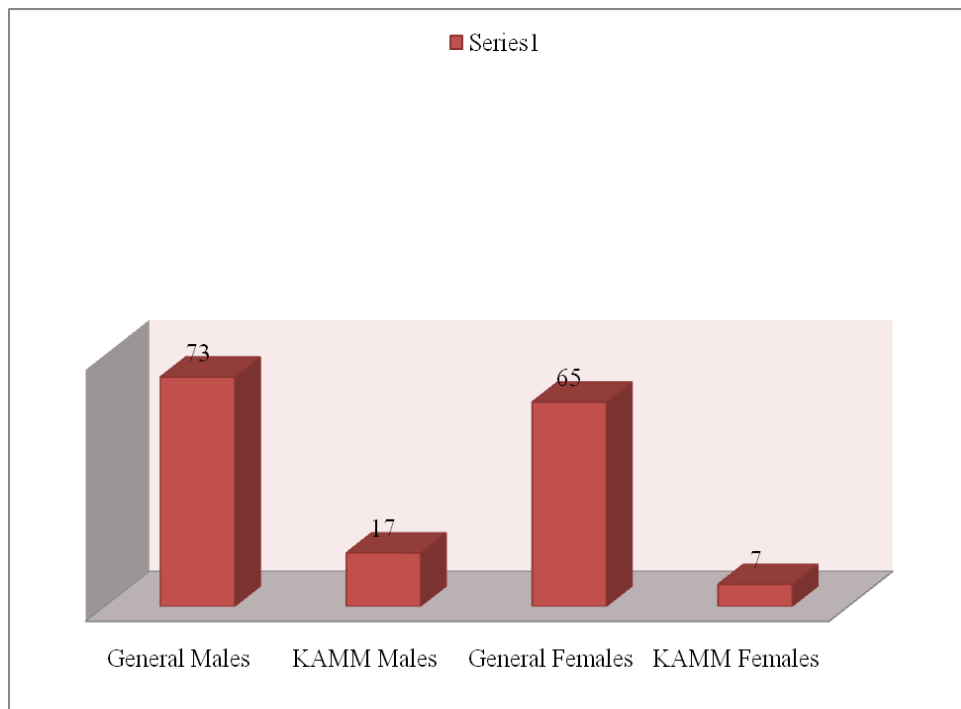
illustrates the number of disadvantaged eleventh grade Language Arts students who were categorized subgroups.

Table 4.8 – Number of Disadvantaged Students Classified in a Subgroup

| Category | Number of Disadvantaged Students |
|--|---|
| Race-Ethnicity and Free/Reduced Lunch | 64 |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | 43 |
| Special Education, Race-Ethnicity, and Free/Reduced Lunch | 15 |
| Special Education and Race-Ethnicity | 13 |
| Special Education | 11 |
| Race-Ethnicity, Free/Reduced Lunch, and ELL | 7 |
| Special Education and Free/Reduced Lunch | 5 |
| ELL and Race-Ethnicity | 2 |
| ELL and Free/Reduced Lunch | 1 |
| Free/Reduced Lunch, Race-Ethnicity, Special Education, and ELL | 1 |

Two different types of state reading assessments were administered to the eleventh grade Language Arts students: the general Kansas State Reading Assessment and the Kansas Assessment of Modified Measures (KAMM) Assessment. Of the 162 disadvantaged eleventh grade students at Echo High School who were administered the general Kansas State Reading Assessment and the KAMM, 138 students were administered the general assessment and 24 students were administered the KAMM. Furthermore, 73 males and 65 females were administered the general assessment, and 17 males and 7 females were administered the KAMM. Figure 4-2 illustrates the number and gender of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were administered the general state reading assessment and the KAMM. Eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were not administered the state reading assessment were not included in the graph.

Figure 4-2 - 2008-2009 Number and Gender of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students Who Were Administered the General State Reading Assessment and KAMM



In addition, NCLB requires states to disaggregate the results of the annual assessments by race-ethnicity (Apple, 2006; Carlson, 2004; Costello, 2008; Goldberg, 2004; Orlich, 2004).

According to the Kansas State Department of Education (2006), the following are race-ethnicity categories: White, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, Asian, and Multiethnic.

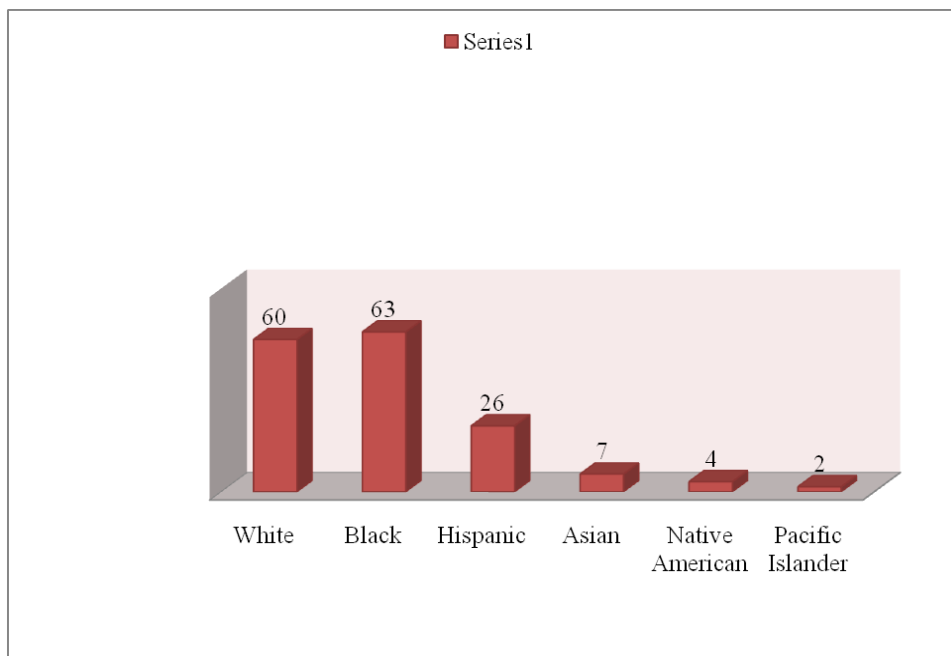
Of the 162 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students at Echo High School who were administered the state reading assessment, the following data were disaggregated:

- 60 students were White,
- 63 students were Black,
- 26 students were Hispanic,
- 7 students were Asian,
- 4 students were Native American, and

- 2 students were Pacific Islander.

Figure 4-3 illustrates the number and race-ethnicity of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were administered the state reading assessment. Eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were not administered the state reading assessment were not included in the graph.

Figure 4-3 - 2008-2009 Number and Race-Ethnicity of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students Who Were Administered the Kansas State Reading Assessment



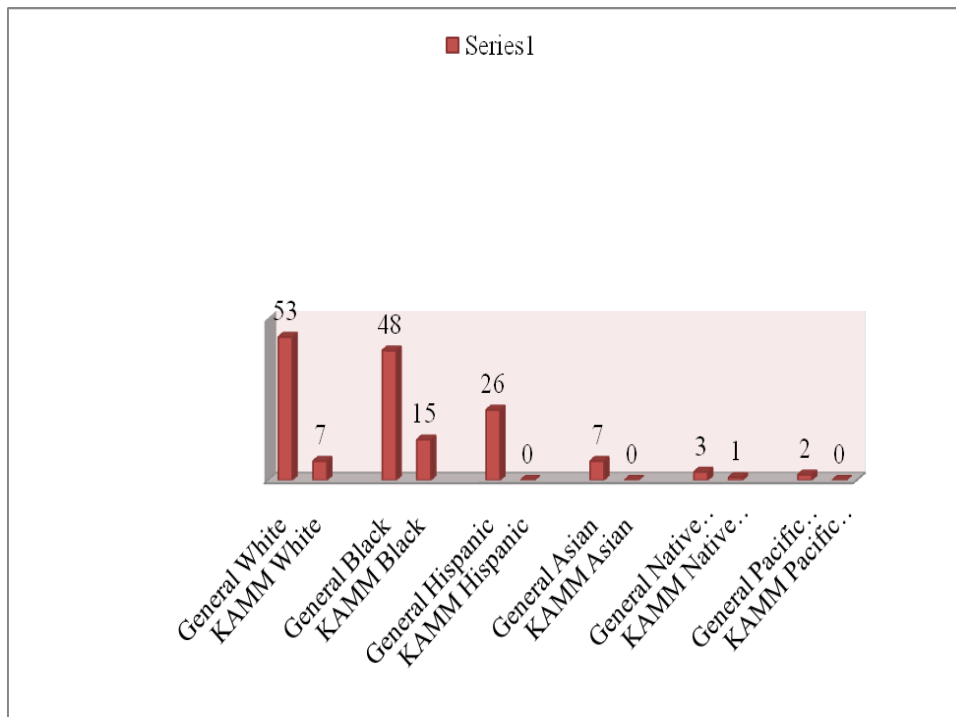
Furthermore, while analyzing the data from the eleventh grade state reading assessment results from Echo High School, the researcher disaggregated the following data in reference to the disadvantaged eleventh grade population:

- 53 White students were administered the general state reading assessment, and 7 White students were administered the KAMM;
- 48 Black students were administered the general state reading assessment, and 15 Black students were administered the KAMM;

- 26 Hispanic students were administered the general state reading assessment;
- 7 Asian students were administered the general state reading assessment;
- 3 Native American students were administered the general state reading assessment, and 1 Native American student was administered the KAMM; and
- 2 Pacific Islander students were administered the general state reading assessment.

No Hispanic, Asian, or Pacific Islander students were administered the KAMM. Figure 4-4 illustrates the number and race-ethnicity of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were administered the general state reading assessment and the KAMM. Eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were not administered the state reading assessment were not included in the graph.

Figure 4-4 - 2008-2009 Number and Race-Ethnicity of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students Who Were Administered the General State Reading Assessment and KAMM



In reviewing the demographics of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, the researcher noted that Echo High School's demographics were consistent with the research. Of the 162 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were administered the state reading assessment, 89 students were male, and 73 students were female. Males continually score lower than females on reading tests (Carbo, 2008; Costello, 2008). According to the 2004 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), males have significantly poorer reading skills than females.

Furthermore, 63 Black eleventh grade Language Arts students and 26 Hispanic eleventh grade Language Arts students were considered to be disadvantaged, compared to 60 White students. Haskins and Rouse (2006) found that Black and Hispanic students fall far behind White students in reading achievement. In addition, Kim and Sunderman (2005) argued that Black and Hispanic students state assessment scores are "likely to fall below the minimum proficiency level required to meet AYP" (p. 4).

Moreover, 15 Black eleventh grade Language Arts were administered the KAMM at Echo High School, compared to seven White students and one Native American student. The KAMM is administered only to special education students who have the lowest reading skills. Adams (2008) argued that Black students "are far more likely than other students...to be referred for special education services..." (p. 26).

Identification of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students

Eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught in Echo High School. All eight of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. The researcher identified the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in each of the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. Upon entering the Midwest school to

conduct the research, the researcher was given a list of eleventh grade Language Arts students who were considered to be disadvantaged. The eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were identified as disadvantaged because they were classified in at least one of the following subgroups: free/reduced lunch, race-ethnicity, English language learner, or special education. Teacher A was the only eleventh grade Language Arts teacher who had a paraeducator in the classroom, however, the paraeducator was only in Teacher A's classroom for three days that the researcher observed. During those three days, the paraeducator walked around the room and assisted eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students if they asked for assistance. There were a higher number of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in Teacher B and Teacher D's classes as well as Teacher E and Teacher H's classes. Because there was a higher number of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, Teacher B and Teacher H had co-teachers who were certified in Special Education.

When the researcher visited each classroom for the first time, the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom teachers gave the researcher a seating chart that identified the students. The researcher made a note on each seating chart that identified the students as disadvantaged students. When the researcher observed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, she documented the activities used in the classrooms and the interactions with the disadvantaged students only. The researcher was not able to observe every eleventh grade Language Arts classroom because of the number of eleventh grade Language Arts classes that occurred during the same hour. However, all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers gave the researcher a seating chart, and they assured the researcher that the material taught in the observed eleventh grade Language Arts classes was the same material and style taught in the other eleventh grade Language Arts classes. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught their classes

consistently each class period in order for the eleventh grade Language Arts students to remain at the same pace. The eleventh grade Language Arts classes included A.P. eleventh grade Language Arts, regular Language Arts, and modified Language Arts. The A.P. and regular Language Arts eleventh grade classes had a mix of non-disadvantaged students and disadvantaged students. The modified eleventh grade Language Arts classes only had special education students. Table 4.9 illustrates each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher, the class period in which the eleventh grade Language Arts class was taught, and the number of disadvantaged students in that eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. The Midwest school was on a block schedule, and the colors in which to identify the day of the block schedule were changed to ensure the school's anonymity.

Table 4.9 – Teachers, Class Periods, and Number of Disadvantaged Students

| Teacher | Class Period | Number of Disadvantaged Students | Teacher | Class Period | Number of Disadvantaged Students |
|-----------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Teacher A | P1 | 3 | Teacher A | P3 | 9 |
| Teacher B | P1 | 5 | Teacher C | P4 | 8 |
| Teacher D | P1 | 5 | Teacher E | P4 | 11 |
| Teacher E | P1 | 10 | Teacher H | P4 | 11 |
| Teacher H | P1 | 10 | Teacher G | P4 | 10 |
| Teacher F | P1 | 3 | Teacher A | G1 | 8 |
| Teacher G | P1 | 9 | Teacher A | G2 | 9 |
| Teacher A | P2 | 10 | Teacher B | G2 | 12 |
| Teacher B | P2 | 12 | Teacher D | G2 | 12 |
| Teacher D | P2 | 12 | Teacher B | G3 | 9 |
| Teacher C | P2 | 8 | Teacher D | G3 | 9 |
| Teacher E | P2 | 12 | Teacher E | G3 | 9 |
| Teacher H | P2 | 12 | Teacher H | G3 | 9 |

The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers were aware of the disadvantaged students in their classrooms, and the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in different ways. Teacher A, Teacher C, and Teacher F walked around the room, looking at students’ worksheets, quizzes, projects, etc. Teacher A, Teacher C, and Teacher F visited the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ desks more than the non-disadvantaged eleventh grade Language Arts students, and these three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers examined the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language

Arts students' work more closely than the non-disadvantaged eleventh grade Language Arts students' work. When an eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Art student completed the work incorrectly or struggled to complete the work, Teacher A, Teacher C, or Teacher F quietly assisted the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student. This assistance sometimes required the teacher to repeat the directions, provide a model of the assignment, and/or explain the assignment in a different style that was used earlier in the class period. In a few cases, the researcher observed Teacher A and Teacher C ask an eleventh grade Language Arts student to come into the classroom and work during seminar. The eleventh grade Language Arts teacher signed the eleventh grade Language Arts student's planner so the student could visit with the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher during the assigned seminar.

Furthermore, Teacher A, Teacher C, and Teacher F chose the pairs and groups of students when group work was allowed in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. When the researcher asked Teacher A if there was a reason he did not allow the students to choose their partners, he replied:

At-risk students tend to partner with other at-risk students; and when this occurs, it is like the blind leading the blind. I purposely choose the groups, and I partner at-risk students with regular students so the regular students can help the at-risk students.

The researcher asked Teacher C if he chose the eleventh grade Language Arts students' partners based on their abilities, and he replied:

If we are doing important assignments that I want to make sure the at-risk students understand, then, yes, I make sure to partner the students based on their abilities. I partner the at-risk student with a student who shouldn't have any problems understanding the material.

In addition, the researcher asked Teacher F how she determined partners when the eleventh grade Language Arts students were required to do group work. Teacher F said, “It depends on the assignment. Sometimes I let the students choose their partners, and sometimes I choose their partners. It depends on the material.”

Teacher B and Teacher D as well as Teacher E and Teacher H co-taught in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. Teacher D and Teacher E were special education teachers who were also certified in Language Arts. Although both sets of eleventh grade Language Arts co-teachers taught all of the eleventh grade Language Arts students in each eleventh grade Language Arts class, Teacher D and Teacher E assisted special education students in small groups and one-on-one instruction. Furthermore, as Teacher B and Teacher H conducted class, Teacher D and Teacher E walked around the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, stopping or slowing down at the desk of a eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student to ensure the student understood the material being taught. All four of these eleventh grade Language Arts teachers requested various eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students visit with them during seminar when the teachers felt the students needed further assistance.

Teacher E and Teacher H conducted many activities that required students to answer and interact with the SMART Board. Teacher H called upon non-disadvantaged eleventh grade Language Arts students; Teacher E called upon eleventh grade special education Language Arts students. After several observations, the researcher asked Teacher E and Teacher H the reasoning behind choosing eleventh grade Language Arts students in this manner. Teacher E replied:

I know the special education students very well. I usually know when they are having a good day and when they are having a bad day. I usually know when a student feels comfortable answering a question and when a student isn't comfortable answering a

question. The last thing we want to do is call upon a student who is having a bad day or doesn't want to answer a question because that could cause an explosion.

The researcher inquired further concerning which teacher called upon an eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student who was not in special education. Teacher H responded, "I have taught at-risk students for a number of years, and I know them very well. I call upon the regular students and the at-risk students."

Teacher G taught eleventh grade special education Language Arts without any paraeducator support. Teacher G continually monitored the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students to ensure they understood the material. Teacher G asked the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students questions, created worksheets for them, and led class discussions. If an eleventh grade special education Language Arts student did not understand the material, Teacher G would explain the material in a different style. Teacher G requested eleventh grade special education Language Arts students visit with her during seminar if she thought they needed extra assistance or were behind in the eleventh grade Language Arts class. During the two class periods that Teacher G dedicated to individual assignments, she worked with the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students who were behind in the class or needed further clarification.

Framework Used in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts Classroom

The researcher used the following seven categories as the framework for this study: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking* (Brooks & Brooks, 2004; Garner, 2008; Marzano et al., 2001). This framework was the foundation for the study's major codes. When the researcher observed each eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, she marked the appropriate

box when she observed the teacher utilizing the categories to build on the cognitive structures of the students' knowledge (see Appendix H). Every time the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher transitioned to another activity, the researcher documented this transition as a new activity. At the end of the observation period, the researcher calculated the total number of activities by adding all of the different activities and recording the sum. Many times, the activities overlapped, and the researcher categorized an activity in more than one of the seven categories. Furthermore, the audit trail included observations and the lessons presented during the class. In addition, the researcher observed researched-based strategies that were utilized in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom even though the strategies did not represent any of the above seven categories.

Recognition

Each day the researcher observed Teacher B and Teacher D, who co-taught in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, the day began with the *Word of the Day*. This word was a term that may have been encountered on the state assessment. After the class discussed the *Word of the Day*, the eleventh grade Language Arts students were given a *Daily Prompt*, and the students wrote the *Daily Prompt* in their class journal. The *Daily Prompt* was a question or statement that involved the *Word of the Day*. As the lesson for the day was taught, the *Word of the Day* related to the lesson, and the Teacher B and Teacher D stopped to discuss the term in context of the lesson. Table 4.10 illustrates a typical class period for Teacher B and Teacher D.

Table 4.10 – Typical Class Period for Teacher B and Teacher D

| Activity | Time Spent on Activity |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Word of the Day | 10 minutes |
| Daily Prompt | 10 minutes |
| Personal Journal | 15 minutes |
| Discussion of Journal | 10 minutes |
| Lesson - Huck Finn | 45 minutes |

On March 9, 2009, the *Word of the Day* was “brevity,” and the *Daily Prompt* was “Describe ways when brevity is acceptable.” After the eleventh grade Language Arts students shared their prompts, a student asked the teachers, “How do you know the *Word of the Day* will be related to what we do?” Teacher B responded, “I read the text ahead of time and find a word that you may encounter on the state assessment.” Teacher D replied, “We find words that you need to know and have you relate them to your personal life so you can make a connection to the word. It helps you remember the word if you can relate it to your life.”

Garner (2008) defined *recognition* as “the ability to identify a match or fit between two or more pieces of information” (p. 34). The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *recognition* nearly every class period, although the teachers employed different approaches to stimulate the students in recognizing the materials. Teacher B and Teacher D prompted the students with the *Word of the Day* and *Daily Prompt*. In the teacher-led discussion of the word, the teachers assisted the students in dissecting the word into its prefix, suffix, or root word. Teacher D walked to the special education students and asked them questions and checked their answers. Teacher A, Teacher G, and Teacher F began the class period by reviewing what the students had read, written, and learned the previous day. Teacher C, and Teacher E and Teacher H who co-taught in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, began the class period by reviewing prefixes, suffixes, and root words that may have been

encountered on the state assessments. After reviewing the terms, Teacher C, Teacher E, and Teacher H reviewed what the students had read, written, and learned the previous day.

Teacher C, Teacher E, and Teacher H systematically reviewed prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Teacher C wrote two terms or words (they varied between prefixes, suffixes, root words, and complete words) on an overhead projector. Showing only one term or word at a time, Teacher C led the discussion related to the definition. Teacher C asked the eleventh grade Language Arts students if they had heard the term or word and where the students had heard the term or word. After the discussion, Teacher C had the students write at least two sentences for each word. After reviewing the sentences, Teacher C prompted the students for antonyms and synonyms for the term or word. The eleventh grade Language Arts students were tested after they learned 10 new terms or words; and with each test, Teacher C added the previous words that were tested to the current test.

Teacher E and Teacher H methodically utilized the SMART Board each class period; however, Teacher E and Teacher H changed the SMART Board activities each class period, continually focusing on prefixes, suffixes, and root words. On March 9, 2009, Teacher E and Teacher H typed 10 prefixes, suffixes, or root words on the SMART Board, and the teachers chose different eleventh grade Language Arts students to write the definitions of 10 terms or words on the SMART Board. As a class, the teachers and students discussed the meanings of the prefixes, suffixes, or root words. After the discussion, Teacher E and Teacher H randomly chose different students to write a complete word on the SMART Board using the prefix, suffix, or root word. Ten different students wrote the definitions of the words on the SMART Board.

Recognition was a category in which all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused nearly every class period. Only in one instance did two eleventh grade Language Arts

teachers not use *recognition* in a class period. On April 6, 2009, Teacher C did not use academic *recognition* because the teacher told students what assignments they had missing (see Figure A-4). On April 14, 2009, Teacher G had so many eleventh grade Language Arts students absent from class that the remaining students were allowed to work on individual assignments (see Figure A-7). Table 4.11 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *recognition* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.11 – Number and Percentage of Activities and Class Periods Teaching *Recognition*

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 22/22 | 100 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher B | 23/23 | 100 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 15/16 | 93.8 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher D | 23/23 | 100 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 23/23 | 100 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher F | 18/18 | 100 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher G | 15/16 | 93.8 | 9/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher H | 23/23 | 100 | 10/10 | 100 |

Memorization

“How does reading story after story help us on the state assessment,” a student asked Teacher A. Teacher A responded:

You will have to know plot, antagonist, protagonist, climax, resolution, and many other terms on the state assessment. By reading stories and knowing the different plot line words, you will be more prepared and knowledgeable for the state assessment.

Everything we are doing is for English and for the state assessment.

Garner (2008) defined *memorization* as “the ability to store information” (p. 34). In studying the data, the researcher discovered that *memorization* was primarily built into the lessons; and the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expected the eleventh grade Language

Arts students to memorize the materials over time by consistently using terms and reading stories. None of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers told the eleventh grade Language Arts students to memorize a certain piece of information; none of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *memorization* solely as the goal. Nearly all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized *memorization* when they taught prefixes, suffixes, and root words and when they read stories and used literary terms to discuss the stories.

In all of the eleventh grade Language Arts classes in which the researcher observed, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught short stories, plays, or a novel. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers employed different activities to teach the literary pieces, all of the teachers' lessons incorporated *memorization* to assist the eleventh grade Language Arts students learn the literary terms in a plot line. Throughout the 2008-2009 school year, the teachers reviewed and taught literary terms with the expressed goal of having the students memorize the definitions of the terms. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers used worksheets while they taught the literary pieces. The worksheets targeted questions relating to the story in terms that may have been encountered on the state assessments. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts students may have recognized the definitions of literary terms, the students were expected to correctly relate the terms to the literary piece they were studying (see Figure A-8).

In addition to worksheets, teachers implemented other activities to engage eleventh grade Language Arts students in memorizing the concepts they were studying. On March 10, 2009, Teacher A said to the class, "This group has a hard time on formative practice assessments with *summarize*; therefore, you are going to do an assignment to help you with *summarizing*." Teacher A reviewed the term *summarizing*, and explained that *summarizing* answered the who,

what, where, when, and how questions. The assignment that Teacher A assigned to the eleventh grade Language Arts students in the classroom was to write a news article summarizing the play, “Trifles.”

Teacher B and Teacher D taught the novel *Huckleberry Finn* to their eleventh grade Language Arts students. After completing Chapter 19, the eleventh grade Language Arts students were given a Map Journey assignment. The assignment was for each student to make a map of places Huck Finn had traveled since the beginning of the novel. Along Huck Finn’s path, each student was expected to list all of the characters present at that time and whether the characters were antagonists, protagonists, round characters, or flat characters. Also, the students were expected to explain other literary terms like setting, conflict, climax, and resolution. Teacher B and Teacher D wrote the terms on the board and instructed the eleventh grade Language students where the terms were to be placed and answered on the map.

Memorization was a category that most eleventh grade Language Arts teachers implemented regularly in their classrooms as a dependent component of the lessons and not independent of the lessons. Teacher C only taught *memorization* 31.3% of the time and only in two class periods; however, five days were spent allowing eleventh grade Language Arts students to work independently on a project that was a major percent of the students’ quarter grade, and one day was used for discussion of the project (see figure A-4). Because the project involved different lyrics and poems for each student, *memorization* was not applicable. Teacher A taught *memorization* 72.7% of the time; however, Teacher A taught *memorization* at least once in every class period (see Figure A-2). Teacher F taught *memorization* 72.2% of the time and 9 out of 10 class periods. Teacher F conducted a writing workshop during one class period, and *memorization* was not applicable to her lesson (see Figure A-6). Teacher G taught *memorization*

87.5% of the time and in eight class periods. Teacher G allowed two days for students to work individually on projects (see Figure A-7). Teacher B, Teacher D, Teacher E, and Teacher H taught *memorization* during each class period. Teacher B, Teacher D, Teacher E, and Teacher H focused every moment of the class period on prefixes, suffixes, root words, and literary terms. The eleventh grade Language Arts students also read stories for interpretation and state assessment connections (see Figure A-3 and Figure A-5). Furthermore, Teacher D and Teacher E worked with eleventh grade special education Language Arts students one-on-one and in small groups. Teacher D and Teacher E worked with the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students either in the classroom or in the hallway. Table 4.12 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *memorization* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.12 – Number and Percentage of Activities and Class Periods Teaching

Memorization

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 16/22 | 72.7 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher B | 23/23 | 100 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 5/16 | 31.3 | 2/10 | 20.0 |
| Teacher D | 23/23 | 100 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 23/23 | 100 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher F | 13/18 | 72.2 | 9/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher G | 14/16 | 87.5 | 8/10 | 80.0 |
| Teacher H | 23/23 | 100 | 10/10 | 100 |

Conservation of Constancy

Teacher C developed a lesson using music lyrics. Teacher C gave the eleventh grade Language Arts students in the classroom the lyrics to five different songs. The students found the title and artist on the Internet. Upon finding the title and artist, the students completed a

worksheet that addressed literary concepts from the lyrics. Furthermore, the students chose nine songs they liked. They listened to the songs and answered questions on a worksheet that targeted literary concepts. The students wrote the lyrics to their songs with the title and artist. Upon completion of this assignment, Teacher C had the eleventh grade Language Arts students address the characteristics of poems and lyrics as well as the characteristics that changed and the characteristics that remained the same.

