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Administrator Role in Successful Volunteer Based Reading Programs

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ADMINISTRATOR ROLE IN SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER BASED READING

PROGRAMS

by

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To the students I have had the privilege of teaching, and to those I have yet to meet.

Your world-changing potential motivates me to be a better educator.

A tremendous thank you to my family, for the ways you cheered me on to complete this

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Introduction

As a former first grade elementary teacher I am well aware of the importance of literacy development in primary students. My graduate coursework in the MA Literacy Program at Hamline University has also deepened my understanding not only of the significant role of literacy education for these students, but also the best practices for fostering literacy learning. My teaching experience combined with my graduate work and discoveries related to my involvement with various volunteer reading programs have inspired my capstone question: *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* The capstone thesis process creates an opportunity for me to explore one way that schools provide students the chance to read independent leveled text to another adult. These practice opportunities are of critical importance given the large number of elementary students not reading at a proficient level (National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), n.d.). When considering volunteer reading programs, understanding the role and impact of school administrators is helpful in examining ways these programs can support elementary readers.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 35% of fourth grade students in the United States are reading at or above the proficient level in reading in 2019, and only 66% were reading at or above the basic level (NAEP,

n.d.). The NAEP data also reports that for students in the lowest percentiles of reading achievement, the 10th and 25th percentiles, the 2019 reading scores were significantly lower than the reading scores in 2017. Another notable finding from the NAEP data is that in 2019, White fourth grade students scored an average of 27 points higher than their Black peers, and 21 points higher than their Hispanic peers, illustrating a gap in achievement for different groups of students. These scores highlight the degree to which students need support in reading, specifically in the early years.

These NAEP assessments evaluate reading comprehension, and the reading comprehension questions included in the assessment are designed to target three main areas: student ability to locate/recall, integrate/interpret, and critique/evaluate (NAEP, n.d.). In addition to these assessments, the development and adoption of the Common Core State Standards add another layer of depth to reading assessment. Adopted by the state of Minnesota in 2010 (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), 2019) the Common Core State Standards in the area of English Language Arts require students not only read complex text, but demonstrate a strong understanding of literature. From the Common Core website:

> The Common Core asks students to read stories and literature, as well as more complex texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas such as science and social studies. Students will be challenged and asked questions that push them to refer back to what they've read. This stresses critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that are required for success in college, career, and life. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2020)

These high standards for young readers demonstrate the need to provide many opportunities for practice reading with adults and interventions early to prevent greater reading difficulty in later grades.

This idea is further emphasized by research (Stanovich, 1986; Torgesen, 2004) that has shown that students who struggle in reading at an early age are more likely to struggle as they continue through school. As an elementary teacher I have personally experienced the sometimes overwhelming pressure to meet the reading needs of students who struggle while not sacrificing the needs of others in the classroom. Best practice in reading instruction involves meeting with students in differentiated groups and pairing students to texts that are at their instructional or independent reading level (Torgeson, 2004; Wasik & Slavin, 1993), and in one classroom it is not uncommon to have a very wide range of readers. During my teaching experience I was often overwhelmed by this range of readers and the charge to provide differentiated instruction for each student, especially those that struggled in reading. Lindo, Weiser, Cheatham and Allor (2018) report that the pressure I experienced in creating multiple differentiated groups in reading is common for many elementary teachers.

Wasik and Slavin (1993) state students who need extra instruction in reading are best supported by a licensed teacher. During my experience, we had a Reading Recovery (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2020) Teacher who worked very closely with individual students on a daily basis, and this was very beneficial to the students who were in the Reading Recovery program. Other than that teacher, however, there were no other licensed teachers or interventionists that were available to help with student instruction. This is common in schools, and the lack of licensed teachers can be due to a

lack of funding or available staff members (Morris, 2006). This only placed more pressure on me to find ways to differentiate for all the needs in the classroom.

Torgesen (2004) reports that one of the most helpful tools for addressing this range of readers is having an adult to meet with students to model fluent reading, monitor student success, and provide immediate feedback. Torgesen (2004) states that when reading to an adult, learners not only experience growth in their reading ability, but also in their attitude toward reading as they begin to feel more positive about their progress.

Given that reading to an adult is an important instructional tool, and one that can be hard for the licensed teaching staff to provide, Wasik and Slavin (1993) describe how volunteer reading programs were developed in part to meet the challenge of students who struggle in reading by offering opportunities for these students to read with an adult. There are a variety of volunteer reading programs. The Reading Buddies (L. Carlson, personal communication, February 12, 2019) program at my children's school utilizes employees from a local business to meet with students over lunch once a week. The director of this program explains that students and their adult buddies play reading games and sometimes "just chat" when they are together. The goal in this program is not measurable reading growth, but instead a positive relationship with a caring adult (L. Carlson, personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Other programs are designed to follow a specific structure within a regimented schedule, and the goal of these programs is increased reading achievement (Elbaum, Vaughn, Tejero Hughes & Watson Moody, 2000; Morris, 2006; Pullen, Lane & Monaghan, 2004; Wasik, 1998a; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). One of these programs is Reading Partners (2020). Reading Partners, a nationally recognized program and one that

will be further considered in this paper, has the following mission statement: "Our mission is to help children become lifelong readers by empowering communities to provide individualized instruction with measurable results" (Reading Partners, 2020,Vision and Values, Our Mission, para. 1). While creating relationships with students and increasing motivation to learn are important topics that are addressed by many programs, the research in this paper seeks to consider how students who struggle in reading can show progress as a result of a volunteer reading program. For this reason, the scope of this paper will be limited to those programs that, like Reading Partners (2020), aim to increase reading achievement.

In order for volunteer programs to have the greatest impact on student achievement, they must be supported by the teachers and administration (Potter, 1999). Potter (1999) states that while a variety of reading programs are managed by an organization outside of the school, it is still important to have consistency with classroom instruction when considering these types of programs. Several researchers (Matsumura, Sartois, DiPrima Bickel & Garnier, 2009; Potter, 1999; Wepner, Strickland & Feeley, 2002) highlight the importance of volunteer based reading programs needing to be supported by the staff, and specifically the elementary administrators who often solidify funding and other resources for these programs. During my review of the research literature for a variety of volunteer reading programs, while I found a great deal of literature about many key stakeholders involved with volunteer reading programs, I found very little research from the perspective of administrators. Since it is often the administrators who are viewed as instructional leaders in their building (Lynch, 2012), I was eager to hear about their perspective of the effectiveness of these programs. This led

me to the question: *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

This chapter will first describe my background as a college student beginning to develop a teaching philosophy that focused on the importance of literacy education. Next will be a description of my experience as a first grade classroom teacher finding ways to involve adults in the literacy instruction. The chapter ends with a recollection of two specific conversations that occurred within months of each other and spurred me on to the idea focusing my capstone on volunteer-based reading programs offering support to students that struggle to read grade level text. Finally, a rationale will be provided for the importance of considering my capstone question.

Early and Foundational Experiences Related to My Interest in the Topic

One of the most influential ideas in my teaching journey has been the concept of public school being the "great equalizer." The idea that all students can have the same potential for future success has motivated me to be a supporter for public schools. In 2001, during my sophomore year of college, I spent a semester studying and teaching in Antigua, Guatemala. During this semester, it became apparent to me that having an education was truly a privilege. The students in our school who were learning English would have more career opportunities because they could speak English, and more potential for future success. Growing up and going to school in a white, suburban, middle class neighborhood, I had previously only considered school as an obligation. After my experience abroad I was able to see education through a different lens, and this helped me understand the great service that public education offers.

This optimism was quickly challenged with my first teaching assignment as a second grade teacher in 2003. The wide variety of reading abilities among students in my classroom was striking. While some students were having trouble decoding text, others were struggling to find books that were at their advanced reading level with appropriate themes for seven and eight year olds. I was not prepared for this great range in ability, and this became one of the most difficult pieces of literacy instruction. To support me in knowing how to address the diverse reading abilities in my classroom I turned to the expertise of my mentor teacher who offered some ideas on differentiating instruction. However, I was not able to find a great deal of support from other staff or administrators in my building for reading instruction.

First Grade Teaching Experience

For the next seven years this challenge followed me to two more schools and experiences at every level from kindergarten to third grade. Although more confident in my overall teaching ability, meeting the dynamic needs of all students, especially in reading, remained a difficult task. Between 2006 and 2010 I spent five years teaching first grade, and as the curriculum and teaching strategies for this particular level became more comfortable, it was apparent that it was time to look more closely at how the literacy needs of all learners were being met in my classroom.

I began to explore this idea more fully during the 2007-2008 school year. My classroom consisted of a small cluster of students who were informally identified as Gifted and Talented, along with a group of students who had low reading scores and were not receiving other interventions such as English Language or Special Education services. The rest of the students fell somewhere within three or four guided reading levels around

the grade level range. Planning guided reading groups for the classroom was challenging as one group needed help with vowel sounds and another worked on finding major themes of a 150 page chapter book. I felt a need to meet with the struggling readers often, but knew it was also important to keep holding group sessions with the more advanced readers so they did not become stagnant in their reading ability.

