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**Middle Level Literacy:
Individual Skills Screener and Plan for Response to Student Data**

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literacy Education.

Hamline University

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Chapter One

Introduction:

Before setting foot in the world of teaching, I had the naive belief that it would be easy to help struggling students. This assumption was quickly shattered, although it created a mental puzzle that I have pondered for quite some time. The dilemma of how to help students most in need has led to my research question: *What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified?*

Growing up, I knew from a very young age that I wanted to be a teacher. I had amazing teachers in my life who seemed to have an innate ability to zero in on exactly what a student was struggling with and meet that need. Teachers in movies were always beautiful women who would come into the classroom and be powerhouses for growth and personal improvement all while wearing impractical stiletto shoes. With these experiences, I came to the misguided conclusion that I would come out of college with this ability myself, able to save the day and perform educational miracles without breaking a sweat. What I quickly discovered was the sobering reality that helping students who are struggling with reading is not a simple task.

My first teaching position out of college was teaching 9th and 10th grade mainstream students. I was given very limited data on their reading ability, handed a curriculum that was intended to be “one size fits all”, and told to make sure that my students showed growth on standardized tests. During my first month of teaching, I cried on my drive home every day, feeling overwhelmed at the amount of varied needs in my classroom and my lack of knowledge

about how to serve all of my students' needs while also covering the curriculum that I was given. I felt like I was failing my students and that was the last thing I wanted to do.

What was clear to me immediately, is that one well-worded monologue about perseverance and work ethic, similar to what I saw in the movies, was not going to cut it. There were students in my classroom who were multiple grade levels ahead of their peers and many who were well below grade level, and it seemed ludicrous that I would be asking them to complete the same assignment when the knowledge and effort that assignment took to complete would be drastically different for different students. While I had well-meaning colleagues, I felt secluded and stranded without a life line in sight because they did not seem to see what I saw, that the model we were using was not working. After the initial shock wore off and I was able to surface for air, I started to research and ask colleagues about how they were meeting the individual needs of students desperately hoping they had resources that they could pass on to help me. They gave me a few well intentioned tips, but ultimately this experience was the beginning of a five year quest for the "perfect intervention" which led me to ultimately pose my research question: *What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified?*

Rationale: The Classroom Without Rose Colored Glasses

From the beginning of my journey as a classroom teacher, doing what is in the best interest of students has been my driving force. During my five years of teaching I have had many struggling readers come through my classroom who needed extra reading support. As I worked with these students in the mainstream classroom and intervention sessions, I began to feel unsure

about the effectiveness of what I was doing with students. Countless hours were spent researching and trying to find the one “perfect intervention” to help these struggling students but I ultimately realized I was looking for something that did not exist. After much reflection what I realized is that I could not find the “perfect intervention” because creating that would be impossible. Students are not one-size-fits-all and their reading support should not be either.

All of this culminated when I was working with an 8th grade student named James (name changed for privacy). James had been in our most intense level of general education reading support for over two years and was still well below grade level with reading. I spoke with my reading intervention coordinator and together we worked to develop a system of assessments that allowed us to determine a student’s area of need. Fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, main idea, inferencing, and listening comprehension were the skills that we assessed. After performing our assessments, we found that James was several grade levels below where he should be in phonemic awareness. Finding this major gap in his reading ability allowed us to intensely target his interventions and give him what he needed, which had not been done before. Once we were able to target his area of need, his reading ability improved significantly and his behavior and approach to school shifted drastically in a positive way.

When I talked to James about this, he told me that for so long he had felt defeated. It took him longer to accomplish tasks that required reading and he ended up feeling frustrated and self-conscious about asking for help of any kind. It is no surprise that after years of feeling this way, James began to act out, he readily admitted to me that in many cases his behavior was a defence mechanism, he was “saving face” in front of his peers. He had made the decision that it was better to be seen as a “bad kid” or a “trouble maker” than a struggling student.