Garner (2008) described *conservation of constancy* as “the ability to understand how some characteristics of a thing can change while others stay the same” (p. 35). *Conservation of constancy* was not observed a high number of times in the classroom except in the classroom of Teacher B and Teacher D. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *conservation of constancy* in their classrooms, but the teachers created lesson plans that taught *conservation of constancy* in different ways.

Teacher A taught many short stories and poems in the classroom. With one story, “A Rose for Emily,” Teacher A asked the eleventh grade Language Arts students to address the changing economic and social conditions in Miss Emily’s town and how these conditions remained the same. Furthermore, Teacher A asked the eleventh grade Language Arts students to describe how the attitudes and values of the Deep South changed and remained the same into the 21st century (see Figure A-9).

Teacher G taught *Red Badge of Courage* to the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students in her classroom. Upon finishing the novel, the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students wrote notes pertaining to what aspects changed and what aspects remained the same in the novel. The eleventh grade special education Language Arts

students told the class what they wrote, and Teacher G led a class discussion on the students' responses.

Generally, *conservation of constancy* was observed a small percentage of time during class activities. Only two teachers, Teacher A and Teacher F, taught *conservation of constancy* over 50% of their total classroom activities. However, all but one teacher taught *conservation of constancy* at least 50% of the time during their daily classroom lessons. From this observation, the researcher determined that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *conservation of constancy* a small portion of most class periods. Teacher A taught *conservation of constancy* in the classroom 7 of the 10 class periods; Teacher B and Teacher D taught *conservation of constancy* during every class period; Teacher E and Teacher H taught *conservation of constancy* 6 out of 10 class periods; Teacher F taught *conservation of constancy* 8 out of 10 class periods; and Teacher G taught *conservation of constancy* 5 out of 10 class periods. Teacher C allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students five days to work independently on a project that was a large percent of the students' quarter grade and one day discussing the project (see figure A-4); however, the researcher observed Teacher C using *conservation of constancy* during the four class periods that were not dedicated to working on the project. Table 4.13 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *conservation of constancy* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.13 – Number and Percentage of Activities and Class Periods Teaching *Conservation of Constancy*

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 12/22 | 54.5 | 7/10 | 70.0 |
| Teacher B | 6/23 | 26.1 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 4/16 | 25.0 | 4/10 | 40.0 |
| Teacher D | 6/23 | 26.1 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 6/23 | 26.1 | 6/10 | 60.0 |
| Teacher F | 10/18 | 55.6 | 8/10 | 80.0 |
| Teacher G | 7/16 | 43.8 | 5/10 | 50.0 |
| Teacher H | 6/23 | 26.1 | 6/10 | 60.0 |

Classification

On March 13, 2009, Teacher E and Teacher H showed the last part of *Shrek* to the eleventh grade Language Arts students, completing the movie. Upon reviewing the occurrences in the movie, Teacher E and Teacher H focused the eleventh grade Language Arts students’ attention on the SMART Board. On the SMART Board, the teachers created the plot line using the terms: basic situation, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Below the plot line were five circles with phrases in the circles (see Figure A-10). Teacher E asked an eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student to locate the correct answer for “basic situation” and drag the circle to the appropriate position. Next, the teachers led a discussion concerning the “basic situation,” and the eleventh grade Language Arts students actively participated. The teachers wrote notes on the SMART Board for the eleventh grade Language Arts students to copy relating to “basic situation.” Teacher H asked an eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student to locate the correct answer for “rising action” and drag the circle to the appropriate position. Again, the teachers led a discussion concerning the “rising action,” and the teachers provided notes on the SMART Board for the eleventh grade Language Arts students to copy. The

teachers alternated calling upon the eleventh grade Language Arts students and discussing the five plot line terms.

Garner (2008) described *classification* as “the ability to identify, compare, and order information to create meaning on the basis of relationships of parts to one another and parts to the whole” (p. 36). The researcher discovered all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *classification* separately, rather than inclusive of a topic. However, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *classification* while teaching a topic; and because of the teaching method, *classification* flowed into the topic without being segregated. The word “classify” was verbalized frequently in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms when the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expected students to order the information and understand relationships. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *classification* when they taught prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

In teaching *classification*, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers employed different methods to review prefixes, suffixes, root words, literary terms, and genres. Teacher E and Teacher H favored the SMART Board. They designed activities to engage the eleventh grade Language Arts students in classifying information by dragging correct answers to appropriate terms and writing answers on the SMART Board. Teacher A incorporated *classification* exercises into writings and worksheets that accompanied the short stories and plays he taught. In addition to prefixes, suffixes, root words, literary terms, and genres, Teacher A expected eleventh grade Language Arts students to classify “appearances” and “realities” from selected literary pieces. Teacher B and Teacher D reviewed *classification* in the *Word of the Day, Daily Prompt*, and worksheets. Teacher C taught *classification* by using the overhead projector to engage eleventh grade Language Arts students in activities. Teacher C expected eleventh grade

Language Arts students to complete worksheets and projects, as well as participate in sticky note activities, partner activities, and discussion activities. Teacher F targeted *classification* by developing higher-level writing activities such as poems and essays. Teacher F expected the eleventh grade Language Arts students in her class to go beyond identifying *classification*, finding the reasoning behind the *classification* and explaining the *classification* in a more in-depth analysis. Teacher G reviewed *classification* by creating worksheets for the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students. Teacher G led the eleventh grade special education students in small group and class discussions relating to *classification* topics from the books that the students read. After observing Teacher G's class, she told me, "I don't spend much time on *classification* because the students never seem to understand and bring what they learned into the next class period. They don't see the relationships between objects, and they sure don't see the relationships in books."

The researcher discovered that 7 of the 8 eleventh grade Language Arts teachers conducted activities teaching *classification* at least 50% of the time in class activities. The class activities either reviewed *classification* as a separate component or reviewed *classification* as an embedded piece in the curriculum. In the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' daily classroom lessons, 6 of the 8 teachers reviewed *classification* at least 80% of the time. Teacher C reviewed *classification* only 50% of the observed class periods, but Teacher C spent five days allowing the eleventh grade Language Arts students to work independently on a project and one day discussing the project. However, in the project that the eleventh grade Language Arts students completed, *classification* was a component of the project. Teacher G taught *classification* in only 25% of the class activities and in 4 of the 10 classes; however, Teacher G informed the researcher that the eleventh grade Language Arts students did not understand

classification, and the students could not attend the next class period and remember how to classify information. Teacher F did not review *classification* in one class period because that class period was used as a writing workshop. Teacher A did not review *classification* in two class periods because those class periods were devoted to finishing the story the eleventh grade Language Arts students were reading, and Teacher A explained the project that involved the story. The project that Teacher A assigned included many concepts that may have been encountered on the state assessment, but *classification* was not one of the concepts. Table 4.14 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *classification* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.14 – Number and Percentage of Activities and Class Periods Teaching

Classification

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 12/22 | 54.5 | 8/10 | 80.0 |
| Teacher B | 18/23 | 78.3 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 9/16 | 56.3 | 5/10 | 50.0 |
| Teacher D | 18/23 | 78.3 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 14/23 | 60.9 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher F | 9/18 | 50.0 | 9/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher G | 4/16 | 25.0 | 4/10 | 40.0 |
| Teacher H | 14/23 | 60.9 | 10/10 | 100 |

Spatial Orientation

At the end of *Red Badge of Courage*, an eleventh grade special education Language Arts student asked Teacher G:

Why do you always ask us the same questions each class period before we begin reading the story? What is the setting? Who are the characters? What's going on in the novel?

Don't you think we get it by now?

Teacher G responded:

I ask you these questions each class period to make sure you understand the relationships in the story. Plus, I don't want you to forget. You need to understand the relationships to do well on the quizzes and to understand the novel. If you don't understand the relationships, it is pointless to read the book.

Garner (2008) defined *spatial orientation* as “the ability to identify relationships among objects and places” (p. 36). The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *spatial orientation* into their lessons. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers did not teach *spatial orientation* separately but incorporated *spatial orientation* in their lessons by asking questions, reviewing, and using worksheets. None of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers used the term *spatial orientation*; the teachers verbalized the term “relationship.” All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on *spatial orientation* while they taught short stories, novels, and plays. While teaching and reviewing the short stories, novel, and plays, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers asked the eleventh grade Language Arts students questions regarding the relationships in the plot line, including, but not limited to: basic situation, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, setting, characters, protagonist, antagonist, and symbolism.

In addressing *spatial orientation*, all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized the same method. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers led class discussions and reviewed the literature with questions that focused on the relationships within the literature. In addition, every eleventh grade Language Arts teacher prepared worksheets and quizzes that addressed the different relationships in the literature. Teacher E, Teacher H, Teacher C, and Teacher F used movies to address *spatial orientation*. Teacher E and Teacher H showed the eleventh grade Language Arts students a movie that was based on a novel they had read; Teacher C showed the eleventh grade Language Arts students a movie that was not based on a piece of literature, but the movie had an educational focus; Teacher F showed the eleventh grade Language Arts students 30 minute sitcoms that she recorded from the television.

Furthermore, three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *spatial orientation* in different ways than discussion, worksheets, and quizzes. Teacher C, after reading “To Build a Fire,” wrote words on the board that required the eleventh grade Language Arts students to focus on relationships within the short story. The eleventh grade Language Arts students wrote the relationships on their own paper, and then Teacher C grouped the students in pairs. Teacher C gave each pair sticky notes, and the eleventh grade Language Arts students wrote the relationships on the sticky notes and placed them on the board. Teacher C led a class discussion over the answers the eleventh grade Language Arts students wrote on the sticky notes.

Teacher E and Teacher H utilized the SMART Board after reading literature pieces. Teacher E and Teacher H chose eleventh grade Language Arts students to walk to the SMART Board and drag the answer circle to the corresponding, correct term (see Figure A-10). For the literature pieces, Teacher E and Teacher H wrote words that had previously been taught in other pieces of literature, and the teachers incorporated new words that had not been typed on the

SMART Board previous to that literature piece. Furthermore, Teacher E and Teacher H incorporated a “freeze” activity to highlight important relationships in *The Great Gatsby*. The teachers divided the eleventh grade Language Arts students into groups. Each group pulled a piece of paper from a basket. Each group read the piece of paper and reenacted the scene from *The Great Gatsby*, and all of the eleventh grade Language Arts students participated actively in the group. Teacher E and Teacher H allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to use a box of props. For the freeze frame activity, one eleventh grade Language Arts student acted a part of the scene and touched another student’s arm; the student would freeze after touching the student’s arm. The touching and freezing continued until all of the eleventh grade Language Arts students acted a part of the scene and froze. Teacher E described the activity as being like a flip book. Upon completion of each reenactment, Teacher E and Teacher H led a discussion about the relationships in the novel.

The researcher discovered that only three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *spatial orientation* over 50% of the time during class activities. Five of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *spatial orientation* between 30% and 35% of the time during class activities. However, five eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *spatial orientation* at least 50% of the class periods. Teacher C addressed *spatial orientation* in each class period that the eleventh grade students were not working on their individual project, which was five days, and he allowed one day for discussion. Teacher G addressed *spatial orientation* 8 of the 10 class periods; the two class periods did not address *spatial orientation* because she allowed the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students to work on individual assignments. Teacher F addressed *spatial orientation* 7 of the 10 class periods, and the other three class periods were dedicated to writing labs and to A.P. practice activities. Teacher A

addressed *spatial orientation* 9 of the 10 class periods; however, on one of the days, he explained the assignment and read a short story. On the day Teacher A explained the assignment and read the short story, the class period was dedicated to designing the activities completed on later dates. Teacher E and Teacher H addressed *spatial orientation* 4 of the 10 class periods; but during the other six class periods, the teachers focused on other aspects of the state reading assessment. Teacher B and Teacher D addressed *spatial orientation* 6 of the 6 class periods as the eleventh grade Language Arts students were reading *Huckleberry Finn*, and the teachers designed daily lessons that focused on *spatial orientation*. Table 4.15 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *spatial orientation* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.15 – Number and Percentages of Activities and Class Periods Teaching *Spatial Orientation*

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 14/22 | 63.4 | 9/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher B | 8/23 | 34.8 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 5/16 | 31.3 | 4/10 | 40.0 |
| Teacher D | 8/23 | 34.8 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 8/23 | 34.8 | 4/10 | 40.0 |
| Teacher F | 12/18 | 66.7 | 7/10 | 70.0 |
| Teacher G | 14/16 | 87.5 | 8/10 | 80.0 |
| Teacher H | 8/23 | 34.8 | 4/10 | 40.0 |

Temporal Orientation

In Teacher A’s eleventh grade Language Arts classes, the eleventh grade Language Arts students read the play “Sorry, Wrong Number.” After the eleventh grade Language Arts students finished the play, the students described the events as they occurred in complete, detailed

sentences. “Take out a sheet of paper. You will each write your own account of the murder, like a news article,” Teacher A said on March 12, 2009. Teacher A explained that this assignment helped the eleventh grade Language Arts students better understand the main idea of the play, and he wanted to ensure that each student understood the events and the timing of the events to determine if the main character could have made other decisions that could have ultimately saved her life.

Garner (2008) described *temporal orientation* as “the ability to process information by comparing events in relationship to when they occur” (p. 37). In sorting the data, the researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers integrated *temporal orientation* into their lessons. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers did not teach *temporal orientation* independently but integrated *temporal orientation* in their lessons by asking questions, reviewing, writing, and using worksheets. None of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers verbalized the term *temporal orientation*; however, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers asked the following questions:

- When did [the event] occur?
- Who was responsible for [the event]?
- Could [the event] have been stopped or ended differently?
- Did the order of events lead to [the final outcome]?
- If one event had been different, could [the final outcome] have been averted?

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on *temporal orientation* while they taught short stories, novels, and plays. While teaching and reviewing short stories, novel, and plays, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers asked their eleventh grade Language Arts students questions regarding the relationships in the plot line, including but not limited to: basic

situation, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, setting, characters, protagonist, antagonist, and symbolism.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized the same method of teaching when they focused on *temporal orientation*. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers led class discussions and reviewed the literature with questions that focused on the events and/or the timeline of events within the literature. Each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher prepared worksheets and quizzes that addressed the different events in the literature piece. Teacher E, Teacher H, Teacher C, and Teacher F integrated movies to address *temporal orientation*. Teacher E and Teacher H showed the eleventh grade Language Arts students a movie that was based on a novel the students had read; Teacher C showed the eleventh grade Language Arts students a movie that was not based on a piece of literature, but the movie had an educational focus; Teacher F showed the eleventh grade Language Arts students 30 minute sitcoms that she recorded from the television.

Furthermore, three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers approached *temporal orientation* in a fashion that furthered discussion. After reading “To Build a Fire,” Teacher C assigned the eleventh grade Language Arts students the following:

- The students completed a timeline on their own paper for “To Build a Fire”;
- Teacher C grouped the students in pairs to ensure the timelines were complete;
- Teacher C told each pair which event they were responsible for analyzing;
- Students circled the event on the timeline;
- When the pair was chosen, the two students told the class the event;

- The pair explained the importance of the event and determined whether the final outcome would have been the same as the outcome in the short story if the main character had made a different decision.

Teacher E and Teacher H utilized the SMART Board after reading *Of Mice and Men*. On the SMART Board, Teacher E and Teacher H drew a partial timeline of the novel for the eleventh grade Language Arts students to view. At the bottom of the timeline the teachers listed events from the novel. Teacher E and Teacher H chose eleventh grade Language Arts students to walk to the SMART Board and drag the event to the correct placement on the timeline (see Figure A-11). Upon completion of the timeline, Teacher E and Teacher H facilitated a discussion and discussed what events changed the outcome of the novel.

Overall, the researcher discovered only three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *temporal orientation* over 50% of the time during class activities. Five of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *temporal orientation* between 34% and 39% of the time during class activities. However, seven eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *temporal orientation* at least 50% of the class periods. Teacher C addressed *temporal orientation* in each class period that the eleventh grade students were not working on their individual project, which was five days; and he allowed one day for discussion. Teacher G addressed *temporal orientation* 8 of the 10 class periods, but two class periods did not address *temporal orientation* because she allowed the eleventh grade students to work on individual assignments. Teacher F addressed *temporal orientation* 7 of the 10 class periods; the other three class periods were dedicated to writing labs and A.P. practice exams. Teacher A addressed *temporal orientation* 9 of the 10 class periods; however, during one of the class periods, Teacher A explained an assignment and read a short story to design future activities. Teacher E and Teacher H addressed

temporal orientation 5 of the 10 class periods; but during the other five class periods, the teachers discussed other aspects of the state reading assessment. Teacher B and Teacher D addressed *temporal orientation* 6 of the 6 class periods as the eleventh grade Language Arts students read *Huckleberry Finn*, and the teachers designed daily activities focused on *temporal orientation*. Table 4.16 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated *temporal orientation* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.16 – Number and Percentages of Class Activities and Class Periods Teaching *Temporal Orientation*

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 12/22 | 54.5 | 9/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher B | 8/23 | 34.8 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 6/16 | 37.5 | 4/10 | 40.0 |
| Teacher D | 8/23 | 34.8 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 9/23 | 39.1 | 5/10 | 50.0 |
| Teacher F | 12/18 | 66.7 | 7/10 | 70.0 |
| Teacher G | 14/16 | 87.5 | 8/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher H | 9/23 | 39.1 | 5/10 | 50.0 |

Metaphorical Thinking

On April 6, 2009, Teacher F split the eleventh grade Language Arts students into two groups and assigned each group a novel. One group began reading *Fahrenheit 451*; the other group began reading *The Color Purple*. After the eleventh grade Language Arts students received their novels, an eleventh grade Language Arts student asked, “Why are we splitting into two groups and reading two different novels? That doesn’t seem realistic that you can teach two novels at the same time.” Teacher F replied, “I can teach two novels at the same time if the content and themes are similar.” On April 16, 2009, Teacher F allowed each respective group to

discuss the novel with group members for summarization, clarification, and discussion of the main events. Upon completing the group discussion, Teacher F led a class discussion that emphasized the similarities of the main ideas and themes of the novels. Teacher F continually reminded the eleventh grade Language Arts students that they needed to overlook the differences of the novels and solely concentrate on the similarities.

Garner (2008) described *metaphorical thinking* as “the ability to understand the meaning by emphasizing similarities and overlooking differences” (p. 38). The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers integrated *metaphorical thinking* into the literary pieces and taught *metaphorical thinking* as independent lessons. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *metaphorical thinking* by asking questions, reviewing, writing, and creating worksheets and quizzes. When the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reviewed the lessons, they asked questions specific to the similarities of the objects being compared and the significance of the simile or metaphor. On worksheets and quizzes, the eleventh grade Language Arts students wrote a simile or metaphor and the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers asked the students to explain the simile or metaphor.

On March 9, 2009, the eleventh grade Language Arts students finished reading a series of short stories in Teacher A’s eleventh grade Language Arts class. Teacher A gave the eleventh grade Language Arts students a copy of a Venn diagram with a simile or metaphor written at the top of the page. Teacher A required each eleventh grade Language Arts student to write the two objects being compared (one in each large oval of the Venn diagram) and write how the objects were similar in the overlapping ovals.

The researcher discovered that four eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *metaphorical thinking* over 50% of the time during their class activities. Two of the eleventh

grade Language Arts teachers taught *metaphorical thinking* between 30% and 38% of the time during class activities; one eleventh grade Language Arts teacher taught *metaphorical thinking* less than 20% of the time during class activities. Furthermore, in analyzing the time spent teaching *metaphorical thinking* during each class period, the researcher discovered that seven of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *metaphorical thinking* at least 50% of the time during the combined number of class periods. Only one eleventh grade Language Arts teacher taught *metaphorical thinking* less than 50% of the time during the combined number of class periods. Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher D taught *metaphorical thinking* during every class period in which the researcher observed. Teacher C did not teach *metaphorical thinking* in 5 of the 10 class periods because he allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to work on their individual poetry projects five of the class periods. Teacher E and Teacher H taught *metaphorical thinking* 6 of the 10 class periods; however, during the other four class periods, Teacher E and Teacher H taught other components of the state reading assessment. Teacher F taught *metaphorical thinking* 9 of the 10 class periods; but on the day that Teacher F did not teach *metaphorical thinking*, she conducted a writing workshop. Teacher G only taught *metaphorical thinking* during 2 of the 10 class periods. Table 4.17 illustrates the number and percentage of activities and class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught *temporal orientation* in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to enhance student learning.

Table 4.17 – Number and Percentages of Class Activities and Class Periods Teaching

Metaphorical Thinking

| Teacher | Total Number of Class Activities | Percentage of Class Activities | Total Number of Class Periods | Percentage of Class Periods |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher A | 14/22 | 63.6 | 10/10 | 100 |
| Teacher B | 12/23 | 52.2 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 6/16 | 37.5 | 5/10 | 50.0 |
| Teacher D | 12/23 | 52.2 | 6/6 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 7/23 | 30.4 | 6/10 | 60.0 |
| Teacher F | 11/18 | 61.1 | 9/10 | 90.0 |
| Teacher G | 3/16 | 18.8 | 2/10 | 20.0 |
| Teacher H | 7/23 | 30.4 | 6/10 | 60.0 |

In analyzing the percentage of class periods in which the framework was utilized, the researcher discovered varying percentages between eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and the framework that the teachers targeted. The information below documents the percentage of time the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed the framework:

- Teacher B and Teacher D addressed the entire framework every class period.
- Teacher A addressed six components of the framework at least 80% of the observed class periods, and he addressed *conservation of constancy* 70% of the class periods.
- Teacher C never addressed the framework over 50% of the class periods, except for *recognition*.
- Teacher F addressed five components of the framework at least 80% of the class periods, except for two components that were addressed 70% of the class periods.
- Teacher G addressed four components of the framework at least 80% of the class periods, but she addressed the other three components no more than 50% of the class periods.

- Teacher H and Teacher E addressed three of the components of the framework 100% of the class periods; 3 components at least 50% of the class periods; and *spatial orientation* only 40% of the class periods.

The researcher discovered that the components of the framework were highly addressed, sometimes addressed, or occasionally addressed. Reeves (2008) believed that “deep implementation at the 90 percent level of teaching practice is associated with strikingly higher levels of achievement” (p. 16). Using Reeves’ 90% level of implementation, the researcher ordered the components of the framework from the highest level of implementation to the lowest level of implementation:

- *Recognition*;
- *Memorization*;
- *Classification*;
- *Metaphorical thinking*;
- *Temporal orientation*;
- *Spatial orientation*; and
- *Conservation of constancy*.

Recognition and *memorization* were implemented the most in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. *Spatial orientation* and *conservation of constancy* were implemented the least in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. There was a general consensus among many of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students had challenges relating *spatial orientation* and *conservation of constancy* to their personal lives. Table 4.18 illustrates the percentage of class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed the components of the framework.

Table 4.18 – Percentage of Class Periods that the Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers Addressed the Components of the Framework

| Teacher | Rec | Mem | Class | Meta | Temp | Spat | Cons |
|-----------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|
| Teacher A | 100 | 100 | 80.0 | 100 | 90.0 | 90.0 | 70.0 |
| Teacher B | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Teacher C | 100 | 20.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 40.0 | 40.0 | 40.0 |
| Teacher D | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Teacher E | 100 | 100 | 100 | 60.0 | 50.0 | 40.0 | 60.0 |
| Teacher F | 100 | 90.0 | 90.0 | 90.0 | 70.0 | 70.0 | 80.0 |
| Teacher G | 90.0 | 80.0 | 40.0 | 20.0 | 80.0 | 80.0 | 50.0 |
| Teacher H | 100 | 100 | 100 | 60.0 | 50.0 | 40.0 | 60.0 |

Although the researcher tallied the percentage of class periods that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed the components of the framework, the researcher was not able to determine if the 90% level of implementation (Reeves, 2008) was successful in assisting eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students meet the standards on the state reading assessment. The researcher had the formative practice assessment results and the state reading assessment scores at her disposal; however, the researcher did not have the results of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ performance standards that were assessed on the state reading assessment to determine if the students met standards based on the individual state assessment standards and the percentage of class period implementation of the framework for each teacher.

Research-Based Strategies Implemented in Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Upon analyzing the data, the researcher noticed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers implemented research-based strategies, in addition to the framework, in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students

for the state reading assessment. The researcher coded the research-based strategies (see Appendix N) and described in greater detail how the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers implemented the research-based strategies. Garner (2008), Brooks and Brooks (2004), and Marzano et al. (2001) believe the components of the framework are essential in developing the cognitive structures to enhance learning in the classroom. However, other research-based strategies were integrated in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to enhance student learning through the framework. Many of the research-based strategies were incorporated to enhance pieces of the framework of this study; however, some research-based strategies were independent of the framework of this study. The researcher observed the following research-based strategies in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom: structured lessons, relevant curriculum, comprehensive instruction, collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, formative assessment, drill and practice, test-taking strategies, hands-on experience, special privileges, and extra time.

Structured Lessons

Dunn and Honigsfeld (2009), Keene (2008), and Brooks and Brooks (2004) suggested that teachers structure their lesson plans to challenge students' suppositions. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers structured their lesson plans and challenged the eleventh grade Language Arts students' suppositions. In challenging the eleventh grade Language Arts students' suppositions, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the following categories of the study's framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. However, parts of the framework may not have been targeted in every discussion or activity.

When the eleventh grade Language Arts students read “Trifles,” Teacher A led a class discussion concerning the time period in which the play occurred, the role of men and women, and the legal system. Following the discussion, the eleventh grade Language Arts students compared the roles of men and women and the legal system to the standards of today. By challenging the eleventh grade Language Arts students’ suppositions concerning time periods, the roles of men and women, and the legal system, Teacher A taught the students to recognize the following: differences and similarities between the time periods, the roles of men and women, and the legal system; what changed and what remained the same in terms of the time period, the roles of men and women, and the legal system; the relationships in the play; and the events and relationships in the play that led to the final outcome. Furthermore, the other seven eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught in a similar fashion when they discussed and reviewed literary pieces.

Teacher E and Teacher H utilized the SMART Board many times to challenge the eleventh grade Language Arts students’ suppositions. Teacher E and Teacher H conducted interactive activities using the SMART Board; many activities targeted root words, prefixes, suffixes, and literary terms. The SMART Board activities built on each other. Sometimes the eleventh grade Language Arts students had seen the words previously, and sometimes the words were new to the eleventh grade Language Arts students. However, in conducting the SMART Board activities, Teacher E and Teacher H targeted the following categories of the framework: *recognition, memorization, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking.*

Relevant Curriculum

Dunn and Honigsfeld (2009), Keene (2008), Garcia (2006), and Brooks and Brooks (2004) stated that attaching relevance to the curriculum engages students and helps students understand the material. Students who identify with the material usually have a stronger understanding of the content and place the contents into their schemas (Brooks & Brooks, 2004; Keene, 2008). The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers developed lessons that were relevant to the eleventh grade students' lives. By relating the curriculum to the eleventh grade Language Arts students' personal lives, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the following categories of the study's framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. However, parts of the framework may not have been taught in every discussion or activity.