Fortunately, in this setting I had the support not only of a mentor teacher, but also a district reading specialist and the building principal, who made it a priority to schedule grade level teachers with common prep times. In addition, our principal made it a priority to support our first grade team's understanding of literacy development and best practice, and gave us time and opportunities to meet with our district reading specialist and even teachers in other buildings in our district. Within the first few months of the school year every available window of time in our day was used for meeting with small groups of students. My colleagues and I were encouraged by the wonderful resources available to us to deliver in small group instruction, but it still did not feel like the students were receiving enough individualized support. Parents of our students were also contacting us about wanting to volunteer in our classrooms, and while the idea of an extra adult seemed helpful, my colleagues and I found it difficult to utilize these volunteers in a way that would allow us to effectively work with students. Instead of an asset, volunteers began to feel like one more thing to plan into our day, which we did not have the capacity to manage.

Over time, however, our team began to wonder if this extra adult could be helpful in our struggle to provide differentiated instruction. Despite all of the small group work happening in our classrooms, we still lacked the time to meet with students individually

and check in on what they were reading during independent reading time. This led us to consider a possible connection between using parent volunteers in a meaningful way and one of our major frustrations: the lack of time to listen to students read one-on-one. As a first grade team, a decision was made to develop a program that could pair volunteers with individual readers in our classroom.

Throughout the summer of 2008, with the support of our principal who provided resources for book purchasing and compensation of time spent working, my colleagues and I prepared boxes with leveled books for use by volunteers who would be reading with our students. We also developed a simple protocol (Appendix A) for volunteers that involved listening to students read a familiar book of their choosing, asking them a question or two about the book, and helping them trade out leveled books from their book box. The procedure was the same during each session, which would allow the volunteers to be independent so that my colleagues and I could work with students without disruption, which was a priority for our team.

Another aspect of the program was having volunteers keep track of meetings on a master list so each student was seen at least once a week, and the teachers were free to focus on our intensive lessons rather than the bookkeeping required for updating book boxes. When the new school year started and my colleagues and I introduced this process, our observation was that students were more motivated to read during independent reading time because they had high interest books that were the correct level for independent reading. They also wanted to be prepared for the time they would meet with a volunteer. Upon reflection on the years spent in the classroom, this is one of the routines I feel the most successful about; we were able to use willing volunteers

effectively to solve a major classroom frustration. The next section will describe how my

role has changed from a teacher to parent since being out of the classroom since 2010 and

my involvement with volunteer reading programs at my own children's school.

Beyond the Classroom

In 2010 I left the classroom to be home with my growing family. I have spent

the last ten years attending Early Childhood Education Classes and volunteering at

various events at my children's schools. This shift in roles has left me increasingly aware

of the vast differences not only in the academic abilities but in the lives of students

outside of the classroom as well. While some students have parents who spend time daily

on reading and schoolwork, others have caregivers who are working multiple jobs and

unable to set aside extra time for these activities. I have seen the way that academics are

supported both at home and in school, and have developed a greater understanding of the

link between these two settings.

This home school connection has been of particular interest to me beginning when

I attended Early Childhood Family Education classes with my four toddlers, and also

during the course of my Master's work in Literacy Education as I have recognized the

importance of support that goes beyond the classroom. As a result of my Master's work

it is clear that students need to come to school having a wide array of language and text

experiences in order to be successful in reading, and many students do not have these

opportunities. While it is worthwhile to look at ways parents can support their children's

early literacy, it is equally important to understand that this support at home will simply

not be available to many children. Appreciating this reality has caused me to wonder

how teachers and school staff can assist parents who are unable to provide this at home support.

In 2018, I had two experiences that seemed to connect my thinking around literacy development and home support. The first was an informal visit with a friend who volunteers with the "Read With Me" program in the Coachella Valley in California (Klein, 2015). She talked about the number of volunteers who go into area schools where many students live below the poverty line and do not speak fluent English. The students have experienced great success in reading since the program started. This seemingly simple intervention inspired me: finding adult volunteers who have the time and desire to work with students and providing them with a way to help that has lasting effect.

A couple of weeks after my California trip I met with a friend who works with women living in transitional housing with their children. We talked about a chain of issues that can make it difficult for these children to do well in school. Often, these families have experienced some sort of trauma, and this causes them to have extra needs. They may miss more school, and balancing work and childcare can be a difficult task for these single mothers. Reflecting on this conversation later, I wondered if community members could support children like the ones we spoke about by giving them the extra one on one reading time that is so important.

I started to wonder if a volunteer based reading program, like the one in California, could be useful for providing the extra adult support that so many students need but do not have access to. Unsure of how these programs are typically organized, I thought about administrators, who would often be the ones to implement and advocate for a new program in a school. Specifically, I remembered the principal who guided me

when I was teaching first grade and her enthusiasm around early literacy, and the literacy coordinator who always took time to help us refine our practice and think about new ways to meet with students. I considered these administrators compared to others I had worked with in previous buildings who seemed less involved in the practices we were implementing in our classrooms, and became curious about how these different styles of leadership affected intervention efforts in schools. This combined with my interest in volunteer reading programs led me to the question, How *do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

Potential Significance of Capstone Topic for Other Stakeholders

While the aim of the research question is administrators, there are other groups of people that contribute to and are affected by these volunteer programs. This section will consider these stakeholders, and consider the significance of the research question for their unique role.

Volunteers. Adults who volunteer on a consistent basis are making a significant contribution to the field of education, sacrificing their own time in order to support student learning. In order for students to receive the maximum benefit from these volunteers, it is important that a program is organized in a way to provide success. As I explore aspects that contribute to the success of volunteer reading programs, my hope would be that I could offer insight into practices that will make these volunteer experiences beneficial for student achievement.

Administrators. The support I had from my principal and literacy coordinator when teaching first grade was instrumental in my efforts to meet the reading needs in my

classroom. Their support was based on their shared value of the importance of early literacy, and this value influenced their decisions to offer us the time, space, and resources we needed to implement best practice with our students. This capstone will explore the roles of administrators with volunteer reading programs, and hopefully provide insight into certain leadership behaviors and attitudes that are helpful for promoting success. Since there is not a great deal of research on the unique role of administrators involved in schools with volunteer reading programs, the results from this capstone could help school principals and literacy leaders effectively partner with school staff and volunteers to create positive change through volunteer programs.

Program leaders. In addition to school leadership, program leadership is another important factor in program success. Exploring various ideas held by administrators will hopefully uncover ways that program volunteers can effectively manage volunteer programs in schools to increase student achievement in reading.

Students. Perhaps one group most affected by volunteer reading programs is the students themselves. It is important that students are using time during the school day efficiently in order to assure maximum success. Insights gained in this capstone will help to guide administrators and program leaders to create and maintain programs that will maximize student success in reading.

Professional growth. Finally, this capstone will have personal significance to me as it will help me to understand ways that volunteer reading programs can be created and supported to increase student achievement. It will build on the learnings I had as a first grade teacher, that adult support can foster student achievement, and give me ideas for ways this can be carried out in a variety of settings in my future.

Summary

This chapter gave an overview of my experience with primary grade readers and interactions with adult volunteers, both in my own classroom and in other schools. I also provided a rationale behind my research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

In Chapter Two, I will look at current research in the area of volunteer-based reading programs, specifically those that aim to increase reading achievement. The reasons surrounding implementation of volunteer programs will be explored, as well as a review of specific programs and best practice for increasing achievement through volunteer based reading programs. I will also consider major stakeholders involved when considering these programs, namely elementary administrators. Research describing the impact of administrators on reading initiatives will be explored.

Chapter Three will describe the research paradigm for this thesis, and offer support for the qualitative research method applied in this study as well as the decision to use surveys and qualitative, semi-structured interviews to conduct the research. There will be a description of the Reading Partners (2020) program, as the research will be limited to schools partnering with this particular program in order to provide consistency in the research, and a description of the schools where I interviewed administrators. Finally, the chapter will include a description of the research process and procedures.

Chapter Four will summarize the findings from the qualitative interviews described in Chapter three. Using results from surveys and interviews, specific themes will be highlighted and discussed. Next, in Chapter Five, I will draw connections

between the research and the literature review in Chapter Two. Then I will consider the implications of and possible limitations to the research. Finally, I will consider ideas for future research and practice and discuss ways in which this research can be applied to other volunteer based reading programs.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter One there was a review of my background as a primary teacher and discussion of the volunteer protocol developed with my teaching team and the support of my building principal and literacy coordinator. Chapter One also describes my experiences with programs that utilize volunteers to work with at risk students, especially in the area of reading, and considered the perspective of school staff toward these programs. There was particular emphasis on my experiences with supportive administrators in my building, and the research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* was introduced.

In this chapter, research in the area of volunteer based reading programs will be examined. First, there will be a description of what it means to "struggle" in reading. This will establish the need for interventions and review the work of Stanovich (1986) and Torgesen (2004) that considers the spiraling effect of reading difficulties in the early grades, an important issue for teachers and administrators. Next I will review literature that discusses different types of one-on-one tutoring programs, focusing on the effectiveness of these programs. The following section of the review will look at research into specific volunteer based tutoring programs. Five programs, the Howard Street Tutoring Program (Morris, 2006), Book Buddies (Invernizzi, Rosemary, Juel &

Richards, 1997), Help One Student to Succeed (Burns et al., 2004), America Reads

Partnerships (Potter, 1999), and Reading Partners (2020), will be described and their

effectiveness discussed. Relevant findings from studies of smaller programs will also be

reviewed. The review will consider limitations to the research around the effectiveness of

these programs as well.

The next section of the literature review will describe best practice for volunteer

based tutoring programs. Using guidelines defined by Wasik (1998a), a list of essential

elements for tutoring programs will be provided. Finally, the review will consider the

research related to the various stakeholders involved in these programs, specifically

administrators, leading to the formulation of the research question, *How do*

administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs

describe their role in the program's success?