Seeing this change in James and speaking to him about his experience made me think about how many other students I had taught struggling with behavior issues were behaving poorly out of fear and embarrassment due to their need for academic support. This understanding has lead me to be even more passionate about developing a system that can support these students to feel empowered and successful academically.

In studying how to support struggling readers like James, it became clear that the benefits of helping these students through targeted interventions and screeners will ultimately be felt by all educational stakeholders. Students will benefit the most because their needs will finally be addressed in a way that is individualized and aligned with learning deficits. Each student does not have the same reading needs, so why should we give them the same interventions? Ideally, this will lead to a decrease in behavior problems and acting out on behalf of the student because they finally have the tools they need to be successful.

Teachers benefit greatly from targeted screeners and intervention plans because it will allow us to help our students find and feel success. This is truly our ultimate goal as educators. School administrators will see student growth that will reflect positively on them and their school. Additionally, if the pattern from my previously mentioned student James persists, there may be a decline in behavior issues that need to be addressed because those students who were acting out as a coping mechanism will no longer need to engage in that behavior.

The changes likely to result if a strong screener and intervention protocol is put in place are only positive for everyone involved which makes me even more motivated to take my success with James along with my research to develop a system that can work for a multitude of

students. For all of the reasons outlined here, educational stakeholders are likely to see a positive result after implementing the screener and intervention protocol I have created.

Context

As I discussed above, I began my teaching career at a high school teaching 9th and 10th grade English. In this position, I felt a lack of support to help me identify and meet the needs of my struggling readers. This was the catalyst for my deep dive into researching reading interventions and methods for screening and identifying specific areas of need in a student's reading ability. I only taught here for two years so I feel as though this was really the tip of the iceberg in terms of my research journey.

My second teaching position was teaching 8th grade Language Arts in a small/medium sized town in western Minnesota. One of my responsibilities in this position was teaching an intervention period called Individual Skill Building. Being a language arts teacher, I was assigned the students with the greatest need, labeled as "Tier 3" in our Response to Intervention (RtI) Program. I was able to work with a team of paraprofessionals to help me assess, provide interventions, and lead small group skill building activities. My first year teaching this class was overwhelming. I was asked to use a system called Achieve 3000 to progress monitor students but I did not feel very effective. During my second year in this position, we had a new RtI Coordinator join our building and she has honestly been the best thing to happen to me as an educator. We spoke about the students that I would be working with soon after she came to the middle school and realized that both of us had similar questions about diagnostic assessments and interventions. This led to a journey of collaboration that allowed us to create a system of

screenings and interventions that we were able to implement with students this year with a good deal of success. This experience has led me to appreciate the importance of having coworkers who are willing to roll up their sleeves and get into the nitty gritty of creating and designing materials to use with students. My teaching life has led me down this path pointing me towards this research question and I owe it to myself and my students to see it through.

Summary:

My research question, *What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified?* comes from a deep seated desire to help all students like James. He fell through the cracks for years and my deepest desire is to prevent this from happening with any other student. That, coupled with my experiences with other specific students, seeing the impact that finding the right intervention can have, led me to this avenue of research. In the following chapters, I will delve into the research of major areas of literacy including: comprehension, phonics and phonemic awareness, and fluency, as well as how to effectively assess competence in these areas. Using current research, I will draw conclusions that will help me in my creation of a literacy skills screener and intervention recommendation system that can be tailored to meet the needs of individual students. I want teachers to have a tool that allows them to quickly, efficiently, and accurately collect data regarding their students' literacy skills. This will provide teachers with the information needed to be able to differentiate and plan interventions for students who need support in the specific skill areas identified by the diagnostic assessments.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The research question is: *What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified?* This is a multifaceted question that requires in depth analysis before it can truly be answered. Classroom teachers arrive in the classroom with students at a multitude of reading levels, looking for any piece of data they can get their hands on that would allow them to understand the reading ability of students on a deeper level. Many are given access to MCA data and other standardized testing results. However, results from these types of assessments often provide little to no information regarding a student's level of performance on specific content or skills. Students might achieve the same MCA score, but have very different needs in terms of their reading abilities and skills. Yet the number received would indicate that they are "the same" for all intents and purposes.