Teacher B and Teacher D began each class period with a *Daily Prompt*. Not only was the *Daily Prompt* related to a term that may appear on the state assessment, but the *Daily Prompt* was a reflection time for eleventh grade Language Arts students to think of a time in their lives when they encountered a particular event (related to the *Daily Prompt*). Teacher B and Teacher D believed that if an eleventh grade Language Arts student related to the state assessment term used in the *Daily Prompt*, the student had better success recognizing the term and understanding its meaning. On March 11, 2009, Teacher B and Teacher D explained and discussed the root word *cred*, which means "believable." Upon the discussion, Teacher B and Teacher D introduced the *Daily Prompt*: "Describe one of the credos you live your life by." The eleventh grade Language Arts students reflected on their *credos* and wrote in their journals. After the eleventh grade Language Arts students finished writing in their journals, Teacher B and Teacher D led a

class discussion and allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to discuss a credo by which they live.

Similarly, the other six eleventh grade Language Arts teachers led class discussions in ways that the eleventh grade Language Arts students could relate. When the teachers read and discussed literary pieces, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers asked the eleventh grade Language Arts students to describe how the literary pieces related to their lives and to the society in which the students live. Teacher E and Teacher H showed television commercials from many different countries to teach the different types of propaganda. The eleventh grade Language Arts students were interested and actively participated in the activities. At the end of a class period, Teacher H said to the eleventh grade Language Arts class:

This is why I teach propaganda in this way. Many students have difficulties understanding the different types of propaganda, but when you can relate propaganda to your own lives, you can relate, which means you understand. Commercials dominate your lives because you watch so much television.

Comprehensive Instruction

Biancarosa and Snow (2006) described direct and explicit comprehensive instruction as “instruction in the strategies and processes that proficient readers use to understand what they read, including summarizing and keeping track of one’s own understanding” (p. 4). Research shows that direct and explicit comprehensive instruction is critical in building strong literacy skills (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Brimijoin, 2005; Deshler & Schumaker, 2006; Keene, 2008; Lenz et al., 2004). Lenz et al. (2004) believed that teachers should use methods or routines that are “thoroughly explained to and demonstrated for students through easily understood examples and familiar information” (p. 70). Explained and demonstrated methods help disadvantaged

students break the information into steps (Deshler et al., 2004). The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught direct and explicit comprehensive instruction during their lessons. By using direct and explicit comprehensive instruction, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the following categories of the study's framework: *recognition*, *memorization*, *conservation of constancy*, *classification*, *spatial orientation*, *temporal orientation*, and *metaphorical thinking*. However, parts of the framework may not have been taught in every discussion or activity.

In Teacher G's class, the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students created a power point based on a well-known poet. Before Teacher G allowed the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students work on the project individually, Teacher G created a power point of her own. She displayed her work on the SMART Board and showed the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students the steps to create a power point. In addition, Teacher G distributed a step-by step guide describing the steps of creating a power point to the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students.

Similarly, the researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers modeled a project with step-by-step instructions when the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers assigned a kinesthetic activity. Teacher C taught a poetry unit; and to begin the unit, he expected the eleventh grade Language Arts students to research song lyrics on the Internet. Before Teacher C allowed the eleventh grade students to work individually, Teacher C projected the computer screen onto the SMART Board and demonstrated the step-by-step procedures to complete this activity. Teacher E and Teacher H provided step-by-step modeling and instruction on the SMART Board. Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher D regularly distributed worksheets

that with similar formats. By providing similar worksheets for each literary piece, the eleventh grade Language Arts students developed a routine they recognized and understood.

Collaborative Learning

Text-based collaborative learning is when students interact with one another around a variety of texts (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Dunn and Honigsfeld (2009), Keene (2008), Biancarosa and Snow (2006), Brimijoin (2005), and Cotton (1999, 2000) believed text-based collaborative learning should be integrated in a variety of ways to enhance students' knowledge. In a study conducted by Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005), results showed that text-based collaborative learning increases disadvantaged students' scores. Furthermore, Keene (2008) and Marzano et al. (2001) believed collaborative learning is a strong tool for assisting students in understanding and modeling the curriculum being taught. Carbo (2008) believed that disadvantaged students learn in collaborative groups because disadvantaged students tend to be kinesthetic learners. The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized text-based collaborative learning in their daily classroom activities. By utilizing text-based collaborative learning, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the following categories of the study's framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. However, parts of the framework may not have been taught in every discussion or activity.

On March 13, 2009, Teacher E and Teacher H reviewed root words, suffixes, and prefixes. Because the eleventh grade Language Arts students needed the words for the activity, the words remained on the SMART Board for the activity. Once the review was complete, Teacher E and Teacher H divided the eleventh grade Language Arts students in groups. In their groups, the eleventh grade Language Arts students wrote two words for each root word, suffix,

and prefix. When the eleventh grade Language Arts students completed the assignment, each group presented their words to the class, giving the definition of the word and explaining the part of the word that was the root word, suffix, or prefix.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers allowed students to read some of the assigned literary piece in groups. While the eleventh grade Language Arts students read, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers walked around the classroom, stopping momentarily at the students' desks and listening to the students read. If the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher heard a conversation, the teacher walked to the students' desks. Many times the discussion focused on the literary piece, and the eleventh grade Language Arts students were trying to understand the terms or events. When this occurred, the teacher allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to discuss the terms or events; and the teacher assisted when necessary.

Strategic Tutoring

Lenz et al. (2004) defined strategic tutoring as “instruction that compensates for the fact that students frequently do not have good skills or strategies for learning, and that simultaneously shows students ways to compensate for their lack of skills or strategies to learn information independently” (p. 70). Research shows that strategic tutoring is essential in assisting weak students learn strategies to help them complete work independently (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Brimijoin, 2005; Deshler, 2005; Dunn & Honigfeld 2009; Lenz et al., 2004). Biancarosa and Snow (2006) believed that strategic tutoring “provides students with intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed” (p. 4). Strategic tutoring is a necessary tool to use with disadvantaged students who need intense instruction (Deshler, 2005). The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers utilized strategic tutoring in their classrooms. By utilizing strategic tutoring, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted

the following categories of the study's framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking.*

However, parts of the framework may not have been targeted in every discussion or activity.

Teacher D and Teacher E were eleventh grade special education Language Arts teachers. They co-taught with Teacher B and Teacher H, respectively, because of the higher number of disadvantaged eleventh grade Language Arts students enrolled in their classes. By using small group and one-on-one instruction, Teacher D and Teacher E instructed eleventh grade special education Language Arts students. Teacher D and Teacher E applied strategic tutoring by assisting the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students with reading, writing, and content instruction in small groups and individual settings. In a conversation with the researcher, Teacher E stated:

The special education students in these classes have too high of skills to be in a self-contained special education English class. But they are too low to function without any extra assistance. I work with them in groups and individually to reinforce the skills needed to meet standards on the state assessment. Each student has different skills that need to be strengthened, and it is my job to know which students need a certain skill.

Teacher G, also an eleventh grade special education Language Arts teacher, taught self-contained eleventh grade special education Language Arts classes. Teacher G taught her eleventh grade special education Language Arts classes at a slower pace, reviewing and re-teaching the concepts repeatedly. However, in some class periods, the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students worked individually or in groups. Teacher G worked individually or with small groups of eleventh grade special education Language Arts students, further enhancing the students' reading, writing, and comprehension skills. Likewise, Teacher A, Teacher C, and

Teacher F utilized strategic tutoring with individuals and small groups by assigning an activity and then worked with eleventh grade Language Arts students who struggled in reading, writing, or content instruction.

Formative Assessment

Ongoing formative assessment is an “informal, often daily, assessment of how students are progressing” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 4). Deshler and Schumaker (2006) and Brimijoin (2005) argued that ongoing formative assessment is imperative in the classroom because ongoing formative assessment assesses student learning in the context of daily classroom activities. Ongoing formative assessment ensures that students’ performance in the classroom matches the instructional goals (Deshler et al., 2004). Deshler et al. (2004) believed that daily informal assessments are best for disadvantaged students because the informal assessments allow teachers to know what instructional procedures need to be changed or modified to be more effective. The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers conducted formative assessments, and many eleventh grade Language Arts teachers conducted informal assessments daily. In conducting daily formative assessments, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the following categories of the study’s framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. However, parts of the framework may not have been taught in every discussion or activity.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers conducted ongoing formative assessments almost daily in their classrooms. The eleventh grade Language Arts students completed worksheets as they read literary pieces for the class. The worksheets focused on content that would be present on the state reading assessment. Teacher E and Teacher H

conducted many informal assessments through active learning on the SMART Board, and the eleventh grade Language Arts students completed quizzes over the content of the state reading assessment.

Furthermore, all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reserved computers to conduct formal formative assessments for the state reading assessment. Each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher reserved the computers to conduct formative assessments in the following state assessment categories: expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical. By conducting these formative assessments, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers knew which instructional strategies were effective in the classroom; the instructional strategies that were not effective in the classroom; the strengths of the eleventh grade Language Arts students; and the weaknesses of the eleventh grade Language Arts students. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers continued using the instructional strategies that were effective but changed or modified instructional strategies that were not effective.

Drill and Practice

Dunn and Honigsfeld (2009) and Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005) suggested that teachers include drill and practice as a technique to increase disadvantaged students' scores. The researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated drill and practice in many of their daily classroom activities. When the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers conducted the drill and practice strategy in their classroom activities, the teachers targeted the following categories of the study's framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. However, parts of the framework may not have been targeted in every discussion or activity.

The researcher discovered that all eight of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers incorporated drill and practice in their classroom activities. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers read short stories, poems, or novels. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers created worksheets based on the literary pieces for the eleventh grade Language Arts students to practice the categories of the study's framework. On worksheets and quizzes, the eleventh grade Language Arts students identified concepts that may have appeared on the state reading assessment, including but not limited to: symbolism, setting, characters, foreshadowing, inferences, summary, main idea, plot line, prefixes, suffixes, root words, literary devices, expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical. The questions on the worksheets and quizzes represented one or more of the seven categories: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. Furthermore, Teacher C, Teacher E, Teacher F and Teacher H allowed the class to watch movies or sitcoms to strengthen the relevance of the literary concepts.

Although Teacher E and Teacher H created worksheets and quizzes for drill and practice, Teacher E and Teacher H created kinesthetic activities for the eleventh grade Language Arts students. Teacher E and Teacher H utilized the SMART Board during the class periods, engaging the eleventh grade Language Arts students in active learning. The use of the SMART Board allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to be actively engaged and allowed for drill and practice. Teacher E and Teacher H changed the format of the SMART Board activities, but state assessment concepts did not change.

Test-Taking Strategies

In a study conducted by Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005), it was determined that disadvantaged students need to learn and practice test-taking strategies. The eleventh grade

Language Arts teachers taught the eleventh grade Language Arts students successful strategies to complete the state assessment. Furthermore, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers taught the eleventh grade Language Arts students strategies to take a computerized state assessment. The eleventh grade Language Arts students practiced state assessments on paper and on the computer. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers explained and demonstrated the similarities and differences between a paper/pencil state assessment and a computerized state assessment. By teaching the eleventh grade Language Arts students test-taking strategies, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers targeted the following categories in the study's framework: *recognition*, *memorization*, *conservation of constancy*, and *classification*.

The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers created quizzes and worksheets similar to the format of the state assessment. Furthermore, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers asked questions similar to the questions found on the state assessment. In addition to the paper/pencil practice assessment created by the teachers, the teachers reserved the mobile computer lab and conducted formative practice assessments on the computer. Each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher conducted one computerized practice formative assessment for each category: expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers explained the different screens in which the eleventh grade Language Arts students could view the state assessment and the tools the students could use to help them succeed on the state assessment.

As the eleventh grade Language Arts students practiced for the state assessments, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers verbalized strategies that could enhance the eleventh grade Language Arts students' success on the state assessment. Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher G, and Teacher H told the eleventh grade Language Arts students to use

the red X to cross-out the answers they knew to be incorrect. Teacher B, Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher G, and Teacher H explained to the eleventh grade Language Arts students that if the students could visually see the red X, the students were more likely to block the incorrect answer from their mind and focus on the possible correct answers. Teacher B, Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher G, and Teacher H required all of the eleventh grade students to use the red X when completing the practice formative assessment on the computer.

Furthermore, all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers provided the auditory learners with whisper phones so the auditory eleventh grade Language Arts learners could whisper and hear their own words. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers explained to the eleventh grade Language Arts students that if the students felt overwhelmed and frustrated, the students should take a deep breath, close their eyes to clear their minds, and take a moment to relax. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers explained to the eleventh grade Language Arts students that the students may need to skip a harder question and return to that question at the end of the test. During one class period, Teacher G reminded her eleventh grade special education Language Arts students:

Remember what we do when we don't know an answer. We skip that question and go to the next question. You do not have to rush; there is no time limit. Take your time, and answer the questions you know first.

Hands-on Experience

Dunn and Honigsfeld (2009) and Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005) found that disadvantaged students' scores increase when the students kinesthetically interact with the material being taught. The researcher discovered that Teacher C, Teacher E, Teacher G, and Teacher H incorporated kinesthetic activities in their lessons. By incorporating kinesthetic

activities, Teacher C, Teacher E, Teacher G, and Teacher H targeted the categories of the study's framework: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. On March 10, 2009, Teacher C distributed sticky notes to the eleventh grade Language Arts students. The eleventh grade Language Arts students moved around the room after writing on their sticky notes and placed the sticky notes on the board. The sticky notes were incorporated into the lesson that targeted concepts that may have been on the state assessment.

Furthermore, Teacher E and Teacher H regularly utilized the SMART Board in their daily lesson plans, actively involving the eleventh grade Language students. The eleventh grade Language Arts students wrote answers on the SMART Board and moved correct answers to the corresponding question or word. The lessons created by Teacher E and Teacher H taught and reinforced the content on the state assessment. Teacher G's eleventh grade special education Language Arts students developed a power point and presented the power point to the class. The eleventh grade special education Language Arts students conducted research, created slides, used correct punctuation and grammar, and included visual images into the power point.

Special Privileges

In a study conducted by Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005), results showed that disadvantaged students perform better when they were granted special privileges. Furthermore, Dunn and Honigsfeld (2009) state that disadvantaged students tend to perform better if they are allowed to listen to music, eat snacks, move around the room, and take relaxation breaks. The researcher discovered that all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers granted special privileges as the eleventh grade students prepared for the state assessment. However, the researcher discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers granted their students

different privileges. Although granting special privileges did not target any of the categories for this study's framework, granting special privileges was a research-based strategy.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to eat snacks during the class period. In one class period, an eleventh grade Language Arts student asked Teacher A why some teachers allowed snacks and other teachers did not allow snacks. Teacher A responded:

Each teacher has his (and her) classroom rules. I have taught long enough to know that students do better if they are focused. Food helps keep you focused. Studies show that students learn better on a full stomach, and if you are snacking to keep your stomach full that means you are focused.

At the end of class periods when the eleventh grade Language Arts students stayed focused and worked well, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers rewarded the students by giving the students free time at the end of the hour. This free time included time to use the computer, opportunities to talk to their peers, and move about the room freely. Teacher E and Teacher H provided snacks to the eleventh grade Language Arts students during some class periods as a reward for working hard and staying focused. Teacher D and Teacher E, the two eleventh grade special education Language Arts co-teachers, randomly selected students at the end of some class periods and gave them the option of going to the library. Teacher G ended her class periods early when the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students stayed focused and worked hard. Teacher G told the researcher:

Ninety minutes is so hard for special ed. students to stay focused and learn. If I required them to read and write the entire 90 minute period, they would shut down, hate me, hate

the class, and not come prepared to learn. My students know that if they get through the material and try their best without goofing around, I'll give them free time.

Extra Time

Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005) and Cotton (1999, 2000) believed extra time to complete tasks is an important research-based strategy. The researcher discovered that all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers allowed the eleventh grade disadvantaged students extra time to complete tasks. Although this strategy was not categorized into any of the study's framework, extra time to complete tasks was a research-based strategy that was utilized by the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Sometimes the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students approached the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher. The eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students explained why they needed extra time to complete the task. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers required the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student to come to the Language Arts classroom during seminar, or the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher established a due date for the work. Sometimes the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher noticed that an eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student was struggling, and the teacher asked the student to come to the classroom during seminar.

Formative Practice Assessments

Each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher had the option to administer formative practice assessments to the eleventh grade Language Arts students. Four categories were present on the Kansas State Reading Assessment: expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical. An eleventh grade Language Arts teacher could administer as many as four formative practice assessments for each category. Because of the high number of eleventh grade Language Arts

students and the minimal number of available computers, each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher administered one formative practice assessment for each of the four categories. After the four formative practice assessments were administered, the eleventh grade Language Arts students were administered the Kansas State Reading Assessment. The formative practice assessments and the Kansas State Reading Assessment were administered on the computer.

The researcher obtained the formative practice assessment results and the Kansas State Reading Assessment scores of the eleventh grade Language Arts students. The researcher organized the assessment results by class of each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher. To protect the identity of the school, the researcher labeled the classes by color (purple and green) and class period (i.e., P1 symbolizes purple day hour 1). The researcher also excluded the names of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students; the researcher numbered each eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student from 1 to 157 (i.e., S1 symbolizes student 1). There were 162 eleventh grade Language Arts students administered the formative practice assessments and the Kansas State Reading Assessment. Five of the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were taught in a self-contained classroom, and the researcher did not include the students' scores because the self-contained eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were not taught by one of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that the researcher observed.

In analyzing the formative practice assessment results, the researcher discovered the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores fluctuated up, down, or remained the same. In determining the number of times the formative practice assessment results decreased, increased, or remained the same, the researcher recorded each formative practice assessment result. The researcher recorded whether the score decreased, increased, or remained

the same between the expository and narrative, the narrative and persuasive, and the persuasive and technical formative practice assessments. The researcher included a table for each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher listing the different combinations of formative practice assessment results.

The formative practice assessments allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts students to prepare for the Kansas State Reading Assessment. From the results of the formative practice assessments, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers assessed the students' learning and focused on areas in which the eleventh grade Language Arts students scored low. The percentage score on each formative practice assessment was a percentage score for that category (expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical) of the formative practice assessment only. However, the final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment was a compilation of all four categories. Furthermore, the final Kansas State Reading Assessment scores were categorized in one of five categories: *Exemplary* (89-100), *Exceeds Standard* (81-88), *Meets Standard* (68-80), *Approaches Standard* (54-67), or *Academic Warning* (0-54). For eleventh grade Language Arts students to be proficient on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, the students had to score at least a 68, falling into the *Meets Standard*, *Exceeds Standard*, or *Exemplary* category. Eleventh grade special education students who were administered the Kansas Assessment of Multiple Measures (KAMM) Assessment were placed in the same five categories, but the scores were different: *Exemplary* (88-100), *Exceeds Standard* (82-87), *Meets Standard* (49-81), *Approaches Standard* (38-48), and *Academic Warning* (0-37). Table 4.19 illustrates the number of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who scored *Exemplary*, *Exceeds Standard*, *Meets Standard*, *Approaches Standard*, and *Academic Warning* for each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher.

Table 4.19 – Number of Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students in Each Kansas State Reading Assessment Category

| Teacher | Exemplary | Exceeds Standard | Meets Standard | Approaches Standard | Academic Warning |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Teacher A | 12 | 14 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Teacher B | 0 | 9 | 14 | 13 | 2 |
| Teacher C | 0 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| Teacher D | 0 | 9 | 14 | 13 | 2 |
| Teacher E | 0 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 5 |
| Teacher F | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Teacher G | 5 KAMM | 6 KAMM | 8 KAMM | 0 | 0 |
| Teacher H | 0 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 5 |

Teacher A

Teacher A taught five classes of eleventh grade Language Arts. Teacher A taught the following number of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in his classes, totaling 39 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students:

- 3 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P1;
- 10 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P2;
- 9 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P3;
- 8 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in G1; and
- 9 disadvantaged Language Arts students in G2.

The researcher found 10 different combinations in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results. Table 4.20 illustrates the 10 combinations and number of

occurrences in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results for Teacher A’s eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.

Table 4.20 – Combinations and Occurrences of Teacher A’s Eleventh Grade

Disadvantaged Language Arts Students’ Formative Practice Assessment Results

| Combination | Number of Occurrences |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Decrease, Increase, Increase | 9 |
| Decrease, Increase, Decrease | 9 |
| Increase, Decrease, Increase | 7 |
| Decrease, Decrease, Increase | 4 |
| Decrease, Increase, Same | 3 |
| Increase, Increase, Increase | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Increase | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Same | 1 |
| Same, Decrease, Same | 1 |
| Increase, Decrease, Decrease | 1 |

The researcher found the fluctuation of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores to be as follows:

- 20 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased once;
- 14 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased twice;
- 18 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased once;
- 18 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased twice;
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased three times;
- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores remained the same once; and
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores remained the same twice.

Table 4.21 illustrates the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ results of the formative practice assessments and the students’ final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher A’s classes.

Table 4.21 – Results of Formative Practice Assessments and Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher A’s Classes

| Hr | Stu | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final | | Hr | Stu | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final |
|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| P1 | S1 | 100 | 93.75 | 100 | 100 | 100 | | G1 | S23 | 87.50 | 68.75 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 84 |
| | S2 | 93.75 | 87.50 | 100 | 92.86 | 94 | | | S24 | 93.75 | 81.25 | 100 | 85.71 | 92 |
| | S3 | 87.50 | 93.75 | 92.86 | 100 | 94 | | | S25 | 75.00 | 81.25 | 64.29 | 57.14 | 66 |
| P2 | S4 | 93.75 | 93.75 | 92.86 | 92.86 | 93 | | | S26 | 87.50 | 68.75 | 100 | 92.86 | 88 |
| | S5 | 93.75 | 68.75 | 78.57 | 92.86 | 84 | | | S27 | 75.00 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 100 | 85 |
| | S6 | 93.75 | 81.25 | 92.86 | 100 | 91 | | | S28 | 37.50 | 56.25 | 28.57 | 78.57 | 49 |
| | S7 | 56.25 | 50.00 | 35.71 | 64.29 | 50 | | | S29 | 100 | 93.75 | 85.71 | 100 | 92 |
| | S8 | 68.75 | 50.00 | 64.29 | 78.57 | 63 | | | S30 | 87.50 | 68.75 | 100 | 92.86 | 84 |
| | S9 | 81.25 | 75.00 | 100 | 100 | 90 | | G2 | S31 | 87.50 | 87.50 | 92.86 | 100 | 92 |
| | S10 | 81.25 | 68.75 | 100 | 92.86 | 85 | | | S32 | 87.50 | 81.25 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 86 |
| | S11 | 87.50 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 100 | 87 | | | S33 | 93.75 | 81.25 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 86 |
| | S12 | 37.50 | 62.50 | 64.29 | 71.43 | 58 | | | S34 | 37.50 | 68.75 | 50.00 | 78.57 | 57 |
| | S13 | 50.00 | 68.75 | 64.29 | 71.43 | 62 | | | S35 | 81.25 | 87.50 | 71.43 | 100 | 85 |
| P3 | S14 | 100 | 81.25 | 85.71 | 100 | 92 | | | S36 | 100 | 81.25 | 92.86 | 100 | 91 |
| | S15 | 93.75 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 85 | | | S37 | 87.50 | 62.50 | 85.71 | 78.57 | 79 |
| | S16 | 75.00 | 87.50 | 87.71 | 100 | 87 | | | S38 | 81.25 | 50.00 | 100 | 92.86 | 79 |
| | S17 | 37.50 | 25.00 | 21.43 | 28.57 | 27 | | | S39 | 75.00 | 68.75 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 88 |
| | S18 | 68.75 | 81.25 | 71.43 | 78.57 | 76 | | | | | | | | |
| | S19 | 87.50 | 87.50 | 100 | 100 | 91 | | | | | | | | |
| | S20 | 50.00 | 31.25 | 50.00 | 50.00 | 45 | | | | | | | | |
| | S21 | 50.00 | 31.25 | 21.43 | 78.57 | 53 | | | | | | | | |
| | S22 | 68.75 | 100 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 86 | | | | | | | | |

When the researcher analyzed Teacher A’s eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, she discovered that the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in the following categories:

- 12 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored exemplary;

- 14 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students exceeded standards;
- 3 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students met standards;
- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students approached standards; and
- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in academic warning.

When Teacher A discussed the final Kansas State Reading Assessment scores, he said:

I must admit that my students are the higher-level at-risk students, and most of my students would do well on the state assessment without me as a teacher. Plus, I have an advanced class, and those students scored *Exemplary*.

Teacher B and Teacher D

Teacher B and Teacher D taught the following four classes of eleventh grade Language Arts, totaling 38 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students:

- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P1;
- 12 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P2;
- 12 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in G2; and
- 9 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in G3.

The researcher found 12 different combinations in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results. Table 4.22 illustrates the 12 combinations and number of occurrences in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results for Teacher B's and Teacher D's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.

Table 4.22 - Combinations and Occurrences of Teacher B’s and Teacher D’s Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students’ Formative Practice Assessment Results

| Combination | Number of Occurrences |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Decrease, Increase, Increase | 9 |
| Decrease, Increase, Same | 5 |
| Increase, Increase, Increase | 5 |
| Decrease, Increase, Decrease | 4 |
| Increase, Increase, Decrease | 4 |
| Same, Increase, Increase | 3 |
| Increase, Decrease, Increase | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Same | 2 |
| Decrease, Decrease, Increase | 1 |
| Same, Decrease, Increase | 1 |
| Same, Same, Same | 1 |
| Increase, Decrease, Same | 1 |

The researcher found the fluctuation of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores to be as follows:

- 22 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased once;
- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased twice;
- 14 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased once;
- 19 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased twice;
- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased three times;
- 10 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores remained the same once;
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores remained the same twice; and
- 1 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student’s score remained the same three times.

Table 4.23 illustrates the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' results of the formative practice assessments and the students' final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher B and Teacher D's classes.