Helping Struggling Students: The Matthew Effect

It is widely agreed that early reading success is critical for future academic

achievement (Lindo, Weiser, Cheatham, & Allor, 2018; Stanovich, 1986; Wasik &

Slavin, 1993). However, not all students experience early reading success, and that lack

of success can have long term consequences as described by Stanovich (1986), making it

imperative that struggling students receive early reading support. Stanovich (1986) used

the phrase, the "Matthew Effect" to describe the consequences of reading struggles in the

early grades.

The Matthew effect references a story from the bible where the rich continued to

get richer and the poor become poorer. Stanovich (1986) argues that students who were

poor readers in the early years of kindergarten and first grade experience material that is

too difficult, resulting in unrewarding reading experiences and less involvement in reading activities. The lack of exposure to appropriate material, Stanovich (1986) argued, delays the development of automaticity with reading so that reading for meaning can not happen.

Meanwhile, Stanovich (1986) notes how successful readers continually experience reading material that *is* an appropriate level for them to read for meaning, widening the gap between the struggling and proficient readers. Torgesen, Rashotte, and Alexander (as cited in Torgesen, 2004), agreed with this idea when they said that the "lost practice opportunities make it extremely difficult for children who remain poor readers during the first three years of elementary school to acquire average levels of reading fluency" (para. 3). This lack of progress mentioned by Torgesen is evidenced in the 2019 NAEP data which shows that 65% of fourth graders did not meet proficient levels or above in a 2019 reading assessment (NAEP, n.d.). The next section will describe ways that interventions can be carefully designed to address readers who are not making adequate progress in the first three years of school.

Best Practices for Reading Interventions

In order to address the consequences of the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986), early intervention is required when it is determined that some students are not progressing in reading at the rate of their peers. Clay (1985) noted that early intervention for these struggling students is crucial to later success. Once it is determined that a student is struggling in reading, it is important for teachers to take additional action to support their literacy development. Torgesen (2004) concluded that struggling readers need instruction that is more explicit, intensive, and supportive than regular instruction.

The following paragraphs will explore each of these elements and consider the best ways to implement interventions.

Torgesen (2004) stated, "Explicit instruction is instruction that does not leave anything to chance and does not make assumptions about skills and knowledge that children will acquire on their own" (Instruction for at-risk children must be more explicit than for other children section, para. 2). Torgesen expanded this by explaining that teachers need to teach the connection between the letters in print and the corresponding sounds in a systematic way. They also need to explicitly teach and practice word meanings so students will have access to these meanings when they encounter them in their reading. Finally, Torgesen (2004) stated that this instruction not only must include practice to build fluency, but direct instruction of comprehension strategies in order to pull meaning from text.

Another essential component of interventions is intensity (Allington, 2012; Torgesen, 2004). Intensity can be defined as the time a student spends receiving explicit reading instruction and the teacher-pupil ratio for these instructional settings (Allington, 2012; Torgesen, 2004). There are two ways to increase intensity: the instructional time can be increased, or the size of the instructional group can be made smaller. Torgesen (2004) stated that the most practical way to increase intensity is by reducing the size of the learning group, and make these smaller group learning experiences frequent, at least four days a week, and 20-40 minutes each session.

In a typical classroom with a ratio of 1:22 and a 90 minute reading block, Morris (2006) highlights how teachers do not have adequate time to give to each student the intensity required for literacy learning, especially those who struggle. If there is not

enough time to provide one-on-one or small group intense explicit instruction to struggling readers, what are other options? One is to provide struggling readers with reading interventions that are delivered in a small group or one-on-one settings on a frequent basis.

Allington (2012) explained why this small group instruction can be effective. The author notes that as the size of the instructional group decreases, the likelihood of acceleration increases. Another reason that smaller group instruction is beneficial to struggling readers has been identified by Stanovich (1986) who stated that struggling readers are more likely to have less-meaningful experiences in the large group setting due to their inability to automatically decode grade level text, and small group instruction is more beneficial for these students. A third benefit of small group instruction for struggling readers is noted by Wasik and Slavin (1993). These authors described how reading instruction delivered in a small group or one-on-one setting can improve the time struggling students spend on task reading and allow students to read at their developmental level. This research supports Torgesen's (2004) claim that increasing intensity is an effective way to support struggling readers.

Finally, reading interventions need to offer adequate support. According to Torgesen (2004), supportive instruction provides students with frequent feedback and skillful scaffolding and modeling so they are well guided through reading practice. Supportive interventions also provide frequent feedback. This feedback allows students the opportunity to self correct and change any erroneous reading habits quickly. In summary, Wasik and Slavin (1993) acknowledged that smaller group and one-on-one

settings allow the tutor to tailor the instruction to the specific needs of the student and more effectively monitor reading and comprehension .

While administrators and teachers are aware of the varying needs of students in their classroom, Mathes et al. (2003) stated that factors such as class size, varying abilities, and time restraints often prevent teachers from being able to deliver the intense instruction that struggling readers need. In response to this difficulty to provide intervention to these struggling readers, Former President Clinton introduced the America Reads Challenge (ARC) in 1997. This legislation stated that every child would read well by third grade. Legislation around ARC had two components: America Reads Tutors and a parent component (Wasik, 1998b). The parent and family component had a large focus on what parents can do to help their children before they enter school by building a strong base for reading.

The legislation provided funds for programs like Head Start to support young children (Department of Education, 1997). There were resources designed for helping parents of school age children, but once children were in school, the legislation considered using community members and organizations to provide reading volunteers (Department of Education, 1997). Wasik (1998a) explained how this legislation also proposed funding to put one million reading volunteers into classrooms as reading tutors. She continued that this proposed legislation caused greater interest in providing volunteer based tutors in schools to work with readers that were at risk of reading failure, and the effectiveness of volunteer based programs began to be considered. There have been a variety of programs that have utilized volunteer tutors to deliver additional reading

instruction, and the next section will look at some of these programs that have been studied for their effectiveness.

Effectiveness of Volunteer Literacy Programs: Exploring Research

Clinton's America Reads Act proposed funding for volunteers to support reading in classrooms, and this prompted a great deal of research around volunteer-based reading programs (Elebaum, Vaughn, Tejero Hughes & Watson Moody, 2000; Wasik, 1998b; Wasik, 1999). Wasik (1998b) stated that it was important to "provide a comprehensive review of the current state of knowledge about the effects of various volunteer tutoring programs in reading" (p. 266) before implementing volunteer programs haphazardly. She argued that before sending volunteers into classrooms in response to the America Reads Challenge, it was important to have a clear understanding of the role volunteers could play and what training they need in order to be effective (1998b, p. 266). Part of her comprehensive review was a study of 11 programs that used volunteers to help students with reading. Wasik (1998b) considered elements that these programs had in common, and used her research to suggest elements that were essential to volunteer based reading programs.

In addition to Wasik's (1998b) research related to the role of volunteers, Elebaum et al. (2000) also conducted a meta-analysis of 29 studies of volunteer tutoring reported between 1975 and 1988. They found that "college students and trained, reliable community volunteers were able to provide significant help to struggling readers" (discussion section, para. 2). According to these researchers the reviewed studies supported that the students who received tutoring performed an average of two-fifths standard deviation higher than the average comparison group (Elebaum et al., 2000). In

addition to the study by Elebaum et al. (2000) a number of tutoring programs have been evaluated for their effectiveness (Burns, Senesac, & Silberglitt, 2008; Burns, Senesac, & Symington, 2004; Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Elbaum et al., 2000; Fitzgerald, 2001; Invernizzi et al., 1997; Lee, Morrow-Howell, Jonson-Reid, & McCrary, 2012; Lindo et al., 2018; Pullen, Lanen & Monaghan, 2004; Rimm-Kaufman, Kagan, & Byers, 1999), and in the following sections this review will consider some of the specific programs that were highlighted in various studies. It will also discuss some of the common limitations to research in this area.

Research on Effectiveness: Howard Street Tutoring Program

The Howard Street Tutoring Program, created in 1979 in Chicago, is an after school program focused on providing tutoring help to second and third graders who have difficulty reading, as identified by informal reading and spelling measures administered by the school reading specialist (Wasik, 1998b). Morris (2006) describes that the students participating in the The Howard Street Tutoring Program were tutored for one hour after school two times per week by volunteers ranging from college students to retirees in the neighborhood. According to Morris (2006) the volunteers follow a specific lesson plan and are closely supervised by a reading specialist who has the responsibility of not only supervising and guiding tutors, but also planning lessons for the volunteers to implement.

Morris, Shaw and Perney (as cited in Morris, 2006) evaluated the program by measuring the outcomes of 30 students who received an average of 50 tutoring sessions throughout the school year to a matched control group of students who did not receive the tutoring. Morris (2006) reported that their evaluation found that "on average, the tutored

group gained 12.2 months in passage reading, whereas the control group only gained 6.6

months" (p. 355). The success of the Howard Street Tutoring program was noted by

multiple researchers, and parts of this model, namely a reading teacher at the center of the

program and a structured procedure for the tutoring session, have been replicated in other

programs.

Research on Effectiveness: Book Buddies

Book Buddies in Charlottesville, Virginia is a program that uses community

volunteers to tutor first graders having difficulty learning to read (Morris, 2006; Wasik,

1998b). In this program, tutors meet with students two times each week for 45-minute

work sessions. Wasik (1998b) describes two important characteristics of the program.