This is the basis for research surrounding the core reading skills that a student needs to be a successful reader, how a classroom teacher could reasonably screen students for their ability in these key areas, and what the response should be when it is discovered that a student has one or more areas of deficit. What follows is a presentation of that research and an analysis of and recommendations for future research in this area of intervention literacy curriculum development.

Key Reading Skills for Middle Level Readers:

Review of Current Research:

Before researching how to identify reading deficits and appropriate correlating responses, it is necessary to identify the skills essential to being an effective reader. The purpose in identifying specific reading skills that educators want readers to have is to allow screeners, intervention materials, and progress monitoring to be targeted and intentional. Research shows that fluency, phonics/phonemic awareness, and comprehension are the main reading skills that should be focused on in a middle level reading program (National Reading Panel, 2000, Saravallo, 2015, Rupley, W. H., Blair, T. R., & Nichols, W. D. (2009)). The research clearly and without hesitation establishes these skills as the major areas of focus in adolescent literacy.

A fluent reader is one that can read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel, 2000). Fluency is important because without it, too much of a reader's brain power is taken up with decoding words, and the overall meaning of the text is lost. The second skill identified is phonics and phonemic awareness. Phonemic Awareness is the ability for a child to isolate the sounds in words as they are spoken (Yopp, 1992). Phonics is the ability to hear phonemes and then use them to spell words in traditional orthography (National Reading Panel). These skills are important because without them, students are unable to break words apart and effectively decode unfamiliar words in a reliable way, which makes reading comprehension difficult. Helping students gain these skills in the proper order allows students to be able to read increasingly complex texts and make growth with their grade alike peers.

Identifying these as the skills of focus allows teachers and interventionists to be intentional about the work done with and by students. Without specifically focusing on these

skills working with students becomes akin to throwing things at the wall to see what sticks. Instead, focusing on these skills allows for common language to be spoken between teachers, data to be meaningful and usable, and students to get what they need.

The research clearly shows that the skills necessary for students to be successful lifelong readers are phonemic and phonetic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. This makes sense once one understands what these skills are. When a student has holes in their phonemic and phonetic awareness that are left unfilled through adolescence, it can cause a great deal of frustration for both students and teachers.

Reading Skill Screeners

Review of Current Research:

Valid and reliable diagnostic assessments are an important component in an effective reading intervention program. A strong assessment allows a teacher to identify a student's mastery of specific literacy skills, both strengths and areas for improvement. Screening all students is essential to ensuring that all students get the support they need to be successful readers (Torgesen & Miller, 2009). The data received from these assessments should be easily utilized to make decisions regarding student instruction. If a student demonstrates that they are able to perform at grade-level in a particular area or skill, then they should not have to do any intervention work in that area and should instead focus on their most pressing area of need (Johnson, Smith, & Harris, 2009). In short, identifying these skills as important reading skills for middle level students allows for purposeful differentiation and intervention work.

There are a variety of diagnostic assessments currently available for use, such as the Upper Level Spelling Inventory that measures phonemic and phonetic awareness (Johnston, 2017). Students are given a list of carefully chosen words that allow the administrator to identify a student's specific spelling stage and the skills that the student needs to work on. Additionally, the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) allows the administrator to calculate words per minute and words per minute correct, which align with fluency (Leslie, 2017). This assessment also asks pre reading and comprehension questions to establish what background or prior knowledge a student is bringing to the reading and what they are able to take away. The questions are comprised of a variety of explicit and implicit questions, which gather information about a student's ability to make inferences (Leslie, 2017).