Table 4.23 - Results of Formative Practice Assessments and Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher B and Teacher D's Classes

| Hr | Stu | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final | | Hr | Stu | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final |
|-----------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| P1 | S40 | 81.25 | 68.75 | 92.86 | 92.86 | 84 | | G2 | S57 | 62.50 | 56.25 | 64.29 | 71.43 | 65 |
| | S41 | 81.25 | 87.50 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 84 | | | S58 | 62.50 | 68.75 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 70 |
| | S42 | 81.25 | 68.75 | 92.86 | 78.57 | 80 | | | S59 | 81.25 | 81.25 | 14.29 | 41.86 | 57 |
| | S43 | 93.75 | 75.00 | 78.57 | 92.86 | 85 | | | S60 | 62.50 | 62.50 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 72 |
| | S44 | 81.25 | 56.25 | 85.71 | 100 | 82 | | | S61 | 43.75 | 68.75 | 35.71 | 78.57 | 55 |
| P2 | S45 | 43.75 | 87.50 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 78 | | S62 | 93.75 | 62.50 | 92.86 | 92.86 | 84 | |
| | S46 | 56.25 | 56.25 | 78.57 | 78.57 | 67 | | S63 | 56.25 | 56.25 | 85.71 | 85.71 | 70 | |
| | S47 | 43.75 | 50.00 | 71.43 | 78.57 | 61 | | S64 | 50.00 | 68.75 | 71.43 | 78.57 | 67 | |
| | S48 | 62.50 | 56.25 | 85.71 | 78.57 | 69 | | S65 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 26 | |
| | S49 | 68.75 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 78.57 | 76 | | S66 | 0.00 | 50.00 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 59 | |
| | S50 | 81.25 | 68.75 | 85.71 | 85.71 | 76 | | S67 | 62.50 | 75.00 | 64.29 | 64.29 | 64 | |
| | S51 | 75.00 | 68.75 | 78.57 | 92.86 | 81 | | S68 | 93.75 | 87.50 | 78.57 | 78.57 | 80 | |
| | S52 | 56.25 | 50.00 | 57.14 | 92.86 | 65 | | G3 | S69 | 43.75 | 43.75 | 71.43 | 85.71 | 56 |
| | S53 | 56.25 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 100 | 79 | | | S70 | 62.50 | 56.25 | 57.14 | 100 | 69 |
| | S54 | 87.50 | 62.50 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 82 | | | S71 | 68.75 | 56.25 | 78.51 | 85.71 | 67 |
| | S55 | 81.25 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 84 | | | S72 | 75.00 | 50.00 | 85.71 | 62.86 | 75 |
| | S56 | 50.00 | 50.00 | 64.29 | 100 | 86 | | | S73 | 68.75 | 62.50 | 50.00 | 64.29 | 59 |
| | | | | | | | | S74 | 37.50 | 62.50 | 78.57 | 71.43 | 64 | |
| | | | | | | | | S75 | 87.50 | 50.00 | 57.14 | 92.86 | 72 | |
| | | | | | | | | S76 | 0.00 | 62.50 | 0.00 | 100 | 38 | |
| | | | | | | | | S77 | 81.25 | 68.75 | 92.86 | 92.86 | 79 | |

When the researcher analyzed Teacher B and Teacher D's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, she discovered that the eleventh grade Language Arts students scored in the following categories:

- 0 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored exemplary;

- 9 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students exceeded standards;
- 14 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students met standards;
- 13 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students approached standards; and
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in academic warning.

When discussing the Kansas State Reading Assessment, Teacher D said:

It's so frustrating because people will see the number of students who did not meet standards, but they will not see the students' improvements. Our students may not have met the standards this year, but we know they improved greatly over the course of the school year.

Teacher C

Teacher C taught the following two classes of eleventh grade Language Arts, totaling 16 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students:

- 8 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P2, and
- 8 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P4.

The researcher found 10 different combinations in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results. Table 4.24 illustrates the 10 combinations and number of occurrences in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results for Teacher C's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.

Table 4.24 - Combinations and Occurrences of Teacher C’s Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students’ Formative Practice Assessment Results

| Combination | Number of Occurrences |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Decrease, Increase, Same | 4 |
| Increase, Decrease, Increase | 3 |
| Decrease, Increase, Increase | 2 |
| Decrease, Increase, Decrease | 1 |
| Decrease, Decrease, Increase | 1 |
| Same, Increase, Increase | 1 |
| Increase, Decrease, Decrease | 1 |
| Increase, Increase, Decrease | 1 |
| Same, Increase, Decrease | 1 |
| Increase, Increase, Same | 1 |

The researcher found the fluctuation of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores to be as follows:

- 11 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased once;
- 3 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased twice;
- 8 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased once;
- 8 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased twice; and
- 7 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores remained the same once.

Table 4.25 illustrates the eleventh grade Language Arts students’ results of the formative practice assessments and their final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher C’s classes.

Table 4.25 - Results of Formative Practice Assessments and Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher C's Classes

| Hr | Student | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final |
|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| P2 | S78 | 93.75 | 62.50 | 100 | 100 | 88 |
| | S79 | 81.25 | 62.50 | 71.43 | 92.86 | 76 |
| | S80 | 75.00 | 75.00 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 79 |
| | S81 | 81.25 | 50.00 | 85.71 | 85.71 | 74 |
| | S82 | 62.50 | 75.00 | 64.29 | 71.43 | 65 |
| | S83 | 81.25 | 81.25 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 80 |
| | S84 | 56.25 | 68.75 | 57.14 | 42.86 | 59 |
| | S85 | 81.25 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 85.71 | 79 |
| P4 | S86 | 75.00 | 62.50 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 74 |
| | S87 | 81.25 | 87.50 | 71.53 | 78.57 | 74 |
| | S88 | 93.75 | 75.00 | 100 | 100 | 87 |
| | S89 | 81.25 | 56.25 | 85.71 | 71.43 | 66 |
| | S90 | 81.25 | 75.00 | 21.43 | 78.57 | 62 |
| | S91 | 50.00 | 62.50 | 64.29 | 50.00 | 59 |
| | S92 | 31.25 | 50.00 | 57.14 | 57.14 | 44 |
| | S93 | 37.50 | 43.75 | 35.71 | 71.43 | 41 |

When the researcher analyzed Teacher C's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, she discovered that the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in the following categories:

- 0 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored exemplary;
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students exceeded standards;
- 7 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students met standards;
- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students approached standards; and
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in academic warning.

When discussing the state assessment, Teacher C commented:

As a new teacher, I worried about the state assessment and what to expect. My students did not score *Exemplary*, but they all made improvement. As I continue to grow as a teacher, I hope to learn new strategies to help students improve each year.

Teacher E and Teacher H

Teacher E and Teacher H taught the following four classes of eleventh grade Language Arts, totaling 42 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students:

- 10 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P1;
- 12 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P2;
- 11 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P4; and
- 9 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in G3.

The researcher found 12 different combinations in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results. Table 4.26 illustrates the 12 combinations and number of occurrences in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results for Teacher E and Teacher H's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.

Table 4.26 - Combinations and Occurrences of Teacher E and Teacher H’s Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students’ Formative Practice Assessment Results

| Combination | Number of Occurrences |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Decrease, Increase, Increase | 9 |
| Decrease, Decrease, Increase | 8 |
| Decrease, Increase, Decrease | 4 |
| Increase, Decrease, Increase | 4 |
| Increase, Increase, Decrease | 4 |
| Increase, Increase, Same | 4 |
| Increase, Increase, Increase | 3 |
| Decrease, Increase, Same | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Increase | 1 |
| Same, Decrease, Increase | 1 |
| Same, Increase, Decrease | 1 |
| Decrease, Same, Increase | 1 |

The researcher found the fluctuation of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores to be as follows:

- 22 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased once;
- 12 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores decreased twice;
- 17 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased once;
- 22 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased twice;
- 3 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores increased three times; and
- 10 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ scores remained the same once.

Table 4.27 illustrates the eleventh grade Language Arts students’ results of the formative practice assessments and their final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher E and Teacher H’s classes.

Table 4.27 - Results of Formative Practice Assessments and Kansas State Reading

Assessment in Teacher E and Teacher H's Classes

| Hr | Stu | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final | | Hr | Stu | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final |
|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| P1 | S94 | 68.75 | 56.25 | 78.57 | 71.43 | 67 | | P4 | S116 | 62.50 | 68.75 | 92.86 | 78.57 | 69 |
| | S95 | 93.75 | 87.50 | 78.57 | 92.86 | 87 | | | S117 | 50.00 | 68.75 | 57.14 | 64.29 | 63 |
| | S96 | 62.50 | 43.75 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 59 | | | S118 | 100 | 81.25 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 88 |
| | S97 | 81.25 | 62.50 | 100 | 100 | 85 | | | S119 | 25.00 | 75.00 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 62 |
| | S98 | 18.75 | 62.50 | 57.14 | 92.86 | 55 | | | S120 | 75.00 | 75.00 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 79 |
| | S99 | 56.25 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 78.57 | 78 | | | S121 | 37.50 | 75.00 | 28.57 | 64.29 | 60 |
| | S100 | 62.50 | 56.25 | 50.00 | 78.57 | 63 | | | S122 | 87.50 | 62.50 | 71.43 | 85.71 | 76 |
| | S101 | 56.25 | 50.00 | 35.71 | 57.14 | 50 | | | S123 | 50.00 | 62.50 | 78.57 | 78.57 | 60 |
| | S102 | 81.25 | 62.50 | 85.71 | 100 | 82 | | | S124 | 37.50 | 43.75 | 50.00 | 92.86 | 54 |
| | S103 | 68.75 | 43.75 | 64.29 | 71.43 | 63 | | | S125 | 75.00 | 62.50 | 92.86 | 85.71 | 81 |
| P2 | S104 | 93.75 | 68.75 | 78.57 | 78.57 | 76 | | | S126 | 31.25 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 100 | 33 |
| | S105 | 56.25 | 68.75 | 85.71 | 85.71 | 72 | | G3 | S127 | 87.50 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 88 |
| | S106 | 75.00 | 75.00 | 71.43 | 78.57 | 72 | | | S128 | 56.25 | 62.50 | 92.86 | 78.57 | 71 |
| | S107 | 50.00 | 68.75 | 71.43 | 71.43 | 59 | | | S129 | 62.50 | 56.25 | 42.86 | 78.57 | 63 |
| | S108 | 50.00 | 50.00 | 85.71 | 78.57 | 64 | | | S130 | 56.25 | 62.50 | 78.57 | 85.71 | 70 |
| | S109 | 56.25 | 50.00 | 71.43 | 85.71 | 65 | | | S131 | 75.00 | 50.00 | 78.57 | 71.43 | 66 |
| | S110 | 87.50 | 75.00 | 78.57 | 85.81 | 82 | | | S132 | 93.75 | 87.50 | 85.71 | 92.86 | 87 |
| | S111 | 37.50 | 75.00 | 85.71 | 71.43 | 63 | | | S133 | 31.25 | 12.50 | 28.57 | 42.86 | 24 |
| | S112 | 62.50 | 75.00 | 78.57 | 78.57 | 71 | | | S134 | 43.75 | 68.75 | 35.71 | 78.57 | 54 |
| | S113 | 56.25 | 43.75 | 21.43 | 28.57 | 35 | | | S135 | 68.75 | 62.50 | 85.71 | 78.57 | 71 |
| | S114 | 75.00 | 68.75 | 64.29 | 85.71 | 71 | | | | | | | | |
| | S115 | 62.50 | 56.25 | 57.14 | 85.71 | 50 | | | | | | | | |

When the researcher analyzed Teacher E and Teacher H's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, she discovered that the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in the following categories:

- 0 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored exemplary;
- 8 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students exceeded standards;
- 12 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students met standards;
- 17 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students approached standards; and

- 5 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored in academic warning.

When discussing the eleventh grade Language Arts students' Kansas State Reading Assessment score, Teacher H said:

It was my goal to get every student to meet standards, but that didn't happen. However, [Teacher E] and I have a significant number of at-risk and special education students. I know that their scores would be much lower if we did not co-teach. If a student scored *Approaching Standard*, then his skills were probably much lower, probably in the *Academic Warning* category. And if a student was in the *Academic Warning* category, his skills were extremely low. It's not enough to show that the students' scores are increasing and their skills are getting better; instead, we must meet standards, and it can't be done to 100%. We are going to have problems making AYP this year.

Teacher F

Teacher F taught one class of eleventh grade Language Arts. Teacher F taught three eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in P1. The researcher found two different combinations in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results. Table 4.28 illustrates the two combinations and number of occurrences in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results for Teacher E and Teacher H's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students.

Table 4.28 - Combinations and Occurrences of Teacher F's Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students' Formative Practice Assessment Results

| Combination | Number of Occurrences |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Decrease, Increase, Same | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Same | 1 |

The researcher found the fluctuation of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores to be as follows:

- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores decreased once;
- 3 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores increased once;
- 22 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores increased twice;
- 2 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores remained the same once; and
- 1 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student's score remained the same twice.

Table 4.29 illustrates the eleventh grade Language Arts students' results of the formative practice assessments and their final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher F's class.

Table 4.29 - Results of Formative Practice Assessments and Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher F's Class

| Hr | Student | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final |
|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| P1 | S136 | 87.50 | 87.50 | 100 | 100 | 93 |
| | S137 | 100 | 81.25 | 92.86 | 92.86 | 93 |
| | S138 | 93.75 | 81.25 | 92.86 | 92.86 | 92 |

When the researcher analyzed Teacher F's eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, she discovered that all three of the eleventh grade Language Arts students scored *Exemplary*. Teacher F commented:

I know the pressure is there for eleventh grade English teachers to get the students to meet the standards. I don't have to worry like they do because my class is an A.P. class,

and my students have no problems meeting the standards. It is important to remember that low scores are not necessarily a reflection of the teacher.

Teacher G

Teacher G taught the following two classes of eleventh grade special education Language Arts, totaling 19 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students:

- 9 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students in P1; and
- 10 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students in P4.

The researcher found five different combinations in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results. Table 4.30 illustrates the five combinations and number of occurrences in the fluctuation of the formative practice assessment results for Teacher G’s eleventh grade special education Language Arts students.

Table 4.30 - Combinations and Occurrences of Teacher G’s Eleventh Grade Special Education Language Arts Students’ Formative Practice Assessment Results

| Combination | Number of Occurrences |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Same, Same, Same | 13 |
| Decrease, Decrease, Increase | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Decrease | 2 |
| Same, Increase, Increase | 1 |
| Increase, Decrease, Increase | 1 |

The researcher found the fluctuation of eleventh grade special education Language Arts students’ scores to be as follows:

- 3 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students’ scores decreased once;
- 2 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students’ scores decreased twice;
- 4 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students’ scores increased once;

- 2 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students' scores increased twice;
- 3 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students' scores remained the same once; and
- 13 eleventh grade special education Language Arts student's score remained the same three times.

Of Teacher G's 19 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students, 13 of the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students scored 0.00 on all four of the formative practice assessments. Table 4.31 illustrates the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students' results of the formative practice assessments and their final score on the Kansas State Reading Assessment in Teacher G's classes.

Table 4.31 - Results of Formative Practice Assessments and Kansas State Reading

Assessment in Teacher G’s Class

| Hr | Student | Expos | Narr | Pers | Tech | Final |
|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| P1 | S139 | 37.50 | 31.25 | 28.57 | 64.29 | 61 |
| | S140 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 67 |
| | S141 | 18.75 | 62.50 | 7.14 | 78.57 | 88 |
| | S142 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 82 |
| | S143 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 88 |
| | S144 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 73 |
| | S145 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 28.57 | 57.14 | 82 |
| | S146 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 82 |
| | S147 | 37.50 | 43.75 | 28.57 | 85.71 | 90 |
| P4 | S148 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 76 |
| | S149 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 76 |
| | S150 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 28.57 | 0.00 | 90 |
| | S151 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 64.29 | 0.00 | 94 |
| | S152 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 76 |
| | S153 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 76 |
| | S154 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 78 |
| | S155 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 86 |
| | S156 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 84 |
| | S157 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 86 |

When the researcher analyzed Teacher G’s eleventh grade special education Language Arts students’ scores on the Kansas State Reading Assessment, she discovered that the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students scored in the following categories:

- 5 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students scored exemplary;
- 6 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students exceeded standards; and
- 8 eleventh grade special education Language Arts students met standards.

All 19 of Teacher G’s eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were administered the KAMM; therefore, their scores were not comparable to the general Kansas State Reading Assessment that was administered to the other eleventh grade disadvantaged

Language Arts students. When discussing the eleventh grade Language Arts students' formative practice assessments, Teacher G said:

My students always do poorly on the formative practice assessments because those assessments are not an accurate reflection of the KAMM. The state does not have computerized formative practice KAMM assessments. I give the practice assessments to teach the students how to take the assessment on the computer. The state doesn't have the computerized practice KAMMs, but the students must take the test on the computer.

In reviewing the formative practice assessment results, the researcher noticed that the eleventh grade disadvantaged students' scores decreased, increased, and remained the same. The fluctuation was inconsistent; and while some patterns were consistent, other patterns were individual to an eleventh grade Language Arts teacher. However, except for Teacher G, the number of increased formative practice assessment results was greater than the number of decreased formative practice assessment results, as well as the scores that remained the same. Furthermore, Teacher A had two students who increased their formative practice assessment results three times; Teacher B and Teacher D had five students that increased their formative practice assessment results three times; and Teacher E and Teacher H had three students that increased their formative practice assessment results three times. The researcher did not include Teacher G in this data because she administered the KAMM to her eleventh grade special education students. Because the formative practice assessments are not comparable to the KAMM, the above results would be skewed. However, the number of increased formative practice assessment results for Teacher G's eleventh grade special education Language Arts students was greater than the number of decreased formative practice assessment results. Teacher

G had 13 students that scored the same each time on the formative practice assessments, but the scores were all 0.00.

The implication of the increased formative practice assessment results showed that many of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students improved when they were administered the formative practice assessments. Cooper (2004) stated that students “have benefited from computerized practice tests that prepare them for the real thing” (p. 58). Heritage (2007) stated that formative practice assessments “can provide teachers and their students with the data that they need” (p. 141). One purpose for formative practice assessments is to establish where students are in their learning (Heritage, 2007; William & Thompson, 2008). Once teachers know where the students are in their learning, teachers can identify the gap between the student’s knowledge and the educational goal and teach the students the skills necessary to close the gap (Heritage, 2007). Cooper (2004) indicated that there is “tremendous improvement in the deficit areas” when formative practice assessments are administered regularly and the data is used to strengthen students’ understandings (p. 58).

Adjustment of Teaching Strategies in Eleventh Grade Language Arts

After each formative practice assessment, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers accessed a detailed report that showed each eleventh grade Language Arts student’s progress for each state reading standard. These detailed reports documented each eleventh grade Language Arts student’s understanding of the state reading standard based on the student’s performance on the formative practice assessments. With this information, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers decided which standards needed more attention, which standards the eleventh grade Language Arts students understood, and which students needed intense instruction. Furthermore,

the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers decided which instructional strategies were helping the eleventh grade Language Arts students and which instructional strategies needed revised.

To determine instructional changes made in the classroom delivery, the researcher interviewed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers at the close of the observation period. This research study elicited a small sample of perspectives on changing the teaching strategies based on the formative practice assessment results. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers briefly discussed how they determined changes in their teaching strategies based on the results of the formative practice assessments. The researcher highlighted the information gleaned from the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' interviews based on influences that encouraged the teachers to change their teaching strategies after the eleventh grade disadvantaged students were administered the formative practice assessments. From the responses of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, the researcher compiled the responses in three groups: the importance of a literacy coach, the importance of new strategies, and the importance of reflection.

The Importance of a Literacy Coach

Six of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned that the literacy coach was an asset to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher D, Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher H responded:

- We [Echo High School] have a literacy coach who often pulls kids out to help with reading. She does a lot of work during seminar. We [eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and literacy coach] get to them [eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students] if it's noticed that the students need help (Teacher A).

- There is a literacy coach. She works mostly with at-risk students and helps them when they are struggling (Teacher B).
- The literacy coach will do a lot of one-one-one learning with the struggling students and teach strategies (Teacher D).
- There is a literacy coach that tracks the students' scores. She'll pull certain students out and do fluency strategies with them and give them a lot of one-one-one attention (Teacher F).
- We [Echo High School] have a literacy coach (Teacher G).
- There is a literacy coach who takes at-risk students and guides them through the formative practice tests. There is a practice formative test first to determine who is struggling, and then the at-risk students are pulled out. The literacy coach goes over certain strategies to help the students on assessments. It also helps having a co-teacher in the classroom because she can pull students out, too (Teacher H).

The Importance of New Strategies

Seven of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers said they made changes to the strategies they used in their classroom based on the formative practice assessment results.

Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher H stated:

- I focus on the areas that students score low on. There is no need to re-teach what they already know (Teacher B).
- I definitely change how I teach in the classroom based on the practice results. I see students who are having trouble with comprehension, so we focus on comprehension. If students are having problems identifying literary elements or anything they are struggling with, then we'll hit those points harder. I keep focusing on different areas;

the areas in which the students are lowest. The first time the students took the practice test, the scores were not so good. I realized there were some questions that some students couldn't answer, and the questions were beyond what I was teaching them. I had to start teaching to those questions (Teacher C).

- I change how I teach in the classroom. If the students aren't getting a concept, it is my fault, not theirs. It is my responsibility, duty, and obligation to find a way to help them learn the material. Some strategies work for some and not others. The key is to keep modifying and keep trying until the right strategy is found (Teacher D).
- After the practice assessments, I note the things the students are low on. We [Teacher H and Teacher E] work together to modify strategies and find strategies that work with each student. I always think that something is going to stick (Teacher E).
- Sometimes I change my strategies, and sometimes I don't. The first formative practice test gives me a feel for where the students are performing. I don't change too much. After the second practice test, if they haven't improved, then I definitely change things. For some students that means direct instruction. For others it just means more intensity in what we've been doing. For some students it means they do extra sessions with the literacy coach or with me during seminar. It depends on what the student needs. After the second practice test, I really have a feel for what the students need. I'll give two more practice tests because it gives me a feel for how the kids are performing right before the test. Formatives are flawed, and I take them with a grain of salt. But it gives me an idea as to how the students will perform on the real assessment (Teacher F).

- I change things quite a bit. In fact, everyday. I change my strategies depending on the students' mood and attitudes. My students typically do poorly in all areas, but I try to focus on the lowest areas (Teacher G).
- I try to make changes. I knew that my kids' narrative scores were bad, and I knew that the students couldn't read between the lines of any text. The kids cannot make inferences. I would focus on the concepts they did not understand. I knew the students got lost in figurative language terminology, so we practiced similes and metaphors much more and with more intensity (Teacher H).

The Importance of Reflection

One of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned that eleventh grade Language Arts teachers must reflect upon the eleventh grade Language Arts students' formative practice assessments and reflect on the strategies being used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. Teacher H said:

This is a new day in education. No longer can teachers tell the students that they earned the score – end of story. No longer can teachers teach everything they want to teach, and as an English teacher, this is very difficult to accept. Until recently, reflection wasn't important to me, but with No Child Left Behind, I must reflect on myself, my strategies, and my students. Reflection goes on much more now than it ever did.

In analyzing the data, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reviewed the eleventh grade Language Arts students' progress after each formative practice assessment. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on the state reading standards in which the eleventh grade Language Arts students performed poorly. By reviewing the formative practice assessment data, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had a better understanding of which standards the

eleventh grade Language Arts students needed further instruction. The only exception was Teacher G, who taught only eleventh grade special education Language Arts students. Because Teacher G's eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were administered the KAMM, the formative practice assessments did not accurately measure the students' understanding of state reading standards. Instead, Teacher G used booklets that were purchased by the district to administer practice KAMM assessments. By using the formative practice assessment results, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers identified "where the learning problem lies" (Cooper, 2004, p. 58). Cooper (2004) argued that every test question is aligned with state reading standards; therefore, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers identified the eleventh grade Language Arts students' lowest standard performance. By providing the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers with the formative practice assessment results, the teachers gained insight into the eleventh grade Language Arts students' weaknesses to "move learning forward" (Heritage, 2007, p. 140).

When the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reviewed the formative practice assessment results, they determined what instructional strategies needed to change within the classroom delivery of the lesson. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, except Teacher A, stated that they changed their instructional strategies based on the formative practice assessment results. Except for Teacher A, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers said they changed their instructional strategies based on the formative practice assessments, focusing on the eleventh grade Language Arts students' lowest state reading standards. Many of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned that they taught the lowest state reading standards with intensity, involving the literacy coach.

Except for Teacher C and Teacher E, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the importance of the literacy coach. Teacher C was a first year teacher, and he may not have mentioned the literacy coach in the interview because he did not associate the literacy coach as an integral part of the preparation for the state reading assessment. Teacher E was a special education co-teacher, and she may have utilized her co-teacher more than the literacy coach. Regardless, six of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the importance of the literacy coach in detail.

Literacy coaches, also referred to as instructional coaches, assist teachers with enhancing the success of students by observing, providing constructive feedback, modeling, and teaching self-reflection (Taylor, 2008). Echo High School's literacy coach was engaged in the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' learning, and she worked closely with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to assist in the students' success. Reiss (2007) stressed the importance of instructional coaches engaging in a collaborative process to promote student achievement success. Furthermore, the literacy coach at Echo High School collaborated with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The literacy coach regularly visited the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms and eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Throughout the year, the literacy coach collaborated with eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, and she worked with the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in small groups and individually. Knight (2007) argued that "collaboration is the lifeblood of instructional coaching" (p. 27).

Perceived Impacts of Formative Practice Assessments

The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on the state reading standards throughout the 2008-2009 academic school year in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. Much of the preparation included building the state reading standards into classroom

activities. As the second semester started, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reserved the mobile labs so the eleventh grade Language Arts students could take the formative practice assessments. Each eleventh grade Language Arts teacher administered one formative practice assessment for each area on the state reading assessment (expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical). After administering the state reading assessment, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers identified the benefits and challenges of the preparation process.

To determine the perceived impacts of the preparation process, the researcher interviewed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers at the close of the observation period. This research study elicited a small assortment of perspectives on the perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement. The researcher highlighted the information collected from the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' interviews based on the teachers' perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers shared benefits and successes of the preparation process, as well as the challenges and drawbacks of the preparation process.

Perceived Benefits of the Preparation Process

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed perceived benefits of the preparation process on student improvement. In relationship to the perceived benefits of the preparation process, all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers described the perceived benefits of the formative practice assessments. The researcher categorized the positive comments into four groups: immediacy of scores, knowledge of computers, positive effects, and raising scores. Table 4.32 illustrates the positive outcomes that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers believed to have resulted from the preparation process.

Table 4.32 – Positive Outcomes of the Preparation Process

| Teacher | Immediacy of Scores | Knowledge of Computers | Positive Effects | Raising Scores |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Teacher A | | | X | |
| Teacher B | | X | | X |
| Teacher C | | X | X | X |
| Teacher D | X | X | X | X |
| Teacher E | | X | X | |
| Teacher F | X | | | X |
| Teacher G | X | | | |
| Teacher H | X | X | | |

Immediacy of Scores

Four of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed the positive outcomes of the immediacy of scores when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were administered the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher D, Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher H positively responded:

- Scores are instant and meaningful. It takes the suspense out of waiting (Teacher D).
- [I prefer] computerized. I get the test scores right away. I don't have to grade anything. I don't have to send materials to other people to grade. It's convenient and efficient (Teacher F).
- For the students, I like the computerized. The results are instant on the practice tests (Teacher G).
- I like the fact that we get our scores quickly. Instant feedback (Teacher H).

Knowledge of Computers

Five of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed the positive outcomes of the students' knowledge of computers when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts

students were administered the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment.

Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher E, and Teacher H positively responded:

- Students are better on the computer since that is all they know (Teacher B).
- [I prefer the] computer. They're on the computer so much nowadays that it's not a big change for them. They get on the computer and know exactly what to do (Teacher C).
- The students like the computer better because that is the only way they have learned as they've grown up (Teacher D).
- I think kids are just so zoned into computers that they can do it easily (Teacher E).
- Computers are a venue that the students play in all the time, so they're not unfamiliar with computers (Teacher H).

Positive Effects

Four of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed the positive effects of formative practice assessments when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were administered the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher A, Teacher C, Teacher D, and Teacher E positively responded:

- It seems that the students that do well on the practice test do well on the tests. I know exactly who's going to score well (Teacher A).
- They [eleventh grade Language Arts students] know how many questions, what kinds of questions are asked, and the things to look for. When the students take the real thing, they've been through it. It's just staying focused and not giving them test anxiety (Teacher C).
- The more practice you give them, the better they get (Teacher D).

- You [the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher] knew some [eleventh grade Language Arts students] were going to do well no matter how many times they took the practice tests. And then you [the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher] could see the kids who did fine and should've done fine on the real one [state reading assessment], but were blowing it off (Teacher E).

Raising Scores

Four of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed positive outcomes of the students' rising formative practice assessment scores when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students took the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, and Teacher F positively responded:

- I have a co-teacher in the room who is also a special education teacher, and she helps with the lower-ended kids. Because of my co-teacher, the lower-ended kids score higher. The good kids will do well no matter what. There will always be kids who do poorly, or stay the same, but I think it [formative practice assessments] does help the students perform better (Teacher B).
- Some [formative practice assessment scores] will go up, some will stay the same, and some will go down. It depends on how much effort they [eleventh grade Language Arts students] put into it. But disadvantaged students take the first formative practice assessment, and they look at their score. The second time they take it, they see they've done better, and that's a huge boost to them. They see they do better, and it gives them the extra boost (Teacher C).

- The higher students are going to make it, usually, no matter what. The average students, they usually do well, and if they are motivated, they usually meet standards (Teacher D).
- I'd say disadvantaged students' scores increase or stay the same when using the formative practice assessments because they are getting practice (Teacher F).

Perceived Challenges of the Preparation Process

Six of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed perceived challenges regarding the preparation process on student improvement. Teacher A and Teacher E did not express any challenges or drawbacks to the preparation process. The researcher categorized the drawbacks into four groups: negative impact on teaching, negative impact of computers, low scores, and special education challenge. Table 4.33 illustrates what the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers believed to be the challenges of the preparation process.

Table 4.33 – Challenges of the Preparation Process

| Teacher | Negative Impact on Teaching | Negative Impact of Computers | Low Scores | Special Education Challenge |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher B | X | | | |
| Teacher C | | | X | |
| Teacher D | X | | X | |
| Teacher F | | X | X | |
| Teacher G | | | | X |
| Teacher H | | X | X | |

Negative Impact on Teaching

Two of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed challenges regarding the negative impact on teaching when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were preparing for the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher B and Teacher D responded:

- We [eleventh grade Language Arts teachers] are worried about scores and how they reflect on us. We are score driven. We teach to the test. We fill each class period with state assessment prep materials (Teacher B).
- We are test driven. We teach to the test (Teacher D).

Negative Impact of Computers

Two of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed challenges regarding the negative impact of computers when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were administered the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher F and Teacher H responded:

- I think for some of the students, the computer might hurt their eyes a little bit. There have also been problems with the lighting. A glare on the computer makes it hard to students to comfortably see the screen (Teacher F).
- A lot of reading strategies require students to annotate on the test. It's just not the same annotating a short story onto the text and annotating onto the computer. It definitely doesn't translate from classroom skills to the computer (Teacher H).

Low Scores

Four of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed challenges regarding the low formative practice assessment scores when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were administered the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher F, and Teacher H responded:

- Some [formative practice assessment scores] will go up, some will stay the same, and some will go down. It depends on how much effort they [eleventh grade Language Arts students] put into it (Teacher C).
- The lower students, at-risk and special education students, really struggle. There will always be students who don't raise their scores. Whether they are lazy, unmotivated, or just don't get it (Teacher D).
- Statistically speaking, we're not going to get 100 percent. We're going to hit a plateau, and I think we've reached that plateau. Given the number of mixed demographics, and the influx of students in and out of the school, we've done great. But we can't keep going higher (Teacher F).
- The scores of at-risk students really fluctuate. That's a problem. That's what makes them at-risk. Some days they are focused. Other days they are not focused. They sit down and try to do well, but they don't do well. So they have a low self-esteem and other priorities. I try to bribe them to do well, but it's like a carrot on a stick for my kids. I believe they want to try and do better. And you have all the formative practice assessments. They get tired of taking them, and they keep asking me, "Is this the real test? Is this the one?" By the time we get to the actual state assessment, the impact is gone. But they need the practice to do well on the state assessment. It's a Catch 22 (Teacher H).

Special Education Challenge

One of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed challenges regarding practicing for the KAMM when eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were

administered the formative practice assessment and the state reading assessment. Teacher G responded:

The KAMM doesn't have practice assessments on the computer, so my students still practice by pencil/paper. I administer formative practice assessments to my students so they understand how the computer assessment works. They take the KAMM assessment on the computer, but there are no practice assessments for the KAMM on the computer.

In analyzing the data, the researcher noticed that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers perceived the formative practice assessments to be an integral part of the state assessment preparation process. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers prepared for the state reading assessment throughout the academic school year, they focused on the formative practice assessments as impacting student improvement. All eight of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers perceived benefits to student improvement by administering the formative practice assessments. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers were divided on the perceived benefits, the group focused on the formative practice assessments. The perceived benefits and challenges of the preparation process are consistent with the research.

Five of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned that practicing for the state assessment was the key to the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' success. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers administered the formative practice assessments four times in their classrooms before the state reading assessment. Cooper (2004) stated, "By taking practice tests four to five times prior to the state testing, students are showing significant improvement within their deficit areas" (p. 59).

Four of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the immediacy of the scores. The immediacy of the scores allowed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to

change their instructional strategies and focus on the lower state reading standards. Cooper (2004) stated, “By quickly identifying the problems, there is plenty of time to address learning deficits and to help students succeed in these areas” (p. 59).

Two of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned that when eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students felt success and saw positive results, they were motivated to perform better. Stiggins (1999) argued that students “succeed academically only if they want to succeed and feel capable of doing so” (p. 191). One eleventh grade Language Arts teacher reported that the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were given a “morale boost” when they saw the high formative practice assessment score. According to Altshuler and Schmautz (2006), “positive self-concept fosters achievement, and successful achievement strengthens self-concept” (p. 9).

One eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the importance of understanding the eleventh grade Language Arts students’ skills and comprehension. Heritage (2007) believed that a core element of formative assessment was to identify the gap. When the gap is identified, the teacher can address students’ current status of learning and better prepare them for the educational goal.

In addition to the perceived benefits of the preparation process, six of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the perceived challenges of the preparation process. Two of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on the perceived challenges of the formative practice assessments. The other five eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned perceived challenges in the classroom.

Two eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reported that too much time was spent on preparing for state assessments, and there was not enough time to teach many other units of

study. Smith (1991) stated that teachers feel compelled to teach to the state assessment in hopes of raising the students' scores. Furthermore, Marchant (2004) argued that "teachers tend to narrow the scope of their curriculum to that which is tested" (p. 4). With NCLB holding teachers accountable for the state reading standards, teachers have set aside other units they had taught in the past. According to Nichols and Berliner (2008), "the time spent talking about, preparing for, and taking tests has increased exponentially" (p. 14). Centolanza (2004) argued that teachers usually teach to the state assessment because there is little time to teach creatively.

Two eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the challenge with eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stated that too many disadvantaged students struggled, and the students' scores fluctuated too much. Furthermore, many eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students did not put much effort into preparing for the state reading assessment. Garner (2008) reported that many "teachers are challenged to help resistant and struggling learners" (p. 32). Furthermore, disadvantaged students who do not put effort into preparing for the state assessment often lack desire or confidence to succeed (Stiggins, 1999). Altshuler and Schmutz (2006) found that "negative academic self-concept has a limiting effect on academic achievement" (p. 9).

One eleventh grade Language Arts teacher described the challenge of preparing eleventh grade special education Language Arts students for the KAMM, using the formative practice assessments. Teacher G struggled with administering the formative practice assessments when the eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were administered the KAMM. Stiggins (1999) argued that students must first experience success in a classroom assessment before they will develop confidence. Teacher G reported that the eleventh grade special

education Language Arts students did not try on the formative practice assessments because few of them saw positive results.

Recommendations of Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers

Although the researcher discovered many instructional strategies that were implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to support the framework of this study, the researcher interviewed the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to gain knowledge regarding their experiences in preparing for the state reading assessment. Upon completing the classroom observations, the researcher conducted interviews with the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers.

In conducting her interviews, the researcher discovered a multitude of recommendations that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers suggested to other Language Arts teachers who prepare the disadvantaged Language Arts population for the state reading assessment. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reflected on their classroom experiences when preparing the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts population. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers made recommendations based on what had and had not been successful in their eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers verbalized recommendations to other Language Arts teachers as they prepare the disadvantaged Language Arts population for the state reading assessment. The researcher categorized the recommendations into five groups: academic strategies, preparation strategies, personal strategies, relationship strategies, and miscellaneous strategies. Table 4.34 illustrates the topics that were important to eleventh grade Language Arts teachers when providing recommendations to other Language Arts teachers.

Table 4.34 – Recommendations of Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers

| Teacher | Academic Strategies | Preparation Strategies | Personal Strategies | Relationship Strategies | Miscellaneous Strategies |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Teacher A | | X | | | |
| Teacher B | X | X | X | | X |
| Teacher C | X | | | | |
| Teacher D | X | X | X | X | X |
| Teacher E | X | | | X | |
| Teacher F | X | | | | |
| Teacher G | X | | X | X | |
| Teacher H | X | | | | X |

Academic Strategies

Seven of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended that other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focus on the academic teaching and interaction that occurs in the classroom. Of the seven eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that recommended focusing on academic teaching and interaction, only two of the teachers verbalized the same academic recommendation. Teacher B and Teacher D mentioned that eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should be repetitive in their directions and academic teaching. Furthermore, of the seven eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that recommended focusing on academic teaching and interaction, only Teacher C and Teacher F solely recommended academic suggestions. Below are the recommendations from Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher H. The researcher disclosed all of the recommended academic strategies suggested by the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The recommendations were not ranked; instead, the researcher wrote the recommendations in the order in which the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers presented the recommendations in the interviews.

- Don't assume the students learn the information in one or two times. Repetition (Teacher B).

- Find interesting ways to teach the information. Relate the material to the students' personal lives (Teacher B).
- Make sure the students know how to use the computer (Teacher B).
- Know what the test is going to ask of the students (Teacher C).
- Teach the students higher level thinking skills, and make sure they aren't just doing the basic things (Teacher C).
- Teach the students to analyze and go beyond comprehension. Look at things in a new way (Teacher C).
- Modify or adapt the work to fit the students' needs (Teacher D).
- Be repetitive (Teacher D).
- Tweak things to the population of students to which you [the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher] are teaching (Teacher E).
- Don't be naïve. Don't think that you [the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher] can teach the way you always have because it speaks to children. Don't think that the students are going to go hard and do well on the test because they aren't (Teacher F).
- Teach them [eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students] strategies to overcome the biases of testing and cultural biases found on the tests (Teacher F).
- Tell the students that they can succeed on the test, and when it is too hard, explain to the students that the test makers do a poor job of writing the test (Teacher F).
- Keep students engaged (Teacher G).
- The teacher is going to have to give up some of the things that make literature teachers happy (Teacher H).

- These students [eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students] need these [state standards] skills. When students graduate from high school, they aren't competing in the national field anymore, but they are competing against other countries that have millions more children than we do. We send our kids into the world market (Teacher H).
- Know your [the eleventh grade Language Arts teacher] content forwards and backwards (Teacher H).
- Teachers need to be aware of what their instruction is and be overt in knowing the objectives (Teacher H).

Preparation Strategies

Three of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended that other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focus on the preparation that occurs in classroom objectives. Of the three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that recommended preparation in the classroom, all three of the teachers verbalized that the entire year should be used to prepare for the state reading assessment. Furthermore, of the three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that recommended preparing for the state reading assessment all year, only Teacher A solely recommended preparation in his recommendations. Below are the recommendations from Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher D:

- Teachers need to prepare for state assessments all year. Students need to read every single day. The teacher needs to give students a schedule and keep it. The students should be tested frequently as checkpoints (Teacher A).
- Begin preparing for state assessments at the beginning of the year! Not in the middle of the year (Teacher B).

- Use the year to prepare (Teacher D).

Personal Strategies

Three of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended that other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focus instruction on personal strategies. Although not all three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers verbalized the same personal strategy, one of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned the same personal strategy as the other two eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Teacher B and Teacher G mentioned that eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should be creative. Teacher D and Teacher G mentioned that eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should be patient. Below are the recommendations from Teacher B, Teacher D, and Teacher G:

- The teacher must find interesting ways to teach the information. Be creative (Teacher B).
- Be patient (Teacher D).
- Be patient. Be empathetic. Keep the students engaged, which means being creative. Be flexible (Teacher G).

Relationship Strategies

Three of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended that other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focus on relationships with co-workers and the eleventh grade Language Arts students. Relationships with coworkers should be professional and respectful, and co-workers should work together to determine what is best for the students. Co-workers should be supportive of one another, and each teacher should feel comfortable with approaching a co-worker. Relationships with students should be respectful. Teachers should have

an understanding of students' home-life and their interests. Teachers should be considerate and empathetic to students' needs, and teachers should assist students in their endeavor towards success. Of the three eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who recommended focusing on relationships, two of the teachers verbalized the same relationship while another combination of two eleventh grade Language Arts teachers verbalized another relationship. Teacher D and Teacher E mentioned that eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should know and understand the eleventh grade Language Arts students. Teacher D and Teacher G mentioned that eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should feel comfortable asking peers for suggestions. Below are the recommendations from Teacher D, Teacher E, and Teacher G:

- Know the special education teachers! Go to them. Ask them for suggestions (Teacher D).
- Know the students and their personalities. Know their strengths and weaknesses. Know how they learn (Teacher D).
- Know the students. Understand the student population in the classroom. Don't have preconceived notions of disadvantaged students. Get to know each student (Teacher E).
- Ask questions if you [eleventh grade Language Arts teacher] don't understand something or ask for suggestions or advice (Teacher G).

Miscellaneous Strategies

Three of the eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended that other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focus on strategies that were not mentioned by any other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Below are the recommendations from Teacher B, Teacher D, and Teacher H:

- Reward students for doing well (Teacher B).
- Don't take things personally (Teacher D).
- Don't complain because NCLB is here and testing must be done. Always remember the intent of NCLB – it's for the students (Teacher H).
- Not every student can be saved (Teacher H).

The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended a wide variety of recommendations to other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Some recommendations were discussed once while other recommendations were discussed more than once. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers based their recommendations on what had worked successfully for them in the past as well as what had not worked successfully for them in the past. The recommendations of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers are consistent with the research.

Four of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed the importance of knowing the state assessment. By knowing the test, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers could better prepare the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state assessment. Heritage (2007) argued that teachers must have knowledge of the assessment in order for the assessment to be successful.

Three of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the importance of teaching higher-level thinking skills. The skills needed on the state reading assessment go beyond basic reading and comprehension skills. The state reading assessment requires higher-level thinking skills to answer the questions correctly. Hanzlicek (2006) reinforced that higher levels of thinking and problem-solving skills are required on state assessments. Furthermore, Keene (2008) contended that students must engage in rigorous discourse for deeper understandings to occur.

Three eleventh grade Language Arts stated that teachers must be creative, patient, flexible, and empathetic. Berliner and Biddle (1995) stated that what works for some students will not work for other students. Patience and creativity were important characteristics to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers when they prepared eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. Brimijoin (2002) argued that teachers need to be flexible when giving students tasks and creative when finding resources. Furthermore, Carbo (2008) and Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005) suggested being flexible in the classroom by allowing for movement, comfortable seating, varied lighting, different groupings. Furthermore, two of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stated that teachers needed to modify eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' assignments to fit the students' needs. When eleventh grade Language Arts teachers modify assignments, the teachers are being flexible.

Two of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers recommended that repetition was used in direction and teaching. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stated that disadvantaged students needed to hear the directives more than once or twice; the students needed to experience the directives multiple times for the students to understand the concept being taught. Schweiker-Marra and Pula (2005) explained that disadvantaged students require repetitive active involvement in classroom activities. For disadvantaged students to understand a concept, they need continually to learn a concept over a period of time.

Two of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stated that teachers should know their students' interests. Additionally, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers need to know the students' family background and strategies that are beneficial in helping students in the classroom. Similarly, one eleventh grade Language Arts teachers expressed the importance of attaching relevance to the students' lives, and another eleventh grade Language Arts teacher

expressed the importance of teaching strategies according to the abilities of each eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student. According to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (1989), teachers should develop their strategies based on the students' abilities, interests, prior experiences, and relationships with family and friends (cited in Brimijoin, 2005). Furthermore, Brooks and Brooks (2004) and Keene (2008) discussed that students who relate the classroom information to their own lives have more success in learning and applying the concepts.

Two of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stated that engaging the students was beneficial to classroom learning. Garcia (2006) stated, "Students need to be engaged" (p. 710). Eleventh grade disadvantaged students who were actively engaged in learning understood the concepts better and exhibited more interest in learning. Brimijoin (2005) argued that students need to be engaged with the content, and teachers who implement a variety of research-based instructional strategies have more success keeping students engaged because there is less boredom.

In addition to the recommendations that were mentioned at least twice, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed recommendations that were unique to themselves. In total, six recommendations were mentioned only one time. Five of the six recommendations focused on the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' personal self-concept. The five recommendations focused on knowing special education teachers, asking colleagues for assistance, realizing every student cannot be saved, not complaining, and not taking the performance of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students personally. One recommendation was to reward the eleventh grade Language Arts students when they performed well on an activity.

Support Resources Provided to Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers

In conducting her research, the researcher wanted to learn about the support resources that were available to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. According to Beers (2005) many schools with a high disadvantaged student population have few resources. Knowing the support resources for the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers may assist other districts who have a high disadvantaged student population. The researcher highlighted the support resources gleaned from the administrative leaders' interviews. The researcher discovered that Echo school district provided a variety of resources to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. In the interviews that were conducted after the observation period, the administrative leaders discussed resources that were available in Echo High School and conferences and workshops that were available to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The researcher discussed the support resources in the order that they appeared in the interviews.

Resources Available to Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers

Each of the three administrative leaders discussed district support provided to Echo High School's eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The administrative leaders discussed the following resources that they believed to be responsible for making the high school, eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, and eleventh grade Language Arts teachers successful:

- literacy improvement plan
- professional development plan
- seminar "pull-out" reading class
- literacy focus meetings

- book studies
- literacy labs
- “Read for Me”

However, none of the administrative leaders discussed the same resource.

Leader A and Leader B discussed the school’s literacy improvement plan and the professional development plan for eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Both administrative leaders stated that Echo High School had a literacy improvement plan and a professional development plan to assist eleventh grade Language Arts teachers with strategies to use with eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. Each year, the literacy improvement plan and the professional development plan were reviewed to maximize student learning. Leader A stated, “First and foremost, professional development for our teachers is a valuable resource.”

Leader A and Leader C discussed the seminar “pull-out” reading class that was required for qualifying eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. This seminar “pull-out” time focused on specific eleventh grade Language Arts students and the specific strategies the students needed to perform successfully on the state reading assessment. Language Arts teachers focused on three areas: vocabulary/decoding words, fluency, and comprehension. Leader C explained that the students were administered an assessment at the beginning of the school year to determine if the students needed the seminar “pull-out” reading class. If it was determined that the students needed the seminar “pull-out” reading class, the students were assigned to a specific Language Arts teacher for a certain time during the seminar period.

Leader A discussed other resources that were available to Echo High School. Leader A discussed the three literacy focus meetings that involved the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The literacy focus meetings focused on particular strategies that met specific standards.

By conducting the literacy focus meetings, the standards aligned to the strategies taught in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. Leader A stated:

There are three literacy focus meetings with the English teachers where the focus is on particular strategies that meet the standards. The standards are aligned to the classroom. When the standards are understood, as well as the pieces of literature and what's in the literature books, it helps support those standards.

As part of the literacy focus meetings, book studies were an additional resource. The books were chosen by the literacy coach and read by the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The books focused on disadvantaged students. During focus meetings, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and literacy coach discussed the book and the implications for disadvantaged students.

Furthermore, Leader A stated that Echo High School offered literacy labs to eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. One class offered in the literacy lab was Read 180. Wilson Reading was utilized among the special education teachers to assist special education students with decoding and spelling.

Leader C stated that Echo High School initiated "Read for Me" time. "Read for Me" time was a mandatory reading period where all students and staff were required to read a book for a small length of time. "Read for Me" time engaged students in reading and exposed them to comprehension and fluency. Leader C also stated that having a literacy coach was a wonderful resource. Leader C stated, "It is great to have a literacy coach because she can work with students who have more difficulty. She has taken on additional assessments to indicate where students are having difficulty in reading."

Leader B discussed the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program that was initiated by Echo High School during the 2009-2010 school year. Although AVID was not

implemented at Echo High School, Leader B believed AVID proved to be a program that enhanced the success of disadvantaged students. “AVID, a national, non-profit program that targets average students, has had success in other schools, so I have faith the program will be a success here.” The program was designed for students who did not earn high grades, but high enough grades to gain college entrance. Furthermore, AVID students were traditionally underserved by colleges and secondary schools, including minority groups.

Conferences and Workshops Available to Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers

Each of the three administrative leaders discussed conferences and workshops that were available to Echo High School’s eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The administrative leaders discussed a variety of conferences and workshops; however, the three administrative leaders did not unanimously discuss the same conference or workshop. The researcher quoted the administrative leaders in the order the quotes appeared in the interviews.

Leader A and Leader B discussed a literacy institute where well-known speakers presented to the district to address literacy in the classrooms. All Language Arts teachers were invited to the literacy institute. Leader B stated:

Once we realized that we needed literacy instruction, the district realized sending people out of district cost a lot of money. District leaders would be more effective if they invited the expert to present here. We have had nationally known people come to Echo school district.

Leader A and Leader C discussed staff development activities that was required for all Language Arts teachers to attend. The staff development was based on research and data that pertained to the needs of Echo High School. This staff development included eight built-in professional development days that focused on literacy. The professional development days that

focused on literacy were conducted by teacher leaders who had attended conferences and workshops. Leader C stated, “The district has been so supportive of any teacher who wants to attend conferences and workshops. The teachers come back, share with colleagues, and implement what they learned.”

Furthermore, Leader A mentioned the various conferences and workshops offered by Echo High School. Leader A listed the following conferences and workshops that Language Arts teachers attended: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), International Reading Association Conference, Bureau of Education Research, and Council for Public School Improvement (CPSI). In addition, Echo High School offered an in-district professional education leadership academy hosted by lead teachers.

In analyzing the data, the researcher noted that the three administrative leaders mentioned seven support resources, but none of the administrative leaders mentioned the same support resource. The recommended support resources are consistent with the research. Support resources are important to the success of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students because support resources can strengthen eleventh grade Language Arts teachers’ instructional strategies, knowledge, and understanding. Cotton (2003) argued that leaders continually need to foster an attitude of change toward a vision of improvement to maintain “a focus on raising student achievement” (p. 56). Leaders need to develop action plans to improve student achievement and communicate the plans to the staff members and community (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Furthermore, the administrative leaders discussed workshops and conferences that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers attended. Two of the administrative leaders mentioned the Summer Literacy Institute that was hosted by Echo school district; two of the administrative

leaders mentioned the staff development activities that were built into the school's professional development days; and one of the administrative leaders mentioned the following workshops and conferences which eleventh grade Language Arts teachers could attend: NCTE, International Reading Association Conference, Bureau of Education Research, CPSI, and in-district professional education leadership academies. Professional development opportunities are important for the growth of both building and teachers. Districts should provide "targeted, sustained professional development for acting school principals," enabling building leaders to be better prepared for working with teachers and for initiating and sustaining school improvement efforts (Demoss, 2002, p. 130). In turn, building leaders need to support "teachers' professional development and experimentation" (Cotton, 2003, p. 56). According to Demoss (2002), teachers' professional development opportunities must effectively support their instructional efforts with students. In a 2000 study by Levine and Levine, the researchers discovered that successful principals "provided professional development activities focused on classroom arrangements and instructional strategies and resources," which are especially beneficial for the disadvantaged student population (p. 5). According to Cooley and Shen (2003), professional development that focuses on administrator and teacher skills must be conducted; and both groups should be required to provide evidence of change.

Recommendations of Administrative Leaders

Because leadership is vital with assisting teachers in the state assessment preparation process, the researcher interviewed the administrative leaders at the conclusion of the observation period. The researcher highlighted the recommendations gleaned from the administrative leaders' interviews. In conducting her interviews with the three administrative leaders, the researcher discovered a variety of recommendations that the administrative leaders

suggested to other administrative leaders who were involved in the state assessment process. Each of the administrative leaders reflected on their experiences in preparing for state assessments. The administrative leaders made suggestions based on what had and had not been successful in preparing for state assessments.

The three administrative leaders that the researcher interviewed verbalized recommendations to other administrative leaders as they prepare for the state reading assessment. Because the recommendations highlighted different themes, the researcher categorized the recommendations into five groups: data, standards, professional development, student relationships, and miscellaneous recommendations. Table 4.35 illustrates the topics of importance to administrative leaders when providing recommendations to other administrative leaders.

Table 4.35 – Recommendations Given by Administrative Leaders

| Leader | Data | Standards | Professional Development | Student Relationships | Miscellaneous Recommendations |
|----------|------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Leader A | X | X | X | | |
| Leader B | X | X | | X | X |
| Leader C | X | | | X | |

Data

All of the three administrative leaders recommended that other administrative leaders focus on data. Leader A, Leader B, and Leader C recommended the following:

- Look at your [the school’s] data. The state now supplies that to us [schools] in such an easy-to-read format. You [teachers and leaders] can drill down to individual students. The principals can look at each teacher. If there is something we [leaders] need to do differently for that person, we [leaders] must take action and help. I think schools should have a good formative investment plan in place so teachers are doing

dipstick measures all along and educators aren't surprised by the data in the spring. Be able to aggregate that data (Leader A).

- Teachers need to pay close attention to the data in the instruction to every single student (Leader B).
- I think there should be something annually for every grade level. This could be a pre-test at the end of their [the students'] previous year. Then students take the test again in one year. Is there really a full-year growth? One year later, students should be at least performing at that same score or higher. If students aren't, then have we [the district] done something to lessen his education? The data would help the students grow (Leader C).

Standards

Two of the three administrative leaders recommended that other administrative leaders focus on standards. Both Leader A and Leader B believed focusing on standards was important.

Below are the recommendations from Leader A and Leader B:

- Focus on the standards. The standards are written and they identify what will specifically be on the state assessment (Leader A).
- Pay close, close attention to the standards. The reading standards are high level thinking and you [teachers] can't teach in a recall kind of mode and expect kids to be able to do the reading (Leader B).