One, tutors are carefully supervised by an onsite reading coordinator who is either a

current or former graduate student in reading education. Two, the tutors receive initial

and ongoing training that includes videos modeling instruction and a careful description

of the lesson plan.

Ivernizzi et al. (1997) evaluated the effectiveness of this program by dividing the

students receiving tutoring in two cohorts: the low session group, which consisted of

students who had received fewer than 40 tutoring sessions, and the high session group,

students who received greater than 40 tutoring sessions (Wasik, 1998b). The high

session group outperformed the low session group, namely in the areas of word

recognition and contextual reading (Ivernizzi et al., 1997).

Research on Effectiveness: Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS)

The Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) program was developed in

Vancouver, Washington by Title 1 teacher William Gibbons during the 1971-1975 school

years (Burns et al., 2004). The HOSTS program focuses primarily on students in grades K-6 who are at risk of reading failure. Burns, et al. (2004) describe the HOSTS program:

> First, each student is assessed to determine his or her literacy strengths and weaknesses, learning style and interests. Then, based on this information and available school resources, personalized interventions are computer generated for each student that include resources and activities to integrate decoding skills, vocabulary, literature, writing and critical thinking on a daily basis. Teachers next select from these resources and activities tailored to the student in designing weekly and daily lesson plans that are followed by the tutor. (p. 89)

Wasik (1988b) reported how the HOST Volunteers receive two hours of initial training by the on-site coordinator, who organizes the materials, recruits volunteers and creates diagnostic plans for students. Students meet with tutors for 30 minutes 3-4 times each week, and may have a different tutor each day (Burns et al., 2004).

A study completed by Burns and colleagues in 2004 evaluated six elementary schools in Michigan that use the HOSTS model against four schools who did not use HOSTS. The results of this study demonstrated that students in schools with the HOSTS program exceeded the control group on measures of reading fluency, reading comprehension, initial sound fluency, and overall reading skills (Burns et al., 2004). A two year follow-up study, conducted by Burns et al., 2008, revealed that students who participated in this initial study maintained positive effects of their HOSTS tutoring two years after the initial study.

Research on Effectiveness: America Reads Partnerships

As a result of the America Reads Challenge, a variety of partnerships were evaluated for their effectiveness to enhance reading achievement of struggling students. Fitzgerald (2001) considered a tutoring program where 39 tutors worked with a total of 144 children to provide tutoring. In this particular study, 64 children who received the full amount of tutoring were compared to 19 children who received less tutoring. The students participated in tutoring sessions for 40 minutes twice a week, and the sessions consisted of four main elements: repeated reading of a familiar book, word study, writing, and guided reading of a new book. Tutors received 33 hours of initial paid training, and there was a supervisor on site that observed and guided tutoring sessions as needed. Fitzgerald (2001) stated that "the average gain for the children receiving the full term of tutoring was 1.19 grade levels during six months of tutoring" (p. 29).

Lee et al. (2012) considered the effects of the program Experience Corps (EC). EC uses older adult volunteers to help with reading in elementary schools. This particular study looked at EC tutoring programs in three cities. Tutors received between 15 and 32 hours of training, and were supported by an on-site staff member (Lee et al., 2012). The EC program requires tutors to use a specific lesson plan protocol, but these can be chosen to fit a particular setting. Based on the specific program, tutors spend about 40 minutes with students two to four times each week. During the study, 75% of students received at least 35 tutoring sessions. Lee et al. (2012) stated that the students who received tutoring services showed "more than a 40% gain on grade specific reading skills" (findings section, para 3).

Research on Effectiveness: Reading Partners

Reading Partners was established in 1999 in East Menlo Park, California. According to their website, the mission of Reading Partners is: "to help children become lifelong readers by empowering communities to provide individualized instruction with measurable results" ("Vision and Values," 2020). Jacob, Armstrong, and Willard (2015) describe how the program uses volunteer tutors to meet with students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade who are one and a half to two and a half years behind in reading. Students meet with tutors for 45 minutes, two times each week and follow a specific lesson plan. Reading Partner volunteers do not need to have training, as there is a full-time Reading Partner site coordinator (often an AmeriCorps member) who is responsible for support and management (Jacob et al., 2015).

Jacob et al. (2015) describe that there are six basic components to the Reading Partners Program: regular one-on-one tutoring, a dedicated space for tutoring and materials, structured and individualized instruction, instruction that is driven by data, a high level of ongoing training, and instructional supervision and support.

An evaluation of the Reading Partners program by Jacob et al. (2015) concluded that the students receiving tutoring from Reading Partners tutors were scoring two to three percentile points above their peers at the end of the school year. According to their website, the Reading Partners program is present in

eleven states in the country with hopes for future growth ("Where We Serve,"

n.d.).

Research on Effectiveness: Additional Program Outcomes

While a majority of the research focuses on measurable academic gains in reading

based activities, there were other benefits of volunteer based reading programs that were

mentioned in literature, some of these not related to academic achievement. One

organization that considers development that extends beyond academic scores is the

Search Institute. The Search Institute's mission is to "partner with organizations to

conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances

equity" (Search Institute, "Vision, Mission, and Values" section, 2020). The Search

Institute identifies 40 Developmental Assets that promote healthy development in young

people. These assets include internal assets such as a sense of purpose and a positive

view of their future (Search Institute, 2010). They also include external assets such as a

strong school support network and a sense that the community values youth. Other assets

that are important for young people are adult role models and high expectations from

parents and teachers (Search Institute, 2010). These developmental assets can not be

overlooked when considering supporting young readers, and research (Fitzgerald, 2001;

Leal et al., 2004; Pullen et al., 2004; Wasik, 1999) has shown that volunteer programs are

very effective in supporting these assets for students. Leal, et al. (2004) describe how

college aged tutors reported students they tutored as having increased motivation and

positive feelings toward reading as the tutoring progressed. This was echoed in the

research by Fitzgerald (2001) who explained that tutors noted students had a more

positive attitude toward challenging activities. Another benefit of these programs

described by Wasik (1999) was how a tutor-student relationship was related to increased motivation toward reading activities. This increased motivation increases students' view of their future, an asset described by the Search Institute (2010).

Another finding came from Pullen et al. (2004), who identified how tutoring benefits children by "providing rich literacy experiences" (p. 656). This relates to the work of Stanovich (1986) who mentioned a lack of meaningful literacy experiences as part of the reason many struggling readers continue to struggle. These rich literacy experiences could help to stop the "downward spiral" of students who struggle with reading in the early grades as described by Torgesen (2004). With the extra support of a tutor that can closely monitor student achievement and tailor instruction to specific student needs, even mid-lesson, students may begin to have more meaningful experiences in reading that will support their achievement.

Limitations to Research on Effectiveness of Volunteer Reading Programs

A review of the studies evaluating the effectiveness of volunteer-based reading programs has revealed some common limitations to research. Wasik (1998b) stated that one difficulty of evaluating effectiveness of volunteer literacy programs is comparing results to a control group. Her review of programs in 1998 found that only two of eleven programs evaluated the progress of students using a control group and rigorous experimental design.

The Book Buddies evaluation performed by Invernizzi et al. (1997) did not have a no-treatment comparison group, as the students were only divided by the number of sessions of tutoring they received. Invernizzi et al. (1997) reported that although the students in the low session group were not different in risk level, they were absent from

school more frequently than the high session group, and this could have affected their reading progress. The issue of students in a control group being absent more frequently and not receiving even the regular classroom instruction was also a concern in the study performed by Lee et al. (2012).

Jacob et al. (2015) mentioned that the positive results noted in an evaluation of the Reading Partners program also has limitations. One of the biggest limitations mentioned was that both the control group and the students receiving tutoring struggled in reading, and it is likely that the struggling students in the control group were receiving some sort of intervention in addition to regular instruction. It is impossible to know how these other interventions affected reading achievement (Jacob et al., 2015).

Despite the limitations to research, the examination of various programs and their effectiveness to support struggling readers has revealed some patterns and characteristics that can be seen as best practice when considering volunteer-based tutoring programs (Wasik, 1998a). The next section will look at the elements that are important for administrators to consider when implementing volunteer tutoring programs, and examine the presence of these elements in various tutoring programs.

Introduction to Best Practices in Volunteer Based Reading Programs

In order to utilize a successful volunteer based reading program, it is essential to have an understanding of the necessary components that make the program successful. Topping (1998) states, "Tutoring is not teaching, nor should it be diluted teaching" (p. 48).   This is important to remember when designing a volunteer program, the volunteers are not supposed to be replacement teachers, but rather supporters of the learning process. In order to create meaningful opportunities for volunteers to support this process, volunteer programs need to be thoughtfully designed and implemented. As a result of her

review of tutoring programs, Wasik (1998a) named eight components that are essential for a successful volunteer based tutoring program. These components have been woven throughout the successful programs discussed earlier in this chapter, and this section will look at how these components are implemented in various programs.

Essential Component: Need for Reading Specialist

The first component named by Wasik (1998a) is a reading specialist who can supervise teachers and become the "core of the program" (p. 565). This specialist should be certified in reading and knowledgeable about reading difficulties. Wasik (1998a) describes the duties of this reading specialist:

> A reading specialist supervises the volunteers on a daily basis, assesses the children, develops lesson plans for the volunteers to implement, and gathers the materials that the tutors need in order to carry out the lesson plan. In addition, the reading specialist can observe volunteers and provide them with constant feedback and support as they work with the students. (p. 565)

Without this designated leader, the planning and supervision often fall on the classroom teachers who are overwhelmed with their classroom duties. Pullen et al. (2004) state that if teachers are the ones to guide the tutors, they will become overwhelmed with the workload and discourage tutoring in their classroom.