There are also a variety of interviews and student questionnaires that allow teachers to ask about student self perception regarding reading (Thayre, 2017). This information is helpful to teachers when figuring out how to motivate students in their reading work. Positive reader self-perception has been linked to higher levels of engagement with reading (Henk and Melnick, 1995). This establishes the importance of having student specific information about how they see themselves as readers. With this information, teachers are able to provide students who are struggling with their engagement and self-perception with interventions and strategies to support them.

Summary:

Overall, research shows that there are diagnostic assessments available that can allow a teacher to assess specific reading skills. However, the same research has brought to light a

glaring hole in the area of reading assessments. Detailed investigation into the variety of screeners that are available found that many are very good at assessing a particular skill. However, there does not seem to be one assessment that can be used to assess all of the key reading skills. An additional challenge is that some of the most highly regarded assessment tools, like the QRI, which does provide information in more than one of these areas, needs to be administered to students individually. This makes it incredibly for a classroom teacher to implement the assessment to every student in a reasonable amount of time.

Reading Interventions:

Review of Current Research:

Choosing a specific reading intervention to meet the needs of a particular student is a challenging process. There are a variety of different intervention programs that are available to meet any number of intervention needs. One tool that identified during research was What Works Clearinghouse, a website database that reviews effectiveness of popular intervention programs. This website can help teachers and school districts make more informed decisions about the interventions that are being used in individual classrooms and district wide.

While there are a number of intervention programs, after reviewing the research, a few programs are highlighted here. First, for fluency the Repeated Oral Assisted Reading (R.O.A.R) and Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.) program through the ITA Foundation has a good deal of evidence supporting its benefit for dysphonetic and dyslexic students who are not yet fluent (Flynn, 2000). The program has students work with a teacher and read aloud a story they have

had no prior experience reading, called a “cold” read, while timed. Their errors, such as mispronunciations and word omissions, are documented while they read aloud. After the cold read, the teacher engages the student in the gradual release of responsibility in an, “I do”, “we do”, “you do” format. Lastly, the student rereads the story aloud, called a “hot” read, while the teacher reassesses. With practice, this process has been proven to improve a student’s reading fluency, and positively impact their accuracy and comprehension (Flynn, 2000).

Secondly, for phonemic/phonetic awareness the Words Their Way program offers a great deal of material and words lists that can be used to help students improve their ability in this area. The research provided shows that this process of having students exposed to specifically curated word lists to help them understand the connection between the sounds that make up words and how that can be represented in writing (Johnston, 2017).

In terms of comprehension, there were a variety of different interventions discussed. Close reading was used as a strategy in some of the research and was effective for those students. Achieve 3000 has been used for this purpose as well, but What Works Clearinghouse found the effect size of the improvement to be minimal for students (WWC, 2018). Overall this seemed to be an area where there was much less consensus on what works for students in terms of intervention.

Summary:

The areas of Phonemic and Phonetic awareness and fluency were well researched in terms of interventions that can be used with students proved to have a positive impact. However when it came to researching comprehension, much less straightforward information is available. This seems to be because the first two skills are more elementary skills but once a student gets to

higher level skills like comprehension, the perceived need or demand for focused intervention programs is not as high. This chapter was able to present the current research found on the topics of key reading skills, reading comprehension, screeners, and interventions. Going forward into chapter 3, the focus will be on a screener and intervention protocol that was created addresses the key literacy skills identified in the research.

Chapter Summary and Looking Ahead:

In an effort to answer the research question it was first necessary to identify the main skills readers need to be successful, then figure out what screeners were already available to identify deficits, and then find researched interventions in those areas as well. Overall, what was found during this research is that once students get beyond elementary school, resources and intervention programs that are age appropriate are fewer and far between. In looking at the skills needed to be a successful reader, the research agreed that phonemic and phonetic awareness, fluency, and comprehension should be the main areas of focus (National Reading Panel, 2000, Saravallo, 2015, Rupley, W. H., Blair, T. R., & Nichols, W. D. (2009)).