Professional Development

Only one of the three administrative leaders recommended that other administrative leaders focus on professional development. Leader A stated, “Give teachers time to look at their data and plan strategies. I call them ‘focus meetings.’ Professional development opportunities support teachers and let them know they are the people who make all the difference.”

Student Relationships

Two of the three administrative leaders recommended that other administrative leaders focus on student relationships. Below are the recommendations from Leader B and Leader C:

- Get to know the students. Build relationships because that’s the only way you’re [the teacher] going to know how to reach every one of them. Understand the backgrounds that they [students] come from and the obstacles they face every day (Leader B).
- I think we’ve [Echo School District] are meeting the needs of most of the kids. We [teachers] aren’t just teaching to one majority of a classroom. We [teachers] really have become almost to an individual learning plan for every student. With MTSS coming into play, I think each teacher with a differentiated instruction needs to focus on each individual student. How do we [educators] reach them [students]? Do we [educators] have the resources for them [students]? A teacher can only know the answers if he knows the student. Every bit of our [district] resources needs to be utilized to help the students grow (Leader C).

Miscellaneous Recommendations

One of the three administrative leaders recommended that other administrative leaders focus on an area that was not mentioned by the other two administrative leaders. Leader B stated, “Be informative. Adjust your [teachers] instruction accordingly.”

In analyzing the data, the researcher found that the administrative leaders’ recommendations were contained to four major areas: knowing the data, knowing the standards, providing professional development, and developing student relationships. The recommendations of the administrative leaders are consistent with the research.

All three of the administrative leaders discussed the importance of knowing the data of assessment scores, including aggregating the data. Ediger and Emeritus (2007) argued that leaders need to continually study and analyze data to enhance the learning environment. Leaders who routinely analyze test data are able to share the results with the staff members and develop action plans for improving student achievement (Cotton, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Two of the administrative leaders expressed the importance of knowing, understanding, and teaching the standards. Because state reading assessments are based on the state reading standards, administrative leaders and eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who know the state reading standards can better prepare eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. When the standards are known and understood, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers can improve their instructional skills. Leaders who collaborate with teachers regarding the standards ensure learning goals are linked to instructional strategies (Cooley & Shen, 2003). Furthermore, leaders who know assessment techniques can help teachers determine what students have learned and not learned (Ediger & Emeritus, 2007).

One leader discussed the need for continuous professional development. Professional development is vital for informing and training teachers. Teachers should regularly be informed of new instructional strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. Teachers' professional development opportunities must effectively support their instructional efforts with students (Demoss, 2002). According to Levine and Levine (2000), successful leaders "provided professional development activities focused on classroom arrangements and instructional strategies and resources," benefiting the disadvantaged student population (p. 5). According to Cooley and Shen (2003), professional development should focus on leader and teacher skills.

Three of the administrative leaders stated that developing student relationships was important. Eleventh grade Language Arts students who know their students' interests, backgrounds, and learning styles have more success in preparing them for the state reading assessment. Furthermore, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should know their eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students well enough to adjust the instruction accordingly. According to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (1989), teachers should develop their strategies based on the students' abilities, interests, prior experiences, and relationships with family and friends (cited in Brimijoin, 2005). Furthermore, Keene (2008) and Brooks and Brooks (2004) argued that students who relate the classroom information to their own lives have more success in learning and applying the concepts.

Summary

Chapter Four presented the findings from the case study conducted at Echo High School investigating strategies implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students on the state reading assessment. Data findings were offered through graphs, tables, and vignettes regarding the strategies implemented

in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to prepare eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. This chapter discussed the findings relating to (a) demographics of participating teachers, (b) demographics of participating administrative leaders, (c) demographics of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, (d) identification of eleventh grade disadvantage Language Arts students, (e) framework used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, (f) research-based strategies implemented by eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, (g) formative practice assessments, (h) adjustment of teaching strategies in eleventh grade Language Arts, (i) perceived impacts of the preparation process, (j) recommendations of eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, (k) support resources provided to eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, and (l) recommendations of administrative leaders.

Data support that the framework (*recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*) was implemented by all of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in a variety of ways. In coding the data from the framework, the researcher discovered that some of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed the framework every class period, while other teachers addressed the framework less often. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers also implemented research-based strategies in the classroom to strengthen the framework. The research-based strategies included: structured lessons, relevant curriculum, comprehensive instruction, collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, formative assessment, drill and practice, test-taking strategies, hands-on experience, special privileges, and extra time. The researcher used the research-based strategies as sub-codes to document what research-based strategies were implemented to enhance the framework of this study.

Furthermore, through data analysis, the researcher discovered that the formative practice assessments created some challenges for eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, but there were many benefits that accompanied the formative practice assessments. The study delved into the perceptions of eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and administrative leaders.

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter presents an overall discussion of the study, implications, and recommendations of the research and data collected within this study. Sections of Chapter 5 include: (a) overview of the study, (b) relationship of the current study to previous research, (c) results, (d) implications of the findings, (e) recommendations for future research, and (f) summary.

Overview of the Study

Because of NCLB, schools are under pressure to succeed by attaining AYP. Not only do schools need to attain AYP annually, but all students also are expected to meet the proficiency standards on state assessments in 2014 (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). Disadvantaged students have the most challenging time meeting the annual proficiency standards (Adams, 2008). Many inexperienced and unqualified teachers do not have the knowledge or resources to know and understand instructional strategies to assist disadvantaged students (Fielder, 2003; Rivers & Sanders, 2000).

Many teachers feel they are not able to be creative in their classrooms because they are expected to focus on the standards being tested. Nichols and Berliner (2008) stated that a number of teachers eliminate hands-on projects and teach more by repetition, and many teachers say that there is “little time to engage in creative interdisciplinary activities or project-based inquiry” (p. 15). According to Centolanza (2004), teachers described their practice by saying they usually taught to the test because there was little time to teach creatively, and they were bored with the continual process of preparing for state assessments.

Unfortunately, what works for some students does not work for other students (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Teachers need foundational skills in differentiation to understand how each student best learns the curriculum (Brimijoin, 2005). Many disadvantaged students are more successful in an environment when movement is not restricted, and they can work in cooperative groups (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Likewise, a number of disadvantaged students frequently understand the curriculum better when the teacher makes “classroom lessons relevant to their everyday lives” (Garcia, 2006, p. 703). For many students, school is boring; for disadvantaged students, school is “worse than ever” when they do not have the opportunity for hands-on learning (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 14). Many educators inadvertently send the message to students that learning new and exciting things is not nearly as important as doing well on the test (Nichols & Berliner, 2008).

Many disadvantaged students do not have the cognitive skills to process the information needed to succeed on the state assessment because they do not have the prior knowledge or experience to make the necessary connections (Garner, 2008). Many educators believe it is crucial that students have the basic skills mastered before going to higher-order thinking (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005); however, many disadvantaged students have not mastered the basic skills (Garner, 2008). Because higher levels of thinking and problem-solving skills are required on state assessments (Hanzlicek, 2006), disadvantaged students tend to have less of a chance of attaining the proficient rating on the state assessment.

Research (e.g., Brimijoin, 2005; Brooks & Brooks, 2004; Carbo, 2008; Garner, 2008; Keene, 2008; Marzano, et. al., 2001) highlights the importance of teachers utilizing strategies in the classroom. Such strategies are especially crucial in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom, as the eleventh grade is the last time students are administered the state assessment.

Although current research (e.g., Brimijoin, 2005; Brooks & Brooks, 2004; Garcia, 2006; Garner, 2008; Keene, 2008; Marzano et al., 2001; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005) provides general strategies for working with disadvantaged students, there was a void in the research concerning the implementation of specific instructional strategies implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment.

The purpose of this study was to explore multiple eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' instructional strategies in several eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school, in order to reveal specific instructional strategies and activities used when preparing disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. This study therefore contributed to the literature of the field in that concrete evidence was gathered and reported as the researcher delineated how instructional strategies were implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. The theoretical framework served as a lens to discover the instructional strategies that were used in the classroom to assist disadvantaged eleventh grade Language Arts students.

Study participants in this qualitative case study included Echo High School's eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Data were collected between March 9, 2009, and April 24, 2009, via classroom observations, individual interviews of teachers and administrative leaders, archival documentation, and field notes. Data were then analyzed through a blending of direct interpretation and categorical aggregation. The multiple sources of data and various participant perspectives enabled the researcher to gain a more complete understanding of the case study. Using the data, the researcher explored: (a) instructional strategies used with disadvantaged students in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school, (b) formative practice assessment data used in preparation for the state reading assessment, (c) changes made in the classroom based on the formative practice assessment results, (d) perceived

impacts of the preparation process on student improvement, (e) recommendations of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers for assisting eleventh grade disadvantaged students in improving their performance on the state reading assessment, (f) resources provided by the district to assist eleventh grade Language Arts teachers as they prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment, and (g) recommendations of the administrative leaders to assist eleventh grade Language Arts teachers as they prepare disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment.

Relationship of the Current Study to Previous Research

The main purpose of this case study was to determine the research-based strategies that were implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school. The case study is significant because there was a void in the research regarding the implementation of specific successful instructional strategies that assisted eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students when they were preparing for the state reading assessment. Through observations of and interviews with the participating eleventh grade Language Arts teachers as well as interviews with administrative leaders, the case study provided valuable insight for eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and administrative leaders. The study focused both on strategies the teachers used to prepare eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment and on administrative leaders' perceptions of their roles in the preparation of students for the state reading assessment.

Previous research indicated that before NCLB, state standards and assessments played a minor role in the school improvement process (Orlich, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). However, beginning in 2001, teachers and administrative leaders were accountable for all students meeting the same standards on the state reading assessment during the same testing

period. Research suggests that because the proficiency percentage is expected to increase each academic year, more schools and districts will fail to attain AYP (National Education Association, 2008b). Many teachers and administrative leaders have been removed from their positions because of poor state assessment results, and most principals' annual evaluations mention the impact the principals had on assessment results (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

One teacher participant in this case study expressed the fear of rising state assessment expectations, noting that if the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored below proficient on the state reading assessment, she might be removed from teaching eleventh grade Language Arts. The current study similarly supported the idea that administrative leaders also have fears related to rising state assessment expectations. One leader participant stated:

I'm scared of the negative impact of not making AYP. We have attained AYP every year, but there is a plateau when students cannot continue to meet standards. There will always be a high number of at-risk and special education students in this school; it is impossible to expect every student to meet standards.

According to NCLB, all schools across the nation are expected to attain AYP each year by meeting the AYP targets "both overall and for various subgroups of students" (Policy Analysis for California Education, 2004, p. 7). NCLB expects states to disaggregate the results of the annual assessments by the subgroups, which include socioeconomic status, race-ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability (Linn et al., 2002).

The researcher determined that 162 students at Echo High School were eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. Of these 162 students, 54 students were categorized in only one subgroup: special education (11 students) and free/reduced lunch (43 students). By contrast, 108 eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were categorized in the low

socioeconomic status subgroup as well as in at least one other subgroup (race-ethnicity, English language proficiency, and/or disability). Consequently, with the mandates set forth by NCLB, 76.7% of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in each subgroup were expected to meet standards on the 2008-2009 state reading assessment (Kansas State Department of Education, 2008b).

Unfortunately, only the White race-ethnicity subgroup attained AYP for the 2008-2009 state reading assessment at Echo High School (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009). The other subgroups at Echo High School did not attain AYP for the 2008-2009 state reading assessment, nor did 76.7% of the total eleventh grade Language Arts student population. In a follow-up discussion with one of the administrative leaders, the researcher was told that too many eleventh grade special education Language Arts students were administered the KAMM, and many of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students scored slightly below the expected score. Although Echo High School did not attain AYP in reading for the 2008-2009 academic school year, Echo High School had attained AYP the five preceding years.

Previous research indicated that disadvantaged students usually attend schools with the fewest resources (Beers, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Beers (2005) discussed the problem stating:

Our children of poverty are most likely to attend schools that are best described as lacking: lacking equipment...lacking cleanliness; lacking computers and Internet access; lacking parental involvement; lacking extracurricular activities; lacking high student achievement; and, lacking enough highly qualified teachers. (p. 82)

However, in comparing Echo High School to other schools with a high number of disadvantaged students, Echo High School did not lack computers and Internet access, extracurricular activities,

or highly qualified teachers. All eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had access to mobile labs that included laptops with Internet access. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers shared the mobile labs, but, as one eleventh grade Language Arts teacher said, “We make it work. We share and work around everyone’s schedule.” Furthermore, Echo High School had 38 activities, not including athletics, in which the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students had the opportunity to be involved. In addition, according to the Kansas State Department of Education (2009), Echo High School employed 100% highly qualified eleventh grade Language Arts teachers during the 2008-2009 academic school year.

Previous research (Carbo, 2008; Hanzlicek 2006; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005) also indicated that students need to master basic skills before learning higher-order thinking skills. However, many disadvantaged students have not mastered the basic skills of “finding patterns and relationships, identifying rules, and generating abstract principles that are relevant in different applications” (Garner, 2008, p. 32). Furthermore, Hanzlicek (2006) found that because higher levels of thinking and problem-solving skills were required on state assessments, many disadvantaged students had a lower chance of attaining the *Meets Standard* level on the state assessment. Garner (2008) believed teachers can use everyday lessons to develop students’ cognitive structures, which include: *recognition, memorization, conservation of constancy, classification, spatial orientation, temporal orientation, and metaphorical thinking*. Furthermore, Marzano et al., (2001) believed cognitive skills are the most important part of all learning. Keene (2008) and Marzano et al. (2001) argued that comparing similarities and differences, classifying information, and creating metaphors and analogies are critical skills that must be taught, modeled, and practiced in the classroom.

Many researchers maintain that strategies can be used within the classroom to enhance students' cognitive structures (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Brimijoin, 2005; Brooks & Brooks, 2004; Carbo, 2008; Deshler & Schumaker, 2006; Garcia, 2006; Keene, 2008; Lenz et al., 2004; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005). According to these researchers, teachers can enhance students' cognitive skills by implementing the following strategies: challenging lessons, relevant curriculum, comprehensive instruction, collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, formative assessment, drill and practice, test taking strategies, hands-on experiences, special privileges, and extra time. In this case study, the researcher discovered that all eight of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers at Echo High School developed students' cognitive structures using the research-based strategies. By using the strategies during their daily lessons, the teachers enhanced the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' cognitive structures and thereby increased the likelihood of their attaining proficiency on the state reading assessment.

Results

The research for this case study was conducted in multiple eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school because this school, which had a steady average of disadvantaged students making up 39% of the eleventh grade reading population, proved successful in attaining AYP the last three years in Language Arts. The following research question was explored in this study:

What instructional strategies are used with disadvantaged students in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms in one Midwest school?

The researcher discovered varying percentages between the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and the framework that the teachers targeted. The researcher discovered that the components of the framework were highly addressed, sometimes addressed, or occasionally

addressed. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers addressed *recognition* more than any other component. *Memorization* was addressed the second most by the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. *Spatial orientation* and *conservation of constancy* was addressed the least by the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. Although all components of the framework were addressed, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on the areas in which they believed the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students would encounter the most on the state reading assessment and in which the students would perform the best.

In addition to the primary research question, one subsequent research question for this study was as follows:

What formative practice assessment data were used in preparation for the state reading assessment?

The researcher noticed that the eleventh grade disadvantaged students' scores decreased, increased, and remained the same. The fluctuation was inconsistent; and while some patterns were consistent, other patterns were individual to an eleventh grade Language Arts teacher. However, in most cases, the number of increased formative practice assessment results was greater than the number of decreased formative practice assessment results, as well as the scores that remained the same. The implication of the increased formative practice assessment results showed that many of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students improved when they were administered the formative practice assessments.

Another subsequent research question was as follows:

What instructional changes were made based on the formative practice assessment results?

The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reviewed the eleventh grade Language Arts

students' progress after each formative practice assessment. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused on the state reading standards in which the eleventh grade Language Arts students performed poorly. By reviewing the formative practice assessment data, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers gained a better understanding of which standards the eleventh grade Language Arts students needed further instruction. By using the formative practice assessment results, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers identified where the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were struggling. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers identified the eleventh grade Language Arts students' lowest standard performance. By providing the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers with the formative practice assessment results, the teachers gained insight into the eleventh grade Language Arts students' weaknesses and were able to focus on these weaknesses.

When the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reviewed the formative practice assessment results, they determined what instructional strategies needed to change within the classroom delivery of the lesson. All but one of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stated that they changed their instructional strategies based on the formative practice assessment results. Many of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers mentioned that they taught the lowest state reading standards with intensity, involving the literacy coach.

The researcher was not in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms during the formative practice assessments. As a result, the researcher did not observe the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers change their instructional strategies. Based on the observations, the researcher found that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers did not focus on strategies to assist the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students with *spatial orientation* and *conservation of constancy* nearly as much as *recognition* and *memorization*. More strategies and

activities needed to focus on *spatial orientation* and *conservation of constancy* because the eleventh grade disadvantaged students did not understand those components as well as the other components.

The third subsequent research question was as follows:

What were the perceived impacts on student improvement related to the process of preparing for state reading assessments?

The researcher noticed that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers perceived the formative practice assessments to be an integral part of the state assessment preparation process. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers prepared for the state reading assessment throughout the academic school year, they focused on the formative practice assessments as impacting student improvement. All eight of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers perceived benefits to student improvement by administering the formative practice assessments. Although the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers were divided on the perceived benefits, the group focused on the formative practice assessments.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' positive comments focused on the students' knowledge of computers, the data that showed the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' scores raised while being administered a series of formative practice assessments, and the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had a strong idea about which eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students would meet the standards on the state reading assessment. In addition to the perceived benefits of formative practice assessments, six of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the perceived challenges of the formative practice assessments.

Although six of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed perceived challenges with the formative practice assessments, there were many more perceived benefits of the formative practice assessments. Many of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers discussed the raising of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' formative practice assessment scores as a result of administering four of the formative practice assessments. However, there are a total of 16 formative practice assessments that could be administered to eleventh grade Language Arts students. More formative practice assessments could have been administered to the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who seemed to be struggling to meet the standards. The literacy coach was an asset to Echo High School, and the literacy coach could have administered more formative practice assessments to the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who needed more practice. The literacy coach could have worked with the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students by going through each question and teaching the students strategies that could help them meet the standards.

Finally, the last subsequent research question for the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers was as follows:

Based on the findings of this study, what recommendations can be made to assist teachers of disadvantaged students to improve performance on the state reading assessment in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom?

The researcher discovered a multitude of recommendations that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers suggested to other Language Arts teachers who prepare the disadvantaged Language Arts population for the state reading assessment. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers reflected on their classroom experiences when preparing the

eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts population. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers made recommendations based on what had and had not been successful in their eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms.

All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers verbalized recommendations to other Language Arts teachers as they prepare the disadvantaged Language Arts population for the state reading assessment. The researcher categorized the recommendations into five groups: academic strategies, preparation strategies, personal strategies, relationship strategies, and miscellaneous strategies. The recommendations focused on interaction in the classroom, preparing all year for the state reading assessment, personal recommendations to assist eleventh grade Language Arts teachers stay focused and calm, building relationships with other educators and the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, and suggestions for understanding and getting through the state assessment process smoothly.

In addition to the subsequent research questions for the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, there were subsequent research questions for district leaders. The first subsequent research question was as follows:

What resources were available in your school district to assist disadvantaged students in preparation for the eleventh grade state reading assessment?

Each of the three administrative leaders discussed district support provided to Echo High School's eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The administrative leaders discussed the following resources that they believed to be responsible for making the high school, eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, and eleventh grade Language Arts teachers successful.

Echo school district provided many resources for the eleventh grade Language Arts

teachers. For being a large district, the district leaders provided different resources to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that in turn used the resources to assist the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students on the state reading assessment. Although the administrative leaders did not specifically mention a literacy coach, the literacy coach was the person who provided the seminar “pull-out” reading class, literacy focus meetings, and book studies. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers repeatedly stated that the literacy coach was one of the strongest components of Echo High School. The literacy coach was an extension of the teacher in the classroom. The literacy coach assisted the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers with strategies, formative practice assessment data, mentoring, and modeling. Furthermore, the literacy coach assisted eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students by working with them individually and in small groups. The literacy coach taught the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students strategies to prepare for the state reading assessment, reading skills, and test-taking strategies.

The second subsequent research question was as follows:

To which workshops and conferences did the school district send eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in order to increase their understanding of different strategies?

The researcher noted that the three administrative leaders mentioned seven support resources. Support resources are important to the success of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students because support resources can strengthen eleventh grade Language Arts teachers’ instructional strategies, knowledge, and understanding. Furthermore, the administrative leaders discussed workshops and conferences that the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers attended. The administrative leaders stated that professional development opportunities are important for the growth of both building and teachers.

Echo school district provided many professional development opportunities for the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The administrative leaders believed professional development activities were important in the district, building, and other locations. Some of the professional development activities occurred in the Echo school district, and nationally recognized speakers attended Echo school district to provide professional development. In addition, Echo school district believed it was important to allow eleventh grade Language Arts teachers an opportunity to travel to another location for professional development. For all of the professional development opportunities, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers could return to Echo High School and implement what they learned to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in the state reading assessment preparation.

The last subsequent research question was as follows:

What recommendations can be made to assist administrative leaders who are involved in the state assessment process?

The three administrative leaders that the researcher interviewed verbalized recommendations to other administrative leaders as they prepare for the state reading assessment. Because the recommendations highlighted different themes, the researcher categorized the recommendations into five groups: data, standards, professional development, student relationships, and miscellaneous recommendations. The administrative leaders believed it was important to know and understand the formative practice assessment data. Knowing and understanding the data helped eleventh grade Language Arts teachers better prepare the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students for the state reading assessment. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers used the data to focus on the lowest standard performance and change the strategies they were implemented in the classrooms. Furthermore, the administrative leaders

believed professional development was important to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers' growth as educators. When the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers implemented current research-based strategies, the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students had a better chance of meeting the standards on the state reading assessment. The administrative leaders also believed building a relationship with the eleventh grade disadvantaged students was vital because the more the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers knew about the students the better the teachers could understand how they learn best. The administrative leaders also recommended personal strategies to assist the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers through the state assessment process.

Implications of the Findings

The study's findings provided relevant information for eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and administrative leaders. This study affirmed the importance of knowing best practices to assist eleventh grade disadvantaged students in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. When the best practices were implemented, there was a heightened awareness of understanding in the classroom. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had a thorough understanding of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Furthermore, this study affirmed the importance of administrative leadership. The eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers were exposed to professional development activities that introduced and explained the best practices that they later used to help the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students succeed on the state reading assessment. These eleventh grade Language Arts teachers also had a mentor with whom they visited about celebrations, concerns, formative practice assessment scores, and individualized needs. As a result of the study, the researcher discovered that the following activities helped in

assisting eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students meet the standards on the state reading assessment: (a) knowing current research-based instructional strategies, (b) providing activities for eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students, (c) making use of class time before assessments, (d) using computerized testing, (e) utilizing veteran teachers as mentors, (f) utilizing instructional coaching, and (g) involving administrative leaders.

Knowing Current Research-Based Instructional Strategies

Teachers who utilize current research-based instructional strategies “make learning to read easy” (Carbo, 2008, p. 58). By using current research-based instructional strategies in the classroom, disadvantaged students learn through their strengths and interests (Carbo, 2008; Keene, 2008). Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in this study utilized current research-based instructional strategies in many different ways to engage eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. By using differentiated instruction, the teachers increased the likelihood that disadvantaged students would stay focused and engaged in the classroom instruction.

Research-based instructional strategies have changed over the last decade. In light of the number of technological devices that could be operated in and out of the classroom, however, the traditional classroom and research-based instructional strategies have not accommodated the “millennial student” (Dunn & Honigsfeld, 2009). Because of technological advancements, students tend to be more technologically knowledgeable and worldlier, but students also tend to be “more diverse, more demanding, needier, and harder to teach than any other students in the past” (Dunn & Honigsfeld, 2009, p. 3). To keep disadvantaged eleventh grade students engaged in the instruction, teacher participants utilized 21st century technological devices. Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who wish to capitalize on eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts

students' strengths, which may lie in technological devices, should therefore find ways to incorporate technology in the classroom.

Providing Activities for Eleventh Grade Disadvantaged Language Arts Students

Disadvantaged students “tend to be global, tactile, and kinesthetic learners” (Carbo, 2008, p. 60). Disadvantaged students benefit from being assigned activities that require “hands-on” experience (Brimijoin, 2005; Garcia, 2006; Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005). Disadvantaged students who are deeply engaged are engrossed and focused on the material (Keene, 2008). In this study, eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were given “hands-on” activities tended to be more involved and engaged in classroom learning. Disadvantaged students who were asked to complete activities were aware that they would be asked to move around the room and answer questions or complete activities.

Disadvantaged students utilize their senses to process information (Schweiker-Marra & Pula, 2005). Disadvantaged students who are allowed to move around the room, sit in comfortable chairs, eat snacks during activities, and have varied lighting tend to stay focused longer (Carbo, 2008; Dunn & Honigsfeld, 2009). Furthermore, disadvantaged students who are comfortable and allowed to utilize their senses tend to achieve higher scores in reading (Carbo, 2008). Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in this study who allowed for movement around the room and occasional relaxation periods tended to have disadvantaged students who experienced longer focused periods of time. In addition, eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students who were allowed to eat snacks in the classroom stayed more focused and engaged in the instruction. Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, therefore, should consider allowing disadvantaged students to eat snacks, as doing so allows students to fulfill the need to move as well as the physiological need to have a full stomach.

Making Use of Class Time before Assessments

Teachers primarily focus on preparing disadvantaged students for the state assessment four to six weeks before the state assessment occurs (McColskey & McMunn, 2000). During this time, teachers try to incorporate a variety of learning styles to help each student “concentrate on, process, internalize, and remember new and difficult academic information” (Dunn & Honigsfeld, 2009, p. 11). The participating eleventh grade Language Arts teachers used the entire school year to prepare the eleventh grade Language Arts students for the state reading assessment, and the teachers used the six weeks prior to the state assessment for intense preparation. Teachers in this study designed activities to target items assessed on the state reading assessment, and eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students were given feedback so they knew whether they understood a concept or needed to continue working on the concept. During the six weeks prior to the state reading assessment, the students were not given individual projects that did not reinforce the material assessed on the state reading assessment. However, students who worked on an individual project related to material on the assessment were given immediate feedback concerning aspects that directly related to the state reading assessment. Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers can incorporate stimulating activities if they reinforce material included on the assessment and if they provide targeted feedback.

Using Computerized Testing

Results of this study support the idea that teachers should utilize computerized testing in their classrooms. Cooper (2004) stated that students “have benefited from computerized practice tests that prepare them for the real thing” (p. 58). When the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students knew what to expect on the state reading assessment, and they had practiced the format of the state reading assessment, their scores tended to be higher than if they

had not practiced with the formative practice assessments. Furthermore, Heritage (2007) stated that formative practice assessments “can provide teachers and their students with the data that they need” (p. 141). With the results of the formative practice assessments, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers determined what standards the students understood and what standards the students did not understand. One purpose for formative practice assessments is to establish where students are in their learning (Heritage, 2007; William & Thompson, 2008). Once the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers knew where the students were in their learning, the teachers identified the gap between the student’s knowledge and the educational goal and taught the students the skills necessary to close the gap. Cooper (2004) indicated that there is “tremendous improvement in the deficit areas” when formative practice assessments are administered regularly and the data is used to strengthen students’ understandings (p. 58). The data from this case study supports Cooper’s findings. All of the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers administered the computerized formative practice assessments, and the formative practice assessment data showed that the scores of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students rose during the course of the formative practice assessments.