Reading specialists can have a variety of backgrounds. Wasik (1998b) stated the Howard Street Tutoring program utilizes a reading teacher who models lessons for volunteers and supervises volunteers as they execute lessons, providing frequent feedback. Following initial assessments, the reading specialist designs lessons for the tutors to teach with each student. These solid lesson plans along with frequent

supervision assure that students are receiving high quality instruction during each session, a critical component for effective tutoring.

The Book Buddies program uses graduate students as supervisors (Wasik, 1998a), and these students have the support of the program creators for initial training and support. Jacob et al. (2015) stated that The Reading Partners program has site coordinators that are almost exclusively AmeriCorps members, and these site coordinators oversee volunteers on a daily basis and also manage the logistics of the Reading Partners Program. These site coordinators are supported by program managers, individuals with classroom experience. The program managers are charged with being the "primary literacy program expert" (p. 17) and manage up to five sites.

Many of the other programs reviewed by literature to be successful for increasing student achievement had a reading specialist at the center of the program (Burns et al., 2004; Fitzgerald, 2001; Lindo et al., 2018; McDaniel, 2002). While this element can add cost to the program, Wasik (1998a) warns that failure to provide this reading expert will decrease the effectiveness of the reading program.

Essential Component: Ongoing Training and Feedback

In addition to providing a solid framework and lesson plan from a reading specialist at the core of the volunteer program, Wasik (1998a) states that program leaders also need to provide ongoing training and feedback for tutors. This assures that the tutors are implementing the teaching strategies with fidelity. Morris (2006) states that the reading teacher's most important role was to act as a "coach" for tutors. He states that this coaching involves: "helping with lesson plans, modeling proper teaching technique, guiding pacing decisions, and providing immediate feedback on performance" (p. 353).

Wasik (1998a) notes that in the Howard Street Tutoring program and Book Buddies program coordinators are present for every tutoring session. Their presence allows them to monitor the session and drives future training sessions.

In their first grade volunteer tutoring model, Rimm Kaufman et al. (1999) provided bi-monthly meetings with tutors in addition to the five training sessions that occurred before tutoring began. These meetings often acted as a forum where tutors could share strategies and ideas, and the coordinators could address patterns they had seen during tutoring sessions. Making sure this training is ongoing is critical for addressing issues that come up throughout the tutoring process since it is almost impossible to anticipate potential issues during the initial training.

This ongoing support is not only important for the students, but the volunteers as well. Potter (1999) states, "The goal of a good tutor-training program, therefore, should be to mine the initial energy volunteers bring, and refine it into a professional base of knowledge and tutoring skills" (p. 23). While they may not come with a great deal of background in working with students, volunteers are typically eager to support students and are receptive to feedback about how they can do this well. Potter (1999) states tutors want the chance to evaluate their progress and feel supported. Without this support, tutors may even abandon the program. As mentioned before, even though having a qualified reading teacher at the center of the program may be more costly, the expense will be balanced by the value that these coordinators bring to the program.

Essential Component: Structured Tutoring Sessions

In her study of four effective volunteer tutoring programs, Wasik (1998a) found that even though effective programs had varied approaches to tutoring, they all consisted

of four main elements: rereading of a familiar text, word analysis, writing, and the introduction of a new text. These elements are also present in teacher delivered programs that have been successful for supporting reading, Reading Recovery and Success for All (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). In the following sections these elements will be described in greater detail.

      Rereading a familiar story or text. Beginning the tutoring session by reading a familiar text allows students and tutors to ease into the tutoring session with something familiar. Rereading text gives students the opportunity to practice fluency, work on automaticity in word recognition, and build their comprehension (Wasik, 1998a).   While repeated reading is an effective way to build reading rate, word accuracy, expression and comprehension, Kuhn and Stahl (as cited in Pullen et al., 2004) stated "assisted repeated reading practice, or reading familiar text under the supervision of a fluent reader, appears to be the most powerful approach to repeated reading intervention" (repeated reading section, para. 1). Therefore, it is not only beneficial that students engage in repeated reading, but important that they can do this under the supervision of their reading tutor.

      The Howard Street Tutoring Program, Book Buddies Reading Program, and others studied include this reading component, but some programs, namely the HOSTS program (which focuses more on skill-based lessons targeted to student needs than time spent actually reading) do not (Burns et al., 2004). The Reading Partners Program does not include a rereading component, but instead the tutor reads aloud to the student, modeling fluency and phrasing and stopping to ask questions that support comprehension.

Word analysis. Word analysis can have different approaches based on the structure of the program, but the common goal is to have children look at the orthographic structure of words (Wasik, 1998a). Torgesen (2004) states that phonological awareness can be the strongest predictor of reading success, and instruction in phonological awareness can significantly improve a students decoding and comprehension skills. Since students can have such a range of understanding with phonics (Stanovich, 1986), it is valuable for students to work on these skills in a one-on-one setting in order to receive constant feedback. The Howard Street Tutoring Program and Book Buddies program both incorporate word study routines (Wasik, 1998a), the Reading Partners program has a time when tutors teach a new skill that is often related to phonics (Jacob et al., 2015), and many other programs incorporate a word study component (Fitzgerald, 2001; Lindo et al., 2018; Pullen et al., 2004).

Writing. Writing is closely connected to reading, as it allows children to see the relationship between reading and print (Wasik, 1998a). Many of the programs studied implemented a writing component. Fitzgerald (2001) documented tutoring sessions delivered by college students and modeled after the Reading Recovery method. The writing portion consisted of students writing a sentence of their choosing while the tutor coached them on letter sound relationships and phonics principles. Leal et al. (2004) described a tutoring program where the tutors engaged in a book writing activity with students. In addition to the other essential components of the tutoring session, students chose a topic and wrote a story about their topic in collaboration with their tutor. During this process, the tutors were able to identify areas of need based on the students' own writing.

Introducing new stories. Wasik (1998a) stated that all four programs she considered introduced a new story during the tutoring session. This story was a text that was matched to the students' instructional level and sometimes even a text that would be used in their classroom. The new story provided opportunities for students to practice word analysis strategies they had worked on in the tutoring session and the tutor could help students preview some of the vocabulary and word patterns they would find in this new text. It was also a chance to model effective word attack strategies. Jacob et al. (2015) described the student read aloud segment as a time where the tutor can encourage the student to use new strategies that were practiced during the tutoring session.

Essential Component: Consistency and Intensity

The structured tutoring sessions in a highly supportive setting have to be consistent and intense to increase student achievement (Torgesen, 2004). Wasik (1998a) states that students need to receive a minimum of one and a half to two hours a week of tutoring in order for the tutoring experience to be beneficial, as the more opportunity a student has to practice a skill, the better their chances of mastery. While many tutoring programs are designed for students to meet with tutors two to three times a week for 40 minutes to an hour (Baker, Gersten & Keating, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2001; Jacob et al., 2015; Leal et al., 2004) this demand has to be balanced with the availability of tutors who often have limited time to meet with students.

It is important to consider tutor availability because of Wasik's (1998a) statement that students should meet with the same tutor every week. She elaborates:

This allows the child and the volunteer to build a relationship. After repeated sessions with the same volunteer, the child begins to trust the tutor, is less likely

to be afraid to admit that he or she doesn't understand something, and becomes

motivated to try to perform well for a valued person. (pp. 567-568)

Wasik also noted the benefits for the tutor in a consistent relationship. When a tutor

works with one student, they are more able to assess progress and understand the specific

needs of the child, and routines can become smooth and familiar since the pairs are

accustomed to working together. It is interesting to note that the HOSTS program does

not require this consistency since the lessons are computer generated and believed to be

less reliant on the tutors (Burns et al., 2004).

Essential Component: Quality Materials

Wasik (1998a) stated that it is crucial to have sufficient books available for

tutoring programs. This includes little books and easy readers so that all students will be

able to read at their developmental level. Many programs do not have this component

because of cost, but it is very important. While some programs use leveled book libraries

and trade books, other programs rely on in-kind donations (Jacob et al., 2015). Books are

one of the ways that a variety of America Reads partnerships utilized federal funding

(Potter, 1999).

It is also important to have other supplementary materials necessary for the

reading lessons. Paper, pencils, whiteboards, markers, and other supplies are often

necessary for tutoring sessions, and the organization and management of these materials

is often the responsibility of the site coordinator of the tutoring program (Jacob et al.,

2015).

Essential Component: Ongoing Student Assessment

In order to effectively adjust to student instructional level and respond to changing needs, student assessment needs to be ongoing (Wasik, 1998a). In her review of four successful programs, Wasik (1998a) identified common themes in the assessment process. First, assessment provides information that allows tutors and coordinators to modify the content of the tutoring sessions. Second, assessment includes the areas of oral reading, concepts of print, word analysis, and phonemic awareness. Next, the assessment is aligned with the skills practiced in the tutoring sessions, and finally, the assessment is connected to tutor training so that tutors can continue to deliver effective instruction to students.

In the Howard Street Tutoring Program and Book Buddies program the reading specialist conducts ongoing assessments (Wasik, 1998a), and the HOSTS program assesses students frequently through the achievement with the computerized lesson plans (Burns et al., 2004). Lindo et al. (2018) noted that on-site supervisors are important in order to help with this ongoing assessment and discussed the role of the supervisor to advise tutors to skip or spend more time on certain aspects of a lesson based on student response. If there is not a prescribed assessment protocol in place, it is critical that the on site reading coordinator is available to help tutors with informal assessments to check for understanding (Lindo et al., 2018).