Once this was established, research into screeners for reading skills was done, and while there are some high quality screeners that may address one or two of these skills, finding one that assessed all three may be very difficult. The other issue was that the screeners that found were ones that required one on one work with a student in order to complete them. It seemed like there was nothing that was intended for a classroom teacher to give to their students to get more individualized and specific data. This area of need is what this project will be working to address.

Finally, research was done into interventions and while there were well researched and established interventions for improving phonemic and phonetic awareness and fluency, a well researched comprehension intervention proved to be more difficult to find. Close reading was presented as an option but the discrepancy in terms of implementation was quite large.

Moving forward, this research will be used to begin creating a diagnostic assessment system that addresses each of the three skills discussed and an intervention plan that would address a deficit in any of the identified skills.

Chapter 3: Project Description

Introduction:

The research question driving this research is, *What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified?* The paper has discussed the research that supports this project, identified the rationale for investigating the answer to this question, and outlines the possible benefits to implementing a more robust intervention program with secondary students. This chapter will describe how the proposed curriculum that will be created and the format used to organize the teaching materials; ensuring that the project is easy to follow and understand. This description includes a discussion of the intended audience for the project and a timeline for development and implementation. The timeline for implementation is necessary for teacher because it will allow them to understand the scope and sequence of the screener tools and intervention system.

Overview of the Project

This project was born simply out of wanting to create something that had been lacking from the classroom teacher's instructional toolbox. Many teachers have classrooms full of students who are well below grade level in terms of their reading skills but are unsure of how to figure out exactly what skills students are lacking and what to do to intentionally target areas of deficiency. After much research, it is found that while there are assessments that are able to assess one or two specific reading skills, the researcher was unable to identify an assessment tool that can be used to manageably assess all of the students in a classroom and provide data

about their ability in the core reading skills. Furthermore, the ultimate goal was to be able to respond to any area of need with a specific targeted intervention. From all of this, the diagnostic assessment tool and intervention protocol project was born; a needs assessment screener that assesses students in fluency, phonemic and phonetic awareness, and comprehension.

The screener created will take the best parts of the diagnostic tools discovered during research and combine them with additional critical thinking, educational experience, and research. Ultimately the goal is to create a screener that can be used by classroom teachers in a single class period to allow them to gather meaningful data on all of their students.

The intervention protocol created through this project will be a flowchart that will allow teachers to easily choose and provide meaningful interventions for students. Once a teacher administers the screener and has data on a student, the intervention protocol will show teachers what intervention a student should receive based on their areas of need identified by the screener. The recommended resources have been selected based on research and results. Repeated Oral Assisted Reading (ROAR) is one of the recommended resources for teachers with students who demonstrate a need for fluency work. Words their Way lists is one of the recommended resources for teachers with students who demonstrate a need for work with phonemic and phonetic awareness. Finally, *The Reading Strategies Book* (Serravallo, 2015) is one of the recommended resources for teachers with students who demonstrate a need in the area of comprehension.

Students will be responsible for self evaluation on a routine basis to help promote self-efficacy. As a teacher, continually monitoring and evaluating the interventions and progress

to see if any changes or adaptations need to be made, will be important as this project is developed and beta tested.

Research Paradigm/Framework/Theories:

The Response to Intervention model is what this project is centered around. The concept of giving students what they need in an equitable, data driven, system is one that aligns strongly with this work. This capstone project is supported by research, specifically the findings of the National Reading Panel in 2000 which identified the key skills identified above that students need in order to be effective readers. Chapter 2 outlined other research that supports these findings and demonstrates that focusing on these skills while developing the screening assessment tool and intervention protocol is best practice.

The screener that will be created utilizes many of the tenants of Stahl and McKenna's (2015) *Assessment for Reading Instruction*. This resource was the foundation for the development of a universal screener for use in general education classrooms. In addition, their discussion of teaching philosophy surrounding data driven decision making useful because it served as a constant reminder of the importance of data as this project is being created. This resource lays out some great teaching philosophy surrounding reading assessment which will be the foundation for this work creating the screener. The examples that they include in the book of different assessments for different skills will help in creating a meaningful assessment that provides data in the necessary areas.