Utilizing Veteran Teachers as Mentors

New teachers need to have a mentor in their content area. New teachers and veteran teachers do not have the same experience, and veteran teachers know many things that can assist new teachers. The most important factor affecting student achievement is “teacher effect” (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, p. 6). According to Haskins and Loeb (2007), “first-year teachers are the least effective” (p. 53). However, first year teachers can be recognized as highly qualified teachers. Highly qualified teachers (1) have at least a bachelor’s degree, (2) have full state licensure or certification, and (3) demonstrate competence in the subjects they teach (Coble &

Azordegan, 2004; Gass, 2008). Although the two new teachers were considered highly qualified, they did not have the same experience as veteran teachers. The researcher found that the two new teachers did not teach as many components as the other veteran teachers. The two new teachers also used class time in the weeks prior to assessment testing to conduct individual projects and finish incomplete work. Cotton (1999, 2000) suggested keeping non-instructional time to a minimum. Although the researcher did not have the information available to her, she assumed that the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in the veterans' classes scored higher on the state reading assessment because the students were better prepared since there was a lack of "free time" in the classrooms. Research conducted by Darling-Hammond (2004) showed that attaining AYP is extremely difficult when there is an at-risk school (characterized by high poverty), with disadvantaged students (characterized by the subgroups on the state assessment), being taught by inexperienced teachers. Being that Echo High School had attained AYP between 2003 and 2008, this statement does not seem to hold true for Echo High School.

New teachers need a content area mentor to assist them in planning lessons and preparing for the state reading assessment. Furthermore, new teachers especially need professional development to assist them with state assessment preparation. With mentoring, professional development, and coaching, new teachers can become skilled at teaching disadvantaged students. Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that "as teacher effectiveness increases, lower achieving students are the first to benefit" (p. i). New teachers should be cultivated and taught strategies in teaching disadvantaged students because if new teachers learn how to teach disadvantaged students, the teachers will help disadvantaged students feel and see success in the classroom and on assessments, regardless of the subgroup in which they are categorized (Aaronson et. al., 2007; McMurrer, 2007; Rivers & Sanders, 2000).

Utilizing Instructional Coaching

Results of this study support the idea that districts should have an instructional coach in the school setting. Through observation, constructive feedback, modeling, and self-reflection, instructional coaches can enhance the success of disadvantaged students (Taylor, 2008). Instructional coaching “provides intensive, differentiated support to teachers so that they are able to implement proven practices” (Knight, 2009, p. 30). In this study, an instructional coach reviewed the practice formative assessment data and visited with eleventh grade Language Arts teachers about the results. The instructional coach provided suggestions to the teachers based on research-based practices that might work for the disadvantaged students.

Furthermore, an instructional coach can provide professional development to eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. An instructional coach should be trained in the most current research-based practices, and the coach should meet with teachers to explain and model these best practices. An instructional coach can “teach teachers about reading strategies, graphic organizers, or teaching activities that will make it easier for students to understand texts...” (Knight, 2007, p. 12). Effective instructional coaching through professional development can produce desired changes in teacher behavior, feelings, thinking, and collaboration (Toll, 2009). In this study, instructional coaches met on a regular basis to provide professional development to the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers.

An instructional coach can also work with students in small groups or individually (McCloskey & McMunn, 2000). In this study, when an instructional coach reviewed the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ formative practice assessment results, the instructional coach worked with many of the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students in small groups and individually to further prepare them for the reading assessment. By

assisting teachers and students, the instructional coach engages in a collaborative process to promote student achievement (Reiss, 2007); eleventh grade teachers of Language Arts and their disadvantaged students are likely to benefit from the support of instructional coaches.

Involving Administrative Leaders

Administrative leaders are an integral part of preparing teachers and disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. Administrative leaders offer professional development activities to expose teachers to best practices that can be used with disadvantaged students (McColskey & McMunn, 2000). In a study conducted by Levine and Levine (2000), successful administrative leaders provided teachers with professional development activities that focused on instructional strategies and resources for disadvantaged students. Furthermore, students tend to be more successful on assessments when administrative leaders collaborate with teachers to ensure current instructional strategies are used in the classroom (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Demoss, 2002).

In addition to professional development, administrative leaders provide materials needed for the state reading assessment and guidance on test preparation approaches (Demoss, 2002; McColskey & McMunn, 2000). Schools can also provide teachers and students with access to computers to complete formative practice assessments (McColskey & McMunn, 2000). With regard to this study, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had access to such test preparation materials, as well as expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical computerized formative practice assessments. The eleventh grade special education Language Arts teachers also had access to such test preparation material and computerized formative practice assessments for special education students who were administered the KAMM. At this time, however, there were no computerized formative practice assessments targeting the KAMM that were available to all

eleventh grade special education Language Arts students; therefore, steps should be taken to develop the materials and/or administrative leaders should encourage teachers to be creative in their development of preparation materials.

Administrative leaders also monitor and report state assessment data (Cotton, 2003). Upon students' completion of formative practice assessments, administrative leaders have access to the students' scores. The scores are an indication of how well the students are prepared for the state reading assessment. The administrative leaders can retrieve information targeting the areas in which the students scored low. This data can then be used to improve the instructional program (Cotton, 2003), and action plans can be developed to improve student achievement (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). In this study, the data were shared with participating teachers so they could use research-based strategies to better prepare their disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. Such collaboration between administrative leaders and teachers, therefore, is likely to benefit eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and their disadvantaged students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The challenges associated with high stakes testing are vast for all administrative leaders and teachers. Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers are faced with the reality that NCLB expects all eleventh grade Language Arts students to reach proficiency on the state reading assessment in the 2013-2014 academic year (Karp, 2003; Kim & Sunderman, 2005; Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002; Million, 2004). Each school year, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers decide which literary pieces will be dropped from the curriculum in order to prepare students for the state reading assessment. Furthermore, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers are expected to possess the pedagogical skills to enhance the learning of disadvantaged students in their classrooms. In designing future research regarding instructional strategies used in the eleventh

grade Language Arts classroom to assist disadvantaged students in preparing for the state reading assessment, one must be aware of the impact of the state reading assessment, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers, and administrative leaders. There are six recommended avenues for continued research regarding instructional strategies used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to assist disadvantaged students.

First, the purpose of AYP was to “ensure that ‘all schools’ and ‘all students’ met the same academic standards in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 academic year” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). As cut scores on the state reading assessment continually rise, however, the researcher ponders the reality of every eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts student attaining proficiency on the state reading assessment in the 2013-2014 academic year. Additional research should be conducted to determine if the scores of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students are improving, even if the students are not attaining proficiency on the reading assessment.

A second area of possible research pertains to the concept of *educational triage*. Educational triage is “the process through which teachers divide students into safe cases, cases suitable for treatment, and hopeless cases and ration resources to focus on those students most likely to improve a school’s test scores” (Booher-Jennings, 2006, p. 758). Many teachers have been told to focus on the students that will make the standards (the “accountables”) and the students that can make the standards with little help (the “bubble” kids); however, in doing this, the teachers may give less attention to the students, who, they believe, will not make the standards (the “unaccountables”). This study did not find educational triage to be a reality in Echo High School. In fact, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers focused much of their time and planning on the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. The eleventh grade

disadvantaged Language Arts students were taught research-based strategies to assist them on the state reading assessment. These research-based strategies were modeled by the teachers and practiced during the class periods. In two of the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms there were two co-teachers that gave the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students individual and small group instruction. Furthermore, a literacy coach was available to assist the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students when they were struggling in an area. The literacy coach worked with the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students individually and in small groups with reading and instructional strategies that would assist them on the state reading assessment.

A third area of possible research pertains to the instructional strategies utilized in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. Teachers should be exposed to best practices that can be used with disadvantaged students (McCloskey & McMunn, 2000). Although the researcher's theoretical framework was founded on existing research-based strategies to assist disadvantaged students, those research-based strategies may change over time. Furthermore, the researcher only observed eight eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in one Midwest school. Further research conducted in other geographical locations of the United States may result in the identification of additional successful research-based instructional strategies.

Fourth, further research should be conducted regarding the use of formative practice assessments in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. There are four areas of reading on the state reading assessment: expository, narrative, persuasive, and technical. Each of these areas has four formative practice assessments that may be administered to eleventh grade Language Arts students before taking the state reading assessment. In the Midwest school in which the researcher conducted her research, the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers only administered

one formative practice assessment in each area. However, Cooper (2004) found that administering formative practice assessments four to five times prior to the state reading assessment significantly improved the disadvantaged students' areas of deficit. The researcher wonders whether eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students would score higher on the state reading assessment if eleventh grade Language Arts teachers administered more than one formative practice assessment in each area.

Furthermore, further research should be conducted to determine the impact of resources, such as equipment, on student success. Beers (2005) stated:

Our children of poverty are most likely to attend schools that are best described as lacking: lacking equipment...lacking cleanliness; lacking computers and Internet access; lacking parental involvement; lacking extracurricular activities; lacking high student achievement; and, lacking enough highly qualified teachers. (p. 82)

Two schools with similar disadvantaged student populations could be compared; one school should be lacking equipment, while the other school should have sufficient equipment. Similarly, research comparing the resources of highly disadvantaged populated schools may lead educators to a more concrete understanding of the importance of parental involvement, extracurricular activities, student achievement, and highly qualified teachers. Although both schools may not attain AYP, the researcher could determine the similarities and differences in the schools' state assessment scores, graduation rates, and highly qualified teachers.

Finally, this current study might also expand on investigating administrative leaders' impact on eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and on the state reading assessment scores of eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students. School leaders' roles have "shifted from being accountable for money and other resources to being accountable for student outcomes and

achievement” (Lyons & Algozzine, 2006, p. 1). The researcher would be interested in discovering practices of administrative leaders that either support or inhibit eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students’ achievement on state reading assessments. Eisner (2002) suggested that building leaders spend one third of the time in classrooms working to develop teacher leaders. It would be interesting to discover if building leaders actually are spending at least one third of their time in classrooms. Additionally, it would be interesting to determine if building leaders should spend a greater portion of time in classrooms in order to meet the demands of NCLB.

Summary

With the enactment of the NCLB, the federal government determined that schools must improve K-12 education because of “the changing demands of an unpredictable world [that requires] an educational system capable of delivering world-class learning to all students” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). The stated goal of NCLB was to have every student in all subgroups (defined by socioeconomic background, race and ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability) successfully and consistently reach the AYP objectives for that state (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). The purpose of AYP was to “ensure that ‘all schools’ and ‘all students’ met the same academic standards in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 academic year” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). Each state was required to develop its own AYP and performance scale, with the standards rising each year, and every state was expected to perform at 100% proficiency in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Many schools across the nation struggle to reach the required AYP standard because of subgroups. Attaining AYP is difficult for schools that are considered high-poverty and racially diverse because “they rely on mean proficiency scores and require all subgroups to meet the

same goals for accountability” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). Because NCLB defines diversity in terms of subgroups, AYP is not measured for each student, but rather on each defined group within the school. Thus, for schools that were equivalent in size, the more subgroups the school had, the less chance of success that school had of reaching AYP (Lawton, 2006). Furthermore, if students are classified in more than one subgroup, their chances of success decrease. Minority students are “more likely than White students to be counted in multiple subgroup categories, including race, ethnicity, economic disadvantage, and limited English proficiency” (Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005, p. 26).

In theory, the goal of NCLB seems promising because students of all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic levels, disabilities, and levels of English proficiency are expected to demonstrate performance at grade level. However, in practicality, NCLB has created discord among educators, parents, students, and community members. Many teachers have been at a loss as to how to motivate and teach students, especially students who are considered disadvantaged.

Current data suggest that eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students continue to struggle on the state reading assessment, especially given that the cut score rises each year. This study found that when research-based strategies were implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to assist disadvantaged students, there was a heightened awareness of understanding in the classroom. The eleventh grade Language Arts teachers had a thorough understanding of the disadvantaged students’ strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Therefore, the teachers focused on the weaknesses and needs of the students in one or more areas. The teachers used their knowledge of students to differentiate instruction and support students in developing the knowledge and skills needed on the state reading assessment.

Furthermore, this study found that administrative leaders' actions were perceived to have had an impact on the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers and their disadvantaged students. Districts should be proactive and utilize professional development activities to enhance the knowledge of the administrative leaders as well as the eleventh grade Language Arts teachers. The teachers should be prepared to help all students meet the standards in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. Because of the increased number of disadvantaged students and the expectations of NCLB for every student to meet standards, eleventh grade Language Arts teachers should know, understand, and utilize the most current best practice approaches when working with disadvantaged students in their classrooms. Eleventh grade Language Arts teachers can most effectively learn such best practices by attending professional development sessions. Teachers and administrative leaders may have an impact on state assessment scores, and, by working as a team, they can help disadvantaged students experience greater levels of academic success.

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Appendix A - Figures

Figure A-1 - Percent of Schools from the Top 10 States Who Made AYP

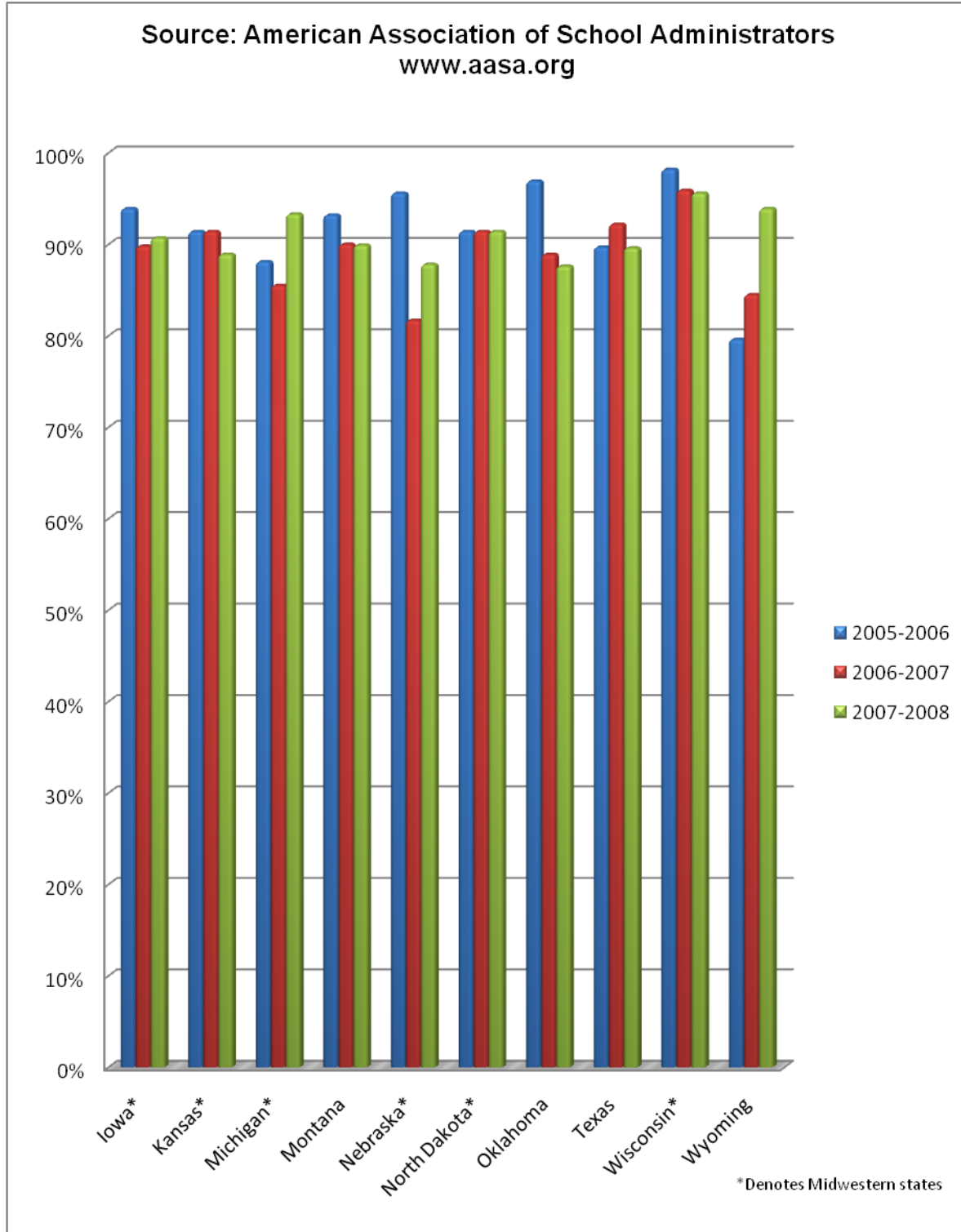


Figure A-2 –Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Classroom by Teacher A

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 9-Mar | Explain assignment and brainstorm | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Teacher reads | X | X | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 10-Mar | Compare/Contrast | X | | | X | | | X |
| | Discuss plot line | X | | | | | | |
| | Read story | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 11-Mar | Compare/Contrast | X | | | X | | | X |
| | Discuss plot line | X | | | | | | |
| | Read story | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 12-Mar | History | X | | | | | | |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 13-Mar | History | X | | | | | | |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Review | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 24-Mar | Review | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 2-Apr | A Lesson Before Dying | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 3-Apr | A Lesson Before Dying | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 6-Apr | Quiz | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Review | X | X | | X | X | | X |

Figure A-3 - Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Classroom by Teacher B

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|----------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 9-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Daily prompt | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Read Ch 16-17 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | State Assessment worksheet | X | X | X | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 10-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Daily prompt | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Review Ch 18 | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Read Ch 19 | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| | Vocabulary, Etc. worksheet | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 11-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Daily prompt | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Review Ch 18 | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Read Ch 19 | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| | Vocabulary, Etc. worksheet | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 13-Mar | Daily prompt | X | X | | | | | |
| | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Quiz | X | X | | | | | |
| | Review | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 24-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Quiz | X | X | | | | | |
| | Review | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Figure A-4 - Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts Classroom by Teacher C

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 10-Mar | Vocabulary | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Movie Discussion | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 12-Mar | Vocabulary | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Read/Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Compare/Contrast | X | X | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Identifying and Worksheet | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 2-Apr | Project Discussion | X | | | | | | |
| | Today's part of project | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Movie/Discussion | X | | X | X | X | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 6-Apr | Work on project individually | X | | | | | | |
| | Catch students up from absences | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 8-Apr | Work on project individually | X | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 14-Apr | Work on project individually | X | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 16-Apr | Discussion | X | | X | | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 20-Apr | Work on project individually | X | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 22-Apr | Work on project individually | X | | | | | | |

Figure A-5 - Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Classroom by Teacher D

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|----------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 9-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Daily prompt | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Read Ch 16-17 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | State Assessment worksheet | X | X | X | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 10-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Daily prompt | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Review Ch 18 | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Read Ch 19 | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| | Vocabulary, Etc. worksheet | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 11-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Daily prompt | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | Review Ch 18 | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Read Ch 19 | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| | Vocabulary, Etc. worksheet | X | X | X | | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 13-Mar | Daily prompt | X | X | | | | | |
| | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Quiz | X | X | | | | | |
| | Review | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 24-Mar | Word of the day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Quiz | X | X | | | | | |
| | Review | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Figure A-6 – Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Classroom by Teacher E

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|----------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 9-Mar | Bio Poem | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Prefixes | X | X | | | | | |
| | Discuss Ch 3 | X | X | | | X | | |
| | Read Ch 4 | X | X | | | | X | |
| 10-Mar | Root Words | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| 11-Mar | Root Words | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| 13-Mar | Smart Board plot line | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| | Literary Words | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Review Vocabulary | X | X | X | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Review Terminology | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| 23-Mar | Review Terminology | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| 24-Mar | Review Terminology | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| 3-Apr | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Introduce The Great Gatsby | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | Discussion of Ch 1 | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| 7-Apr | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Freeze Activity | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Questions/Discussions | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| 8-Apr | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Freeze Activity | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Questions/Discussions | X | X | | X | X | | X |

Figure A-7 – Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts Classroom by Teacher F

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 10-Mar | Essay Exercise | X | X | | | | | |
| 12-Mar | Questions | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 2-Apr | Essay - write, edit, peer read. | X | | X | | | X | |
| | *state assessment material* | | | | | | | |
| 6-Apr | Introduction | X | | | | | | |
| | Power point | X | | | | | | |
| | Literature Review | X | | | | | | |
| | Reading Discussion | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| 8-Apr | Office Discussion | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| | Reading Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| 14-Apr | Reading Assignment | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 16-Apr | Practice Test | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | Discussion | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 20-Apr | Socratic Circle | X | | | X | X | | X |
| | Practice AP | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 22-Apr | Quiz/Review | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | Timed test/review | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 24-Apr | Timed read/review | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Figure A-8 – Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Classroom by Teacher G

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 12-Mar | Present power point over author | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Read | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| | Worksheet | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 2-Apr | Preview, vocabulary, read, quiz | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 6-Apr | Review | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Read | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 8-Apr | Review | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 14-Apr | Work Day | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 16-Apr | Review | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Read | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 20-Apr | Review | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Project | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 22-Apr | Review | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Read | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| | Review Guide | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 24-Apr | Work on projects | X | | | | | | |

Figure A-9 - Instructional Strategies Implemented in the Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Classroom by Teacher H

| DATE | ASSIGNMENT | RECOG | MEM | CLASS | SPATIAL ORIENT | TEMP ORIENT | METAPH THINKING | CON OF CONST |
|--------|----------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 9-Mar | Bio Poem | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Prefixes | X | X | | | | | |
| | Discuss Ch 3 | X | X | | | X | | |
| | Read Ch 4 | X | X | | | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 10-Mar | Root Words | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 11-Mar | Root Words | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 13-Mar | Smart Board plot line | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| | Literary Words | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Review Vocabulary | X | X | X | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Review Terminology | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23-Mar | Review Terminology | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 24-Mar | Review Terminology | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 3-Apr | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Introduce The Great Gatsby | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | Discussion of Ch 1 | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 7-Apr | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Freeze Activity | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Questions/Discussions | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 8-Apr | Word of the Day | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Freeze Activity | X | X | | X | X | | |
| | Questions/Discussions | X | X | | X | X | | X |

Figure A-10 – Activity Used by Teacher A to Reinforce *Memorization*

**Sorry, Wrong Number
By Lucille Fletcher**

Things to identify in the play:

Suspense:

Foreshadowing:

Dramatic Irony:

Mood:

Inference:

Characterization:

Conflict:

Questions to Answer:

1. What makes a story, play, or movie suspenseful?
2. Does the danger have to be real? Explain your answer.
3. Must there be a lot of action? Explain your answer.
4. When did you first suspect that Mrs. Stevenson would be murdered?
5. What does Mrs. Stevenson want as the play opens, and how do her “wants” change as the play progresses? Identify the conflicts throughout the play.
6. Trace how the author develops the character of Mrs. Stevenson in the play.
7. How does the author build suspense?

Suppose you are a television or newspaper reporter. Word has just come in about the death of Mrs. Stevenson. Your assignment is to write an account of the murder and the earlier phone calls she made. Remember to answer these questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Figure A-11 – Activity Used by Teacher A to Reinforce State Assessment Concepts

A Rose for Emily
By William Faulkner
pp. 646-653

Review to get ready for state assessment:

Going page-by-page, answer the following questions about MAKING INFERENCE, SETTING, DETAILS, IDIOMS, and MULTIPLE MEANINGS.

Read the story carefully, responding to each question thoroughly and completely, thinking deeply.

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1. We meet Miss Emily through others' responses to her death. What can you INFER about her from learning who attends her funeral?
2. How does this description of SETTING (paragraph 2) reveal the CHANGING economic and social conditions in Miss Emily's town?
3. Colonel Sartoris embodies the ways of the ANTEBELLUM South. What social conventions of the ANTEBELLUM South are revealed by the edict regarding African American women and by the canceling of Miss Emily's taxes?

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4. What do these DETAILS tell you about Miss Emily? What do they tell you about the narrator? (top of column 1)
5. What MOOD, or emotional atmosphere, does this SETTING convey to you? (paragraph 2)
6. What do you think the sound of "the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain" adds to the DESCRIPTION of Miss Emily?
7. What do you think this DETAIL about Colonel Sartoris suggests about Miss Emily? (paragraph 6)

P. 649

8. Note the SHIFT from *ladies* to *women*. In the South during the early 20th century, *lady* and *woman* were not synonyms. Ladies were members of the Southern aristocracy; women were ordinary people crass enough to complain publicly about a member of the aristocracy. What does this shift indicate about Miss Emily and the townspeople?
9. The Griersons consider themselves aristocrats. What do these two sentences reveal about the Grierson family's status in the community (paragraph 10)? Why does Miss Emily's situation after her father's death make the townspeople glad?