Essential Component: Supporting Consistent Tutor Participation

Wasik (1998a) states that volunteers need to be appreciated if they are expected to make long-term commitments. Since it is so important to maintain consistency for students, volunteer retention/consistent participation must be considered. AmeriCorp

volunteers are often paid a small stipend (Wasik, 1998a), and some programs use college

students as tutors as part of their class load, where they may earn credits for tutor training

and their tutoring experience (Fitzgerald, 2001). Reading Partners volunteers are asked

to make a short, one semester commitment at a time so that they are more likely to

maintain this commitment (Jacob et al., 2015). In some programs, local businesses

release tutors from their jobs so they can volunteer, and other businesses find ways to

formally recognize adults who tutor (Wasik, 1998a). Tutor retention and recognition can

not be overlooked when designing a tutoring program, as it is necessary in order to

provide a consistent relationship.

Essential Component: Coordinated with Classroom Reading Instruction

Students who are at-risk for reading failure often have trouble learning in the

classroom, and offering them a different approach in a tutoring session could add to their

confusion (Wasik, 1998a). While the tutoring session does not need to be an exact

replica of what is happening in the classroom, there should be some level of coordination.

Potter (1999) states:

> While a site coordinator may provide a tutor with a general list of skills and
>
> competencies matched to grade levels, the teacher holds the key to why a
>
> particular child needs tutoring, what he or she is currently learning in the
>
> classroom, where help is needed, and how best to offer it. (pp. 13)

Even though teachers should not be the ones solely responsible for the tutoring sessions

(Potter, 1999), they are valuable for providing insight into current classroom activities

and strategy instruction. When teachers and tutors have some sort of communication

protocol, tutors will be able to support classroom learning by reinforcing skills and

strategies, and perhaps even using texts that have been used in the classroom (Potter, 1999).

This coordination is further encouraged by the principal, who is often considered the instructional leader in a building (Mackey, Pitcher & Decman, 2006). Mackey et. al (2006) studied the influence of principals on their school reading programs and found that those with a background in literacy were strong leaders with a positive impact on student achievement, but those without this background were also capable of influencing literacy in a positive way, especially when they relied on other literacy experts to help influence the curriculum choices for the building and saw themselves as a key instructional leader. This instructional leadership can further the necessary coordination between tutors and teachers that Wasik (1998a) finds critical for program success.

The previous sections of this chapter have described five main volunteer tutoring programs and listed essential elements of volunteer tutoring programs. In summary, the table below lists the five major programs reviewed and the presence of Wasik's (1998a) eight essential elements of a successful tutoring program (see Table 1):

Table 1. Tutoring Program Overview

	On site leader	Ongoing training and support	Structured Session with main elements: Reread, word work, writing, new book	Consistency and Intensity	Quality materials	Specific protocol to maintain tutor attendance	Explicitly Coordinated with instruction	Ongoing Assessment
Howard Street Tutoring Program	yes	yes	yes	1 hour, 2x/week	yes	no	No, this is an after school program	yes
Book Buddies	yes	yes	yes	45 minutes, 2x/week	yes	yes	no	yes
HOSTS	no	yes	Phonics and writing instruction, less reading practice	30 minutes, 3-4x/week Note: Students may meet with different tutors	yes	Some tutors may be paid paraprofessionals, others are volunteers	yes	yes
America Reads Partnerships	yes	yes	Yes, most of the time	Yes	Depending on location	Varies based on specific program	Varies based on specific program	yes
Reading Partners	yes	yes	Yes, although writing is not always a part of the lesson plan	45 minutes 2x/week	yes	yes	no	yes

The need for tutoring to be coordinated with instruction highlights the important relationships that must be considered with a volunteer model aimed at increasing the achievement of struggling students. The next section will consider the major stakeholders involved in these tutoring models and their role in the success of the tutoring program.

Stakeholders Associated with Volunteer Reading Programs

When considering Wasik's (1998a) guidelines for successful tutoring programs, it is important to highlight the need for coordinated and consistent tutoring programs. Noting the responsibilities and needs of the following four major stakeholders is critical to the program design.

- Students: need to be in school and receptive to tutoring

- Tutors: need to be dedicated and open to asking questions and seeking help if needed

- Teachers: need to assist in the selection of students and keep an open line of communication with the tutors and supervisors

- Administrators: need to coordinate programs from a logistics and financial perspective (Wasik 1998a)

This section will consider the perspectives of selected stakeholders that inform the research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

Students. In a conversation about volunteer tutoring programs it is necessary to consider the role of the students engaged in tutoring programs. This review has already considered the academic benefits of tutoring programs for students who struggle, but it is also important to discuss other positive influences of tutoring. Potter (1999) stated:

Children [in volunteer tutoring programs] often benefit twice: first, from individualized support tailored to their own strengths, interests, and needs; second, from the undivided attention from an older role model who provides them with encouragement and motivation. (pp. 2)

Often, students selected for tutoring programs benefit from this extra adult attention, and many tutors have noted the positive effects on student attitudes toward reading as a result of the tutoring relationship (Potter, 1999). It is important to note that the level of frequency and intensity of tutoring programs is most effective if students are in school on a regular basis and attend a school for long enough to complete the tutoring cycle (Elbaum et al. 2000; Wasik 1998a).

Tutors. While reviewing the literature around volunteer based tutoring programs, there have been three main types of tutors: undergraduate students, parent volunteers, and retired adults (Burns et al. 2004; Elbaum et al., 2000; Fitzgerald, 2001; Invernizzi et al., 1997; Jacob et al., 2015; Leal et al., 2004; Lindo et al., 2018; McDaniel, 2002; Pullen et al., 2004). Potter (1999) states that volunteers often come from a variety of educational backgrounds, and a successful program will include a coordinator who is able to show sensitivity to the varying needs of tutors, as tutors need to feel adequately supported in their role in order to continue the tutoring relationship. Tutors also have to be committed, and if they are not offered an incentive for tutoring, the scope of their commitment should carefully be considered. For example, Wasik (1998a) notes that many programs only require a short, one semester commitment for tutors so they are not discouraged from committing to an entire year. When tutors have adequate recognition and support, they are more able to support the work that teachers are already doing in the classroom to help struggling readers (Potter, 1999).

Teachers. While the tutors develop relationships with students and are often supported by a program coordinator, the relationship they have with teachers is very important, making classroom teachers one of the key stakeholders in the tutoring process.

In many programs, it is the teachers who identify students for tutoring programs (Jacob et al., 2015; Morris, 2006; Potter, 1999; Wasik, 1998b), and one important component of tutoring programs is that they are coordinated with classroom instruction (Wasik, 1998a). Potter (1999) emphasizes the importance of tutors and teachers having a method of communication, even if it is only a system of exchanging written notes, in order to streamline instruction and share insight about student interests and needs. Potter (1999) also states it is important for teachers to support the tutoring program so that they can support the scheduling and coordination that is required.

Administrators. As previously mentioned, there are specific elements that make a volunteer reading program successful in a school building (Wasik, 1998a). Administrators are seen as instructional leaders in the building and make decisions about curriculum and instruction. In tutoring programs, a program coordinator, quality materials, continued support, and alignment with classroom instruction are elements that must be supported by an administrator in order to function well. The administrator (often the elementary principal) often has the role of coordinating all of these elements, and determining the funding for the necessary components (Wasik, 1998a). In addition, administrators may have to support teachers in finding the time to communicate with tutors, as well as provide a system for background checks, permissions, etc.

While these tasks are instrumental for the implementation of a volunteer reading program, Sebring and Byrk (2000) state that, "Formal structures provide only the skeleton of a productive school. How people behave, interact, learn and work together is what breathes life into a school" (p. 442). It is important for administrators to provide

tangible support for programs designed to help students in reading, but of equal importance is their ability to work with staff to "breathe life" into a program.

One powerful tool for administrators in implementing any program designed to support literacy is a specialized knowledge in literacy (Helf & Cooke, 2011; Wepner, Strickland & Feeley, 2002). When a principal has a reading background, they are able to be an integral part of the planning for reading programs and interventions. They are also better able to fulfill the role of a vital member of the literacy team (Cobb, 2005; Mackey et al., 2006). If they do not have this background, principals need to rely heavily on a reading specialist in their building or district, and look to these literacy leaders often when adopting and implementing change (Mackey et al., 2006; Wepner et al., 2002). This specific knowledge will help administrators target programs that meet the specific needs of students in their building.

In addition to literacy knowledge, administrators must support the reading programs that are happening in their building. Helf and Cooke (2011) note that the enthusiasm and investment of an initiative communicates the importance of that initiative to teachers and other school staff. In addition, it is often the principal that needs to communicate the importance of a new program to other stakeholders and community members through public endorsement. Matsumara, Sartoris, DiPrima, Bickel & Garnier, (2009) cite research that demonstrates a link between student achievement and the "principal's ability to foster strong social ties among the staff and community" (p. 657), and Sebring and Byrk (2000) notes that participation by the local community provides a strong social support for change at a fundamental level in schools.