The intervention protocol created for classroom use will allow teachers to target a variety of reading skills. When it is necessary to support students in multiple components, the intervention protocol will also offer a sequence for teachers to follow, based on the hierarchy of

reading skills (Seravallo, 2015). This resource does a great job of outlining the hierarchy of reading skills along with different methods to help students master those skills. The work that the author presents will be invaluable in designing an intervention protocol that allows teachers to target a variety of reading skills.

Choice of Method:

The method chosen for this screener and intervention protocol writing is Wiggins and McTighe's Understanding by Design Framework. The reason that this framework was chosen is because of the emphasis that it places on backwards design. The end goal is the key focus from the beginning and this ensures that the outcome stays at the forefront during the planning process.

This curriculum framework is also widely used and accepted in the education community and would be easily shared and accessible to other interested educators. The curriculum framework lends itself to the type of student centered work that this screener and intervention protocol aims for, with the goals and end results being the most important thing.

Setting/Audience:

The intended setting will be mainstream middle school Language Arts classrooms. The beta test for this project will be implementing the curriculum with four groups of 25-30 6th grade students in a suburban public middle school. At this particular middle school, 14% of students are classified as receiving free and reduced lunch. Test scores at this school are well above average. The majority of students will take the universal screener and not have any need for

interventions. However, full participation in the screening assessment would ensure that students with a deficit in any of the key areas do not go unidentified.

Timeline:

Both the screener and intervention protocol will be developed during the fall semester of 2019. This will be completed by the end of the fall semester. The plan for actual implementation with students is in the 1-3 year timeframe, once all of the curriculum has been written and is ready to be implemented.

The intention is to share this work through any number of educational websites once it has been completed. The screener and intervention protocol with 6th grade students serves as a beta test. Results will be tracked and used to modify and improve the screener and intervention protocol.

Summary:

This capstone project was created in response to the research question: *What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified?* This project aims to create a screening tool that is manageable for classroom teachers to use in gathering information about all of their students in the key reading skills: fluency, phonemic and phonetic awareness, and comprehension. An intervention protocol to be used with students who demonstrate need in one of the key skills will also be created.

This comes from what is seen as a need that is not currently being met. Many new and veteran teachers are looking for a resource that would allow them to gather skill specific data on

students in regards to reading skills. After much research, something that was manageable for a classroom teacher to give to all of my students to ensure that no one fell through the cracks was not found. Creating a tool to accomplish this task will allow educators to gather the necessary data on their students and use it to provide them with targeted interventions that would support students in becoming effective independent readers.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Introduction:

What is the most effective way to identify areas of need for struggling middle school readers and how can teachers intentionally target those areas of need once identified? This is the research question that I was compelled to investigate based on my experiences as an educator and a need that I saw in classroom-level reading instruction. I saw a need for a holistic screener that provided skill-level student data on the key literacy skills so that classroom teachers would be able to respond in a meaningful and intention way.

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of my research, outlining the key literacy skills students need to be successful readers, the screeners that are currently available, and interventions to target different reading skills. The limitations and implications of my research and project will also be presented. In creating a screener there were limitations that I came upon when creating my literacy screener as well as implications that my research and project have moving forward. After completing this project I also felt that it was necessary to outline what my next steps are from here, including what research, testing, revising, and additional creating I plan to do in this area of study. I also plan to present my research and have outlined a plan for the presentation of my research to the appropriate parties in this chapter. Ultimately, this culminating reflection will summarize what I have learned, what I created, and my plan moving forward in this vein of study.

Learnings:

Before creating my Literacy Screener, it was essential that I understood the key components of literacy. Through my research, it became clear that phonemic and phonetic awareness, fluency, and comprehension were well established as the essential components of literacy (National Reading Panel, 2000, Saravallo, 2015, Rupley, W. H., Blair, T. R., & Nichols, W. D. (2009). It was clear that these skills needed to be the focus of my literacy screener.