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10. Do you agree with the narrator's assessment of Miss Emily's actions? Explain. (paragraph 1)
11. From the context, what do you think *let the contracts* means? (paragraph 2)
12. What do these people's statements show you about attitudes and values of the Deep South in the early 1900's? (paragraph 3)
13. Why doesn't Miss Emily answer the pharmacist's question? (paragraph 6)

P. 651

14. What do the townspeople's responses to Emily's purchase suggest about their attitudes toward her? (paragraph 1, part IV)
15. The old aristocracy is largely Episcopal, and the new middle class is more likely to be Baptist. What do details in this passage show you about class and gender divisions in Jefferson? (paragraph 2, part IV)

P. 652

16. How is sending pupils to Miss Emily like donating money in church?

17. Why does Miss Emily refuse a mailbox?

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18. What mood does the description of this room create? (paragraph 3, part V)

19. What does the strand of hair IMPLY? What do you think motivated her? (last paragraph)

Figure A-12 – Activity Used by Teacher E and Teacher H to Teach *Classification*

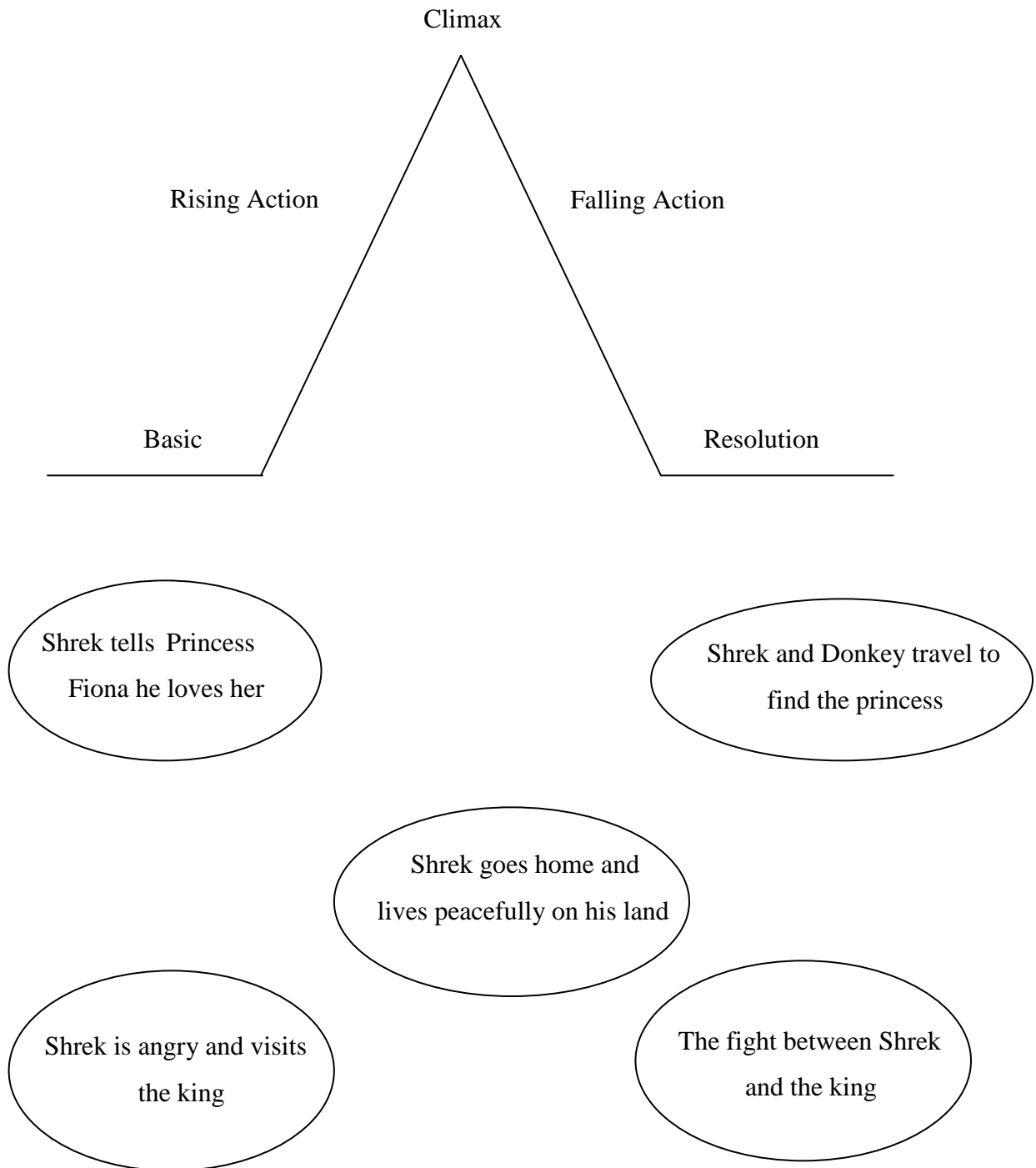
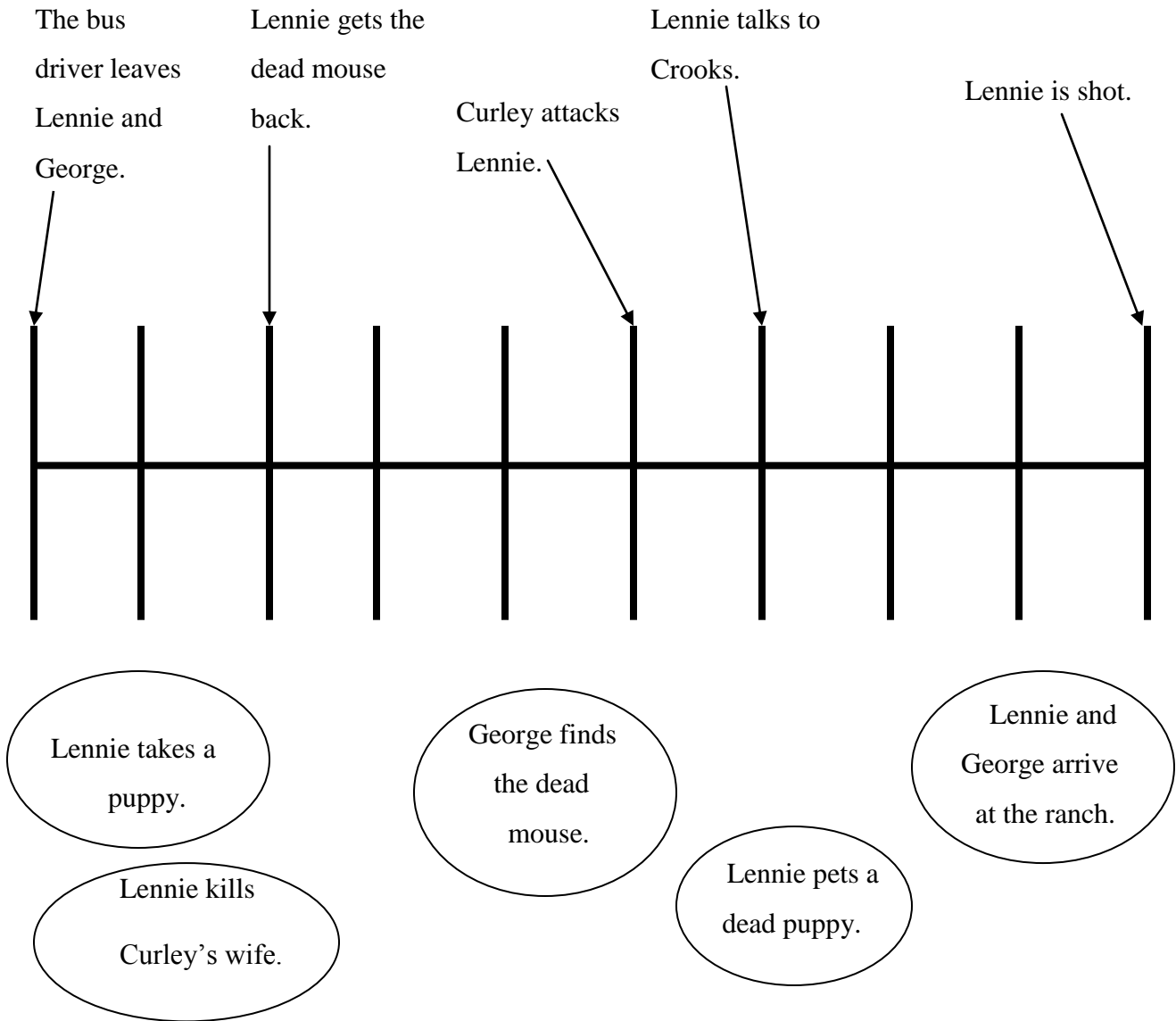


Figure A-13 – Activity Used by Teacher E and Teacher H to Teach *Temporal Orientation*

Of Mice and Men



Appendix B - Participant Invitation Letter

Date

Name

Title

High School

Address

Dear Participant:

I am writing this letter as an invitation for you to participate in a study of eleventh grade Language Arts teachers that I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation at Kansas State University. The focus of my study is to observe strategies being used in the successful eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. This school is considered successful because it has attained AYP the last three consecutive years.

The study is qualitative; therefore, a personal interview and classroom observations will occur. The interview will focus on your perceptions and experiences. The interview will be face-to-face, and the length of the interview will be approximately 30 minutes. In addition, classroom observations will take place in your eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. The observations will be nonintrusive, as my goal is to observe strategies and activities.

Your anonymity is guaranteed in this study. Aliases will be given to you and the school; neither your name nor the name of the high school will be used in the documentation.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the enclosed short questionnaire and return the document in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope no later than *{date}*.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration of participating in this important case study. It is my sincere hope that you will be a willing participant in this study because your insights, experiences, strategies, and activities will assist other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers in preparing disadvantaged students on the state reading assessment.

Enclosed with this letter is the Intent to Participate Form and Prospectus. I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you in advance for participating in this important study.

Sincerely,

Carey A. Tresner

Carey A. Tresner
Doctoral Candidate
Kansas State University

Encl.: Intent to Participate Form and Prospectus
cc: Dr. Teresa Miller, Major Professor

Appendix C - Teacher Intent to Participate Form

The following questions ask about your general teaching background. The questionnaire will be used to confirm that you meet the criteria for participation in this study. Please mail the completed form back to me in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by {date}. Thank you for your time and consideration.

1. Name: _____

2. Institution: _____

3. Position Title: _____

4. Campus Telephone Number and Ext.: _____

5. Email Address: _____

6. How long have you been a teacher?
_____ year(s)

7. How many years have you been a Language Arts teacher?
_____ year(s)

8. How many years have you been an eleventh grade Language Arts teacher?
_____ years(s)

9. How long have you been employed in your current position as an eleventh grade Language Arts teacher?
_____ years(s)

10. What degrees, certificates, and/or licenses do you possess?

Example: BS in English; MS in Special Education; K-12 Building Level
Licensure; ESL Endorsement

11. In what state is your certificate for secondary Language Arts?

12. Is your certificate or license in secondary Language Arts waived on an emergency,
temporary, or provisional basis?

(Please Circle) YES or NO

13. What is the best method to contact you?

_____ Telephone

_____ Email

14. What is your age?

_____ Under 25

_____ 26-35

_____ 36-45

_____ 46-55

_____ 56-65

_____ 66 or older

15. What is your gender?

(Please Circle) MALE or FEMALE

It is my sincere hope that you will participate in this study. Thank you in advance for completing
the questionnaire and returning it to me. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Appendix D - Leader Intent to Participate Form

The following questions ask about your general educational background. The questionnaire will be used to confirm that you meet the criteria for participation in the interview for school leaders who are involved in the preparation of the eleventh grade reading state assessment. Please mail the completed form back to me in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by {date}. Thank you for your time and consideration.

1. Name: _____
2. Institution: _____
3. Position Title: _____
4. Campus Telephone Number and Ext.: _____
5. Email Address: _____
6. How long did you teach in the classroom?
_____ year(s)
7. What subject did you teach in the classroom?

8. How long have you been employed in your current position in this school?
_____ years(s)
9. What degrees, certificates, and/or licenses do you possess?
Example: BS in English; MS in Special Education; K-12 Building Level
Licensure; ESL Endorsement

10. What is your involvement in the preparation process for the eleventh grade state reading assessment?

11. What is the best method to contact you?
_____ Telephone
_____ Email

The following questions are for demographic purposes only. The data will be used only to compile and analyze group data. The individual data will not be reported and it will remain strictly confidential.

12. What is your age?

- Under 25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66 or older

13. What is your gender?

(Please Circle) MALE or FEMALE

It is my sincere hope that you will participate in this interview. Thank you in advance for completing the questionnaire and returning it to me. Your time and cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Appendix E - Prospectus

Because of the legal requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), teachers, schools, districts, and states are continually under pressure to perform at a proficient level on the state assessments. Each year, NCLB states that the proficiency level must rise in each state, making the number of students who perform at the proficiency level even greater. The end goal, according to NCLB, is that 100% of the students will score at least at a proficient level on the state assessments throughout the nation in the year 2014. This percentage must include every student in each subgroup, and research shows that most disadvantaged students are in at least two subgroups. Although six Midwestern states rank in the top ten states nationwide to continually achieve AYP, other states rank at the bottom. Research suggests general reading strategies to assist disadvantaged students, but, presently, there is no research that specifically lists reading strategies and activities that will assist disadvantaged students in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom. Because the Midwest is a successful region, and this school has a history of being successful on the eleventh grade state reading assessment, it is hopeful that the strategies used in these successful classes can be used in other eleventh grade classrooms to assist disadvantaged students.

This is a multi-case qualitative study that is anchored in real classrooms. This approach results in a rich and holistic account of what strategies are being used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. The participants and institution will remain anonymous for this case study. No names will be associated with any of the reported data. For purposes of data collection and analysis, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants.

Data will be collected through observations, semi-structured individual interviews, and documentation related to strategies used in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms. The interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed for purposes of accuracy and analysis. Data will be analyzed as they are being collected, and emerging themes will be identified. The study will provide for triangulation of the data through observations, interviews, and document analysis.

The information gathered in the observations and interview will only be used for the purposes of this research. Furthermore, the data collection sheets, institutional information, logs with research codes, tape recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure location for three years after the study is complete then destroyed.

Procedures

The participants will be asked to do the following:

- Consider being a participant in this important case study
- Complete the Intent to Participate Form
- Read the Prospectus
- Sign the Informed Consent Form

The Observations:

- The participant and researcher will set up observation times

The Interview:

- Participate in a audio-taped face-to-face interview answering questions regarding your experience and perceptions
- The interviews conducted should last about 30 minutes
- The participant will be asked if the researcher may contact him/her one more time for clarification purposes only

Data Analysis:

- The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher or a hired transcriber
- The interview transcript will be read and coded by the researcher and overseen by the major professor
- The participant's name and research code will be kept in a log with data collection sheets, transcriptions, and tape recordings. The researcher will keep these in a secure location for three years after the study is finished.
- The participant's name, institution's name, and other identities mentioned in the interview will not be identified. All personal and identifying information will be kept strictly confidential. When needed, pseudonyms will be used.
- If the participant would like a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy, a copy will be provided to the participant

Participation and Withdrawal:

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The participant has the right to terminate his/her involvement at any time and for any reason. The participant may also refuse to answer any question he/she does not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Identification of Investigators:

- If the participant has questions or concerns about the research, he/she may contact:

Researcher: Carey A. Tresner
620-388-1810 or careyann@ksu.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Teresa N. Miller
785-532-5609 or tmiller@ksu.edu

IRB Chair: Dr. Rick Scheidt, IRB Chairman
785-532-3224 or rscheidt@ksu.edu

Appendix F - Confirmation Letter

Date

Name

Title

Institution

Address

Dear Participant:

Thank you for responding to the invitation to participate in my doctoral dissertation study. For this study, you have been selected based on your qualification of NCLB's definition of a Highly Qualified Teacher in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom.

The next step in the process is to set up a time to review the Informed Consent Form. We will do this together, and it will only take 5-10 minutes. At this time, we will set up a time for me to conduct observations. At the end of the school year, we will set up a time for a short 30 minute interview. Since you indicated the best method of contacting you was by {*phone, email*}, I will contact you to make arrangements for me to come into your classroom and observe.

I am enclosing a copy of the Informed Consent Form, but I ask that we sign it together at our first meeting. However, please review it, and if you have any questions or concerns, we will discuss them at this meeting.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate in this important case study. I look forward to observing your classroom and conversing about your experiences and perceptions regarding strategies that you use to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment.

Sincerely,

Carey A. Tresner

Carey A. Tresner
Doctoral Candidate
Kansas State University

Encl.: Informed Consent Form
cc: Dr. Teresa Miller, Major Professor

Appendix G - Informed Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: A CASE STUDY TO IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE READING STRATEGIES USED IN THE ELEVENTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM TO ASSIST DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN PREPARING FOR THE STATE READING ASSESSMENT

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: 03/09/2009 **EXP. DATE OF PROJECT:** 03/09/2010

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Teresa N. Miller, 785-532-5609, tmiller@ksu.edu

CO-INVESTIGATOR: Carey A. Tresner, 620-388-1810, careyann@ksu.edu

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

- Dr. Teresa N. Miller, 785-532-5609, tmiller@ksu.edu
- Carey Tresner, 620-388-1810, careyann@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION:

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.
- Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: This is a qualitative research study in which you are being asked to participate. The purpose of the study is to identify and describe reading strategies being implemented in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms to prepare disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment. The goal is to share these reading strategies with other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to enhance the successfulness of disadvantaged students.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: As a participant in the study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to observe your classroom multiple times to document the strategies and activities being implemented when preparing for state reading assessments. After the observations, you will be asked to participate in a 30 minute interview regarding your perceptions and experiences. Furthermore, the interview will be audiotaped and transcribed for accuracy and analysis. Data gathered during this study will be available only to the researcher, and the information gathered during the interview will only be used for the purposes of this research. If you would like a copy of the transcript of your interview, a copy will be provided to you.

LENGTH OF STUDY: The second semester of the 2008-2009 school year

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: This type of research poses minimal risk to you, the participant. Furthermore, if you are uncomfortable with any question, you may decline to answer and still remain in the study.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: The anticipated goal of this study is to bring the reading strategies being implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classes into other eleventh grade Language Arts classes where disadvantaged students can benefit. The researcher will identify and describe the reading strategies being implemented in the eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms, and the participants' experiences will contribute to assisting disadvantaged students in eleventh grade Language Arts classrooms.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Quotations from the interview may be used in this study, but the participant's identity, the institution's identity, and the identities of those mentioned in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. However, because of the small sampling number limited to one school, it may be possible to identify the participants from their quotes through the process of elimination. Participants' names and the school name will be identified by code names. Participants' names and assigned research code will be kept in a log. The log and all research material will be kept in a secured place by the researcher and will be destroyed three years after the study's completion. Participants will be asked if they would like to receive a copy of the findings and conclusion of the study.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: This project is qualitative research, and your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this study, you may withdraw your consent at any time and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits or academic standing to which you may otherwise be entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand this consent form and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described. Your signature acknowledges that you have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I consent to participate in this study as stated in this consent form.

(Printed Name of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant)

(Signature of Interviewer/Observer)

(Date)

Appendix H - Observation Checklist

Teacher:

Date:

Hour:

| Recognition | Memorization | Classification | Spacial | Temporal | Metaphorical | Constancy |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

For each box that is checked, give a description of that strategy .

Appendix I - Observation Definitions

- *Recognition*. The ability to identify a match or fit between two or more pieces of information
- *Memorization*. The ability to store information
- *Classification*. The ability to identify, compare, and order information to create meaning on the basis of relationships of parts to one another and parts to the whole
- *Spatial orientation*. The ability to identify relationships among objects and places
- *Temporal orientation*. The ability to process information by comparing events in relationship to when they occur
- *Metaphorical thinking*. The ability to understand the meaning by emphasizing similarities and overlooking differences
- *Conservation of constancy*. The ability to understand how some characteristics of a thing can change while others stay the same

Appendix J - Teacher Interview Protocol

The researcher will ask each participant to respond to the following open-ended questions as thoughtfully and completely as possible. The researcher may need to rephrase or ask additional questions if the participant needs clarification or more details. The open-ended questions give each participant an opportunity to voice their insights and experiences, and the answers may not be anticipated by the interviewer. The interviewer will allow ample time for each participant to respond completely to the questions without interruptions. The researcher approximates the interview to last about 30 minutes.

Participation of the subject is strictly voluntary, and questions that make the participant uncomfortable do not need to be answered by the participant. If a participant declines to answer a question, he/she may still participate in the study.

Resources:

1. What resources are available to you in your school to assist disadvantaged students prepare for the eleventh grade state reading assessment?
2. Are there enough resources and support in the classroom?
3. Does the school divide resources equally so all classrooms have the same resources?
4. Are there more resources in your school now than before NCLB was instated?

Historical:

5. How has the school's focus changed from before NCLB was instated?
6. How has teachers' focus changed from before NCLB was instated?
7. What has been the greatest change in the school or classroom from not making AYP to making AYP?

Preparation

8. How do you, the teacher, discover new strategies that may be useful in your classroom when preparing disadvantaged students for the state assessment?
9. Does the school send you to workshops or conferences to learn different strategies being used in other schools to prepare disadvantaged students for the state assessment?
10. Does the school have staff development meetings to assist teachers with different strategies to prepare disadvantaged students for the state assessment?
11. What do you, the teacher, prefer: paper/pencil state assessments or computerized state assessments?
12. How has computerized state assessments changed the way you, the teacher, prepare for state assessments?
13. How do you, the teacher, prepare students for the format of the computerized state assessment?
14. In your experience, do disadvantaged students' scores increase, decrease, or remain the same when they practice with the computerized formative practice assessments?
15. In your experience, is there enough time and space for all eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to prepare the students on the computerized format?

16. Do you, the teacher, change your teaching strategies based on the results of the computerized formative practice assessment?

Strategies:

17. Based on the reading strategies, what strategies do you find the most useful when preparing disadvantaged students for the state assessment?

18. In your experience, do you modify your strategies to connect with disadvantaged students?

19. In your experience, are there strategies that work better with disadvantaged students? If you answered, "Yes," what strategies do you find work better?

Overall:

20. What advice or suggestions would you give to eleventh grade Language Arts teachers preparing disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment?

21. Are there specific strategies you like best and feel work better with disadvantaged students?

22. What other areas would you like to add that I have not asked?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be connected to you in any way. Your responses will assist other eleventh grade Language Arts teachers who prepare disadvantaged students for state assessments.

Appendix K - Leader Interview Protocol

The researcher will ask each participating school leader to respond to the following open-ended questions as thoughtfully and completely as possible. The researcher may need to rephrase or ask additional questions if the participant needs clarification or more details. The open-ended questions give each participant an opportunity to voice their insights and experiences, and the answers may not be anticipated by the interviewer. The interviewer will allow ample time for each participant to respond completely to the questions without interruptions. The researcher approximates the interview to last about 30 minutes. Participation of the subject is strictly voluntary.

Resources:

1. What resources are available to you in your school to assist disadvantaged students prepare for the eleventh grade state reading assessment?
2. Are there enough resources and support in the classroom?
3. Does the school divide resources equally so all classrooms have the same resources?
4. Are there more resources in your school now than before NCLB was instated?

Historical:

5. How has the school's focus changed from before NCLB was instated?
6. How has teachers' focus changed from before NCLB was instated?
7. How has administrators' focus changed from before NCLB was instated?
8. What has been the greatest change in the school or classroom from not making AYP to making AYP?

Preparation

9. Does the school send eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to workshops or conferences to learn different strategies being used in other schools to prepare disadvantaged students for the state assessment?
10. Does the school have staff development meetings to assist teachers with different strategies to prepare disadvantaged students for the state assessment?
11. What do you, the administrator, prefer: paper/pencil state assessments or computerized state assessments?
12. In your experience, is there enough time and space for all eleventh grade Language Arts teachers to prepare the students on the computerized format?

Overall:

13. What advice or suggestions would you give to school leaders who are involved in the state assessment process in regards to preparing disadvantaged students for the state reading assessment?
14. What other areas would you like to add that I have not asked?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be connected to you in any way. Your responses will assist other school leaders who are involved in the state assessment process.

Appendix L - Sample of Field Notes

Teacher: Teacher B & Teacher D Date: 3/9/09 Hour: P2

| Recognition | Memorization | Classification | Spacial | Temporal | Metaphorical | Constancy |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| X | X | X | | | | |
| X | X | X | | | | |
| X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| X | X | X | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

For each box that is checked, give a description of that strategy.

1. Review *Word of the Day*, a state assessment term. Discuss the Latin word and definition.
 BREVITY. Brainstorm words that use brevity. (*recognition, memorization, classification*)

2. *Daily Prompt* – Describe ways when brevity is acceptable. Students knew brevity from above discussion. Class discussion. (*recognition, memorization, classification*)

3. Read Chapter 16 and 17 of *Huckleberry Finn*. Different students read. Discuss as read.
 Teachers stop and discuss unfamiliar terms, time periods, setting. Teachers ask questions related to state assessment terms. Students try to catch teacher saying, “*Word of the Day*.”
 Discuss plot line. (all of the framework)

4. Teachers hand out a worksheet with state assessment targets, including vocabulary, true/false, inferences, prefixes, root words, suffixes, etc. The students have been targeting these terms for months, so most are familiar with the terms. (*recognition, memorization, classification*)

NOTES:

- Both teachers discuss throughout the class period. Teacher B may explain a concept in one way, and Teacher E may explain the same concept in a different way. Teacher D spent a lot of time walking to the eleventh grade disadvantaged Language Arts students' desks.
- Teacher B and Teacher D gave all students an opportunity to respond, and they called upon some students to discuss an idea or give answers to questions.
- When the students became too loud, and Teacher B could not speak over them, Teacher D would tell the students they needed to quiet down and participate in a mannerly fashion.
- Students would approach Teacher B or Teacher D when they needed to leave the room. This was not disruptive, but a quiet and orderly process that allowed Teacher B and Teacher D to continue teaching, even if a student needed to leave the classroom.

Appendix M - Color Code for Highlighted Interviews

Eleventh Grade Language Arts Teachers' Interview Highlights

| Highlighted Color | Highlighted Question |
|-------------------|--|
| Pink | What formative practice assessment data were used in preparation for the state reading assessment? |
| Green | What instructional changes were made based on the formative practice assessment results? |
| Blue | What were the perceived impacts of the preparation process on student improvement? |
| Orange | Based on the findings of this study, what recommendations can be made to assist teachers of disadvantaged students to improve performance on the state reading assessment in the eleventh grade Language Arts classroom? |

Administrative Leaders' Interview Highlights

| Highlighted Color | Highlighted Question |
|-------------------|---|
| Pink | What resources were available in your school district to assist disadvantaged students in preparation for the eleventh grade state reading assessment? |
| Blue | To which workshops and conferences did the school district send eleventh grade Language Arts teacher to in order to increase their understanding of different strategies? |
| Green | What recommendations can be made to assist administrative leaders who are involved in the state assessment process? |

Appendix N - Codes for Identifying Research-Based Strategies

SL – Structured lessons

RC – Relevant curriculum

CI – Comprehensive instruction

CL – Collaborative learning

ST – Strategic tutoring

FA – Formative assessment

DP – Drill and practice

TT – Test-taking strategies

HO – Hands-on experience

SP – Special privileges

ET – Extra time

Appendix O - Examples of Components

| Component | Activity |
|---------------------------|---|
| Recognition | Verbal or written review of terms and concepts; Quizzes; Activities related to the students' personal lives |
| Memorization | Verbal or written review of terms and concepts; Quizzes; Activities related to the students' personal lives |
| Conservation of Constancy | Discussed a past time period and how times are different/same today; Quizzes; Activities related to the students' personal lives |
| Classification | Activities classifying root words, prefixes, and suffixes; Quizzes; |
| Spatial Orientation | Read "To Build a Fire" and had students complete a survival activity that targeted the relationship between nature, man, and the objects involved; Quizzes; |
| Temporal Orientation | Verbal or written responses of order of events from a story, novel, or poem; Quizzes; Map Journey activity that traced a person's life |
| Metaphorical Thinking | Venn Diagram addressed the similarities and differences of a story; Quizzes; Compared literary piece and movie; Had some students read one novel and other students read another novel at the same time to discover similar concepts |

Appendix P - Non-Examples of Components

| |
|--|
| Teacher gave the students a work day on projects or make-up work |
| Discussion not pertaining to Language Arts work or state assessment preparation |
| “Housekeeping” items, such as having the students sign a contract regarding a due date for an activity. “Housekeeping” items did not pertain to state assessment preparation or active Language Arts learning. |
| Watched a movie |
| Teacher had the students get a computer and a partner. The students were to go to a website after choosing a research topic. Once the students chose a research project, they were to begin completing the assignment. |
| Teacher had students read and critique other students’ essays – peer editing |

Appendix Q - Possible Schools to Conduct Research

| School's Name | Percent of Disadvantaged Students | 2004 AYP | 2005 AYP | 2006 AYP | 2007 AYP | 2008 AYP |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Alpha High | 29% | No | No | Yes | No | No |
| Bravo High | 18% | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| Charlie High | 55% | No | No | No | No | No |
| Delta High | 32% | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Echo High | 39% | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Foxtrot High | 47% | No | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| Golf High | 37% | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Hotel High | 20% | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| India High | 52% | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |

*Due to confidentiality, names have been changed.