While there is research (Cobb, 2005; Mackey et al., 2006; Matsumura et al., 2009) that discusses the importance of administrative enthusiasm and support in reading initiatives in schools, I have not found evaluation research considering the unique role of administrators in *volunteer based* reading programs, which, in the case of the Reading Partners program and many others, are supervised by a group outside of the school building. Even though these programs do not require a member of the school staff to be responsible for the design and implementation of a volunteer based reading program, it is reasonable to consider administrator attitudes toward the program as it has been shown that administrators can often "set the tone" for programs in the building. This idea led me to consider my research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

Summary

This chapter began by looking at research that discussed struggling readers. Using work by Stanovich (1986) and Torgesen (2004), the Matthew Effect in literacy, where struggling students continue to struggle as a result of less meaningful reading experiences (Stahovich, 1986) was described. This phenomenon gave reason behind the urgency and importance of early intervention in reading. Next, Torgesen's (2004) statements about interventions needing to be more explicit, intense, and supportive were explored in the context of early literacy, and examples of intervention that met this criteria were discussed. This was followed by factors that prevent teachers from being the sole providers of these interventions Mathes et al. (2003), and a description of the America Reads Act, legislation to respond to the need for more support for interventions.

This legislation introduced a volunteer component, which ignited further research into the area of volunteer tutors (Wasik, 1998a).

The next section of the literature review looked at the effectiveness of volunteer tutoring programs that had been studied, many in response to the America Reads Act (Wasik, 1998b). As part of this section, there were five specific programs described and explained: the Howard Street Tutoring Program, Book Buddies, Help One Student to Succeed, America Reads Partnerships, and Reading Partners. These descriptions helped illustrate how successful volunteer tutoring programs are often structured to increase reading achievement. After considering these and some smaller programs, the review highlighted eight elements named by Wasik (1998a) that are essential to a successful volunteer tutoring program. These best practices were described, and the section concluded with a table that synthesized the presence of these elements in the five major programs considered in the review.

Finally, four main stakeholders to this topic were considered: students, tutors, teachers, and administrators. Major issues pertaining to these groups were explored, and key points of research involving these stakeholders were synthesized. The final section of the chapter considered administrators, leading to the research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

Chapter Three will review the research question and explain the qualitative research paradigm and transformative worldview that influenced the research. There will also be a detailed description of the decision to use semi-structured qualitative interviews to gather data, and specific details about the data collection and analysis. Chapter Four

will reveal the results of the qualitative interviews and use transcript data to identify

themes that emerged from the research. Chapter Five will connect these outcomes with

the literature review presented in this chapter and discuss limitations to the research.

Chapter Five will also discuss implications of the research data and present ideas for

future research and a personal reflection.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

Introduction

Chapter One provided a brief description of my personal journey with early

literacy and volunteer support and described the ways I found volunteers to be useful, as

well as the questions that formed my interest in this thesis topic. Chapter One also

outlined some of the major questions I had about the usefulness of volunteer literacy

programs and introduced the research question. Chapter Two reviewed literature in the

area of volunteer reading programs and identified best practice for literacy tutoring. Five

major programs were reviewed and their effectiveness considered, and other smaller

programs that showed positive results were examined as well. Chapter Two concluded

with consideration of major stakeholders in the area of volunteer based literacy tutoring

programs, and the lack of research regarding the perspective of administrators led to the

research question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading*

tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?

This chapter will begin with an explanation of the worldview and research

paradigm that drove the research for this capstone as well as describe the rationale for

using qualitative semi-structured interviews to gather data. Next, there will be an

explanation of the decision to focus on a specific volunteer reading program for this

capstone as it relates to the research question. This is followed by a description of the

interview subjects and their professional context. There will also be a description of the Reading Partners (2020) program at each particular site, including the number of students served. The research methods and data collection will be explained, and a survey and interview protocol will show the questions that will act as guides in the semi-structured interviews. Finally, the chapter will detail the data analysis methods and discuss the limitations of the research design. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the research methods and look forward to the content of Chapters Four and Five.

Qualitative Research Paradigm

The goal of this capstone research was to examine the views elementary administrators hold about their role in the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program at their school. Rather than looking only at published data reports and quantitative numbers to determine the value of the Reading Partners program in a building, this research was interested in the *experiences* of these administrators. When considering the experiential nature of the research, it became clear that a qualitative approach was appropriate for this project.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that qualitative research seeks to "understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). In order to determine the unique perspective of administrators toward the Reading Partners (2020) program at their site, the research design required me to ask administrators directly about their experiences with the program. Listening to how administrators described this program in light of their experience with the program itself was a way to develop a deeper understanding.

Another reason for the selection of a qualitative approach to the research question is how it reflected a constructivist worldview (Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D., 2018), as the outcome of research relied on the lived experience of these administrators and considered how they have interpreted their experiences to determine their thoughts and ideas. The reactions of the administrators to these experiences informed their ideas about what makes the programs successful, which addressed the research question.

In addition to considering the experiences of administrators involved in the Reading Partners (2020) program, this research examined the ways in which these volunteer reading programs address a social problem of students not meeting grade level benchmarks in reading, and for this reason it was also influenced by a transformative worldview (Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D., 2018). According to Creswell J. W. and Creswell J. D. (2018) research in the transformative worldview links political and social action to inequalities based on diverse groups of people that have traditionally been marginalized. Two authors (Stanovich, 1986; Torgesen, 2004) describe how students who struggle with reading in the early years are more likely to struggle as they move through school, which can isolate them from their peers, and leave them marginalized in the school setting. In addition, as the 2019 NAEP illustrates, Black and Hispanic students continue to perform at a level lower than their White peers (NAEP, n.d.). The research question sought to understand ways volunteer programs can be utilized as a tool to create change for these marginalized groups of students. The next sections describe how experience and potential action steps for struggling readers will be discovered through qualitative surveys and interviews.

Rationale for Using a Qualitative Survey

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of the unique perspective of administrators on volunteer reading programs, namely the Reading Partners (2020) program. The guiding question for this research was, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* The next two sections will describe how the pre-interview survey and interview protocols were developed as a result of the research that was reviewed in Chapter Two. They will also include the pre-interview survey and the interview protocol.

One of the main goals of the interview research was to gain perspective of the administrators about the Reading Partners program (2020). The thesis question could only be answered by hearing administrators describe the program in their building and their unique experience with the role the program has in student achievement. In order to gain a general understanding of the logistics of the Reading Partners program in each building, interview subjects were asked to complete a brief survey before the interview. The answers to this survey helped guide the open ended interview questions. Questions in this survey sought to gain information such as how long the principal has worked in their particular building, how long the Reading Partners program has been implemented in the building, student selection, and basic components of the program. The survey was important as it helped guide the conversational interview questions and allowed for more time to hear about administrator experience, which was critical for the qualitative research.

Figure 1 shows the pre-interview survey that was sent to administrators via email before the interview date. This survey gathered basic data about the length of time the

Reading Partners (2020) program has been active in the building, but also asked about

some elements that are described in Chapter Two and summarized in Table 1, the

elements that are necessary for a successful volunteer reading program. Using Table 1 as

a guide, survey questions were crafted to check for the presence of some of these

elements in each building, and the responses were discussed further in the interview.

Figure 1 Pre-Interview Survey

Pre-Interview Survey

Hello, My name is Heidi Frye, and I will be interviewing you on [date] to discuss the Reading Partners program in your building. In order to establish some basic information for the interview, please complete this online survey by [date].

This information will be collected and recorded along with the interview transcript, and the names of all people and schools will be changed to pseudonyms in order to protect your confidentiality. Responding to the questions below is voluntary, and you may leave any responses blank if necessary. Please contact me with any questions.

1. How long have you been the administrator/literacy leader at this building?

   0-5 years   6-10 years   10+ years

2. How long has your school been implementing the Reading Partners program (please circle)?

   5 years+   4 years   3 years   2 years   1 year

3. Is this the first volunteer based literacy program you have implemented/supported in your building (please circle)?

   Yes   No

4. How have the teachers responded to the implementation of the Reading Partners program? Please select a measure below:

   4- exceptionally well received by more than 75% of classroom teachers

   3- well received by 50% or more classroom teachers

   2- less than 50% of teachers supportive of program

   1- 25% or fewer classroom teachers are supportive of the program

5. Is there an onsite coordinator for the program

   Yes   No

   a. If yes, do you have regular meetings with this coordinator?

6.   Yes   No

7. What percentage of elementary students participate in the program?

   a. 5-10%

   b. 11-25%

   c. 26-50%

   d. 50-75%

   e. 75% +

8. How are students selected to participate? Please select all that apply:

   ● Teacher recommendation

   ● Classroom assessment data

   ● Performance measures created by the Reading Partners organization

   ● Parent request

9. Describe the logistics of the program:

   a. How many days each week and for how long do tutors and students meet?

   b. Is there a designated place in the building for tutoring to take place? Yes or No

10. What is your level of involvement with the tutors themselves? Please select.

   a. 4- Interact with tutors once a week or more

   b. 3- Interact with tutors once a month

   c. 2- Interact with tutors once a semester

   d. 1- Interact with tutors once a school year

   e. 0- Do not interact with tutors

11. Are there specific assessments that are used to track progress of students in the program?

   a.   Yes   No

Data Analysis of Pre-Interview Surveys

The pre-interview survey was designed as a tool to gather logistical information in preparation for the interview itself, and the results from the survey were recorded and carefully analyzed before the interview. Follow-up questions aimed to clarify or expand on some of the responses from the survey, and survey information was used to create a general description of the building and Reading Partners (2020) program details for data analysis. The survey responses were attached to the interview transcripts for review, and as themes were identified in the responses from the interviews, the responses were analyzed with consideration of the information gathered in the survey. The next section will describe a rationale for using a semi-structured qualitative interview format in order to gather information that sought to answer the research question.