From there, I was able to investigate what screeners and assessments were already created that provided information on the essential reading skills that I established above as well as reader self perception because my research also uncovered the importance of positive reader self-perception in regards to student performance. What I found was that there were screeners that provided valuable information on these skills but none that provided data on all three skills with one assessment. Ultimately this lead to me finding the best assessments for each skill. The Qualitative Reading Inventory (Leslie, 2017) excelled with data related to comprehension and fluency. The Upper Level Spelling Inventory provided invaluable data regarding phonemic and phonetic awareness specifically related to student mastery level with different stages of awareness.

This process was not without limitations. I had to be realistic about what I was able to do and the requirements certain assessments had in order to provide reliable and worthwhile data.

Limitations and Implications:

As I thought about my screener and how I wanted it to work, one of the goals I had was that the screener be manageable for a classroom teacher to administer. I was able to provide this

with the first two components of the screener-the Reader Self-Perception Scale and the Upper Level Spelling Inventory-however, the Qualitative Reading Inventory that I planned to use to assess fluency and comprehension required a teacher to work one on one with a student in order to listen to them read and answer comprehension questions. This was a limitation because as much as I wanted the screener to be something that students could complete individually and then submit to the teacher for assessment, I was not able to get past the fact that best practice with fluency and comprehension assessments is to listen to student reading and responses. This was the major limitation that occurred during the course of my research and project completed.

The implications of my work in this area are fairly concrete. I created a screener that allows teachers to get a comprehensive look at their student as a reader and plan instruction and interventions accordingly. This screener is a worthwhile tool for reading specialists and classroom teachers alike when working with students with reading difficulties. Ideally, this screener could be the foundation of a student reading assessment and would inform student level educational decisions going forward.

Next Steps:

Moving forward, I plan to continue to present my project and research to colleagues and reading specialists in my district. Collaborating with these individuals, I also plan to test my screener on students to gather meaningful literacy data and make any changes or modifications necessary. During this process of student testing, I plan to gather student and teacher feedback to see what changes, modifications, or additions would be beneficial. From the student, the feedback will be used to make the process of taking the screener as painless as possible while

still gather as much information as possible. From the educator, the feedback will be used to inform changes to the screener and guidebook could be made to make it even more user friendly and gather as much usable data as possible.

Additionally, I feel that one of the steps forward academically for me is to continue my research into the role of reader self-perception and that impacts student achievement. I am curious about the impact and correlation of reader self-perception versus possessed reading skills.

Plan for Presentation:

In terms of presenting my project, I have two main objectives. The first is to present it to my Professional Learning Community (PLC) so that they can utilize my screener and flow chart when working with struggling readers. This will allow not just me, but my colleagues as well to address individual reading needs in our classrooms as effectively as possible. Ultimately our goal as teachers is to produce engaged readers with the skills and strategies to approach higher and higher level texts as they go through their educational career and this screener can help in that endeavor.

The second objective is to present my project to the Reading Intervention Coordinator in my building. She is responsible for coordinating the assessment of students and the grouping of students into intervention groups and my project would be an additional tool that could be used in this process.

Summary:

This project truly has allowed me the opportunity to research and investigate a topic that I am passionate about. In doing that I was able to create a screener that allows the classroom teachers to gather skill-specific information on a student's skills in phonemic and phonetic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. Doing this project allows me to give back to the educational field by sharing this resource I have created to make the lives of my fellow educators just a little bit easier. The teaching profession has given me so much by providing the opportunity for me to pursue my passion of passing on my love of reading and literacy to as many students as possible. Having an opportunity to give back to that profession in a tangible way with my work on this project is something that has been very meaningful to me.

This is a project that I feel very proud of and I am confident that it will prove useful to not only myself but other teachers as well. As I was completing my work for this project, I could not help but think about how desperate I was as a new teacher for a resource like the one I ultimately created. If I can help even one teacher avoid the frustration with my project I will count myself successful.

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