Rationale for Using a Semi-structured Qualitative Interview

Figure 1 above includes the pre-interview survey that was used to gather basic logistical data about the Reading Partners (2020) program in each building. This survey served as a guide for the actual interview, which sought to identify the principal's view of their role in the success of the Reading Partners program in their building. Personal interviews with administrators at multiple schools offered a variety of viewpoints on reading programs, allowing patterns to emerge that may be universal for administrators.

According to Weiss (1994), qualitative interviews are often used when the goal of research is to determine how certain events are interpreted and understand a situation from "the inside" (p. 10). This follows the design of the research question that looks at the unique perspective of administrators working inside schools that partner with the Reading Partners (2020) program to provide one on one tutoring delivered by adult

volunteers. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that a semi-structured interview offers enough structure to gather specific information from all participants, but also flexibility in the way questions are worded and ordered to provide the researcher the ability to respond to the worldview of the respondent and any new ideas that emerge about the topic. The structure of the interviews in this thesis followed this semi-structured format, using a select number of questions as guidelines but providing opportunities for participants to include any important information that may not be included in the interview questions.

An interview protocol created by the researcher was used during the 45 minute interviews. The goals for the interview were to gain an understanding of the administrator's role in the volunteer reading program. Responses to the question prompts helped to identify the level of involvement the administrator has with the Reading Partners (2020) program and the role they see themselves playing in the success of the program. The responses to these questions helped answer the research question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* Figure 2 is the interview protocol used in this research.

Figure 2 Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Opening Paragraph: Hello, My name is Heidi Frye, and I will be interviewing you today. The goal of this interview is to determine your unique administrator/leader perspective on the Reading Partners program in your building, namely your perceptions of how struggling readers react to it.

This interview will last about 45 minutes, and I will be recording our conversation for later transcription and review. When reporting my findings in my Capstone Thesis paper, names of all people and schools will be changed to pseudonyms in order to protect your confidentiality. This interview is voluntary and you have the option to stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions, to be used as guides in a semi-structured interview

- In the survey you completed prior to our meeting, you noted that this is the [first, or insert number] volunteer reading program you have implemented/supported in your building. Can you describe what led you to the decision to implement the Reading Partners program?
  You also reported that the teacher response has been [insert response]. How has this helped or hindered the implementation of the program in your building?
  What has been your response to the teachers' reactions to the Reading Partners program?
- In my review of the research for this capstone the primary goal of a Reading Partners program is to support struggling readers. I am interested in hearing you describe the degree to which the Reading Partners program in your building is meeting this goal. O
  - Prompts - How does this program benefit students? Teachers? Community volunteers?
  - I heard you describe this benefit [insert the benefit].
- In your survey you noted that your building [does/does not, insert response from survey] use assessments specifically designed to gain data from students who participate in the Reading Partners program.
  - [If answered yes to survey question 9] How do these assessments help you determine if your objectives for the program are being met?
  - Is there other evidence you use to determine if the goals have been met?
  - [If answered no to survey question 9] Can you talk about why you do not use assessments to track student progress as a result of the Reading Partners program?
  - Is there other evidence you use to determine if the goals have been met?
- Struggling readers often receive a variety of interventions. Do you have a way to differentiate the progress students make as a result of the Reading Partners program vs other reading interventions?
- The central question for my capstone asks how principals and administrators describe their role in the success of volunteer reading programs. Can you spend some time describing your involvement in the program?
  - You described participating in this way [insert involvement]. How do you think this particular thing enables the program to be successful?
- [If respondent answered yes to question 5 in survey] In your survey you responded that you have regular meetings with the onsite coordinator for the program. Can you describe these meetings?
- Implementing a new program can offer many challenges. Can you describe some of the barriers and/or enablers that have influenced the success of the Reading Partners implementation in your building?
- Have you had experience with other programs (volunteer or otherwise) aimed at increasing reading achievement that have not been successful? If so, what were some of the barriers to the success of these programs?

We are at the end of the interview is there anything you would like to add?

Data Analysis of Qualitative Interviews

The data analysis of the qualitative interviews followed carefully planned steps that allowed for an inductive approach that would allow me to gather data to build hypotheses rather than testing specific hypotheses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition to this building of theory, the analysis was also issue focused. Weiss (1994) describes issue focused analysis by describing analysis that "would concern itself with what could be learned about specific issues-or events or processes-from any and all respondents" (p.154). It was the specific experiences of building administrators that informed the research in this thesis.

In order to prepare the data, I transcribed the interviews shortly after the interview took place. The interview transcripts were then reviewed and coded and sorted according to major themes, a process described by Weiss (1994). The coding and sorting allowed first for local integration, or "organizing and integrating our observations and understandings in each section of the report" (Weiss 1994, p. 158), and then inclusive integration, which integrates each theme within the larger summary.

Research Setting: Reading Partners Program Schools

Chapter Two considered the wide range of volunteer based programs offered for students who need extra support in reading. As described, many of these programs have significantly different organizational structures and components. In addition to the programs described in Chapter Two, there are countless other "volunteer reading programs" happening in schools with a variety of goals ranging from advancing student achievement or simply building positive relationships. For the scope of this capstone, it was necessary to establish an interview sample that offered insight into volunteer reading

programs with consistent routines and goals. This allowed for a more clear analysis of data with fewer variables. To recruit participants for this research, a purposeful sampling approach was used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merrian and Tisdell (2016) state that purposeful sampling is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96).

A purposeful sampling approach meant that the subjects in this research were elementary administrators working in schools partnering with the Reading Partners (2020) program in one specific metropolitan area. The term administrator is defined in this thesis as building principals and others employed by the school or district with a leadership position in the building such as a literacy coach or instructional leader. Using this criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to select subjects provided insight about issues of importance regarding the administrator's role in the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program. There are 11 schools that use the Reading Partners program in the desired area, and this list served as the starting point for interview subjects. After obtaining the clearance of the Institutional Review Board in November of 2019, I approached principals from these eleven schools to inquire about their interest in participating in a semi-structured interview to discuss their perspectives on the Reading Partners program in their school. My first point of contact was a letter sent through US mail (Appendix C), followed one week later with an email (Appendix D), and finally a phone call (Appendix E). I heard no response after sending the letters via US mail, and received 3 responses after sending emails.

One potential respondent was willing to set up a meeting, two declined, and one responded with enthusiasm, but we were unable to schedule an interview due to restrictions around interview requests and permissions in their district. These restrictions affected three schools in total. After all the requests were made for interviews, there was one confirmed interview, two principals who declined to participate, three who could not due to permissions, one principal who initially agreed to do an interview but did not respond to requests to schedule the interview, and five principals who failed to respond to the interview requests. I moved forward with the one confirmed principal interview (Respondent A from School A) on January 10, 2020 and proceeded to ask two literacy coaches from schools that participated in the Reading Partners (2020) program to participate in an interview. One of these coaches never responded to my requests, and one (Respondent B from School B) agreed to an interview, which took place in February of 2020.

Sites of Study

School A.   School A is a pre-K-5 school, located in an urban setting. There are 286 students that attend the school and about 20 teachers in the building. 79% of students receive free or reduced-fee lunch. 47% of the students identify as Black/African American, 12% Asian, 10% Hispanic/Latino, 8% two or more races, and 22% White. The most current data shows that 33.6% of students are meeting grade level reading standards, as measured by the MCA tests (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2018). School A has been partnering with the Reading Partners program for 5 years and there are about 55 students participating in the program.

School B. School B is a pre-k-5 school, located in an urban setting. Three are 295 students that attend the school and about 20 teachers in the building. 90% of students receive free or reduced-priced lunch. 65% of the students identify as Black/African American, 8% Asian, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 13% two or more races, and 6% White. The most current data shows that 17.8% of students are meeting grade level reading standards, as measured by the MCA tests (MDE, 2018). School B has been partnering with the Reading Partners program for 5 years and there are about 100 students participating in the program.

Participants

Administrator A. Administrator A has worked at School A for five years. Previously she served as assistant principal in the same building, and a classroom teacher. She has been at the school during all of the five years of the Reading Partners (2020) partnership and while she was part of the administrative team when the school adopted the Reading Partners she was not the building principal when the decision to adopt Reading Partners was made.

Administrator B. Administrator B has worked at School B for two years. Previously she has served as a classroom teacher in a different building. She has been at the school during two of the five years of the Reading Partners (2020) partnership and she was not part of the administrative team when the school adopted Reading Partners.

Data Collection

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board in November 2019, I contacted administrators at Schools A-B in order to introduce myself and the goal of my research and to request their participation in a qualitative interview. Once this permission

was granted, I sent participants a letter of informed consent describing the thesis topic and rights of the participants. I also sent the pre-interview survey to be completed before the interview in order to gain background knowledge before the interview. I provided an opportunity for all participants to ask questions or share concerns before the interview, and I also copied this form to bring along to interviews and have respondents sign when we met, after asking if they had any questions. All interviews were recorded with the voice memo application for iPhone for later transcription. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Limitations of the Research Design

This thesis sought to gain an understanding of the feelings of administrators about the success of volunteer based reading programs in their building. For reasons explained above, the respondents in this interview were limited to administrators using the Reading Partners (2020) program in their building. While this scope offers a benefit of comparing programs in different buildings with a similar structure, it does not necessarily represent the wider question about volunteer reading programs as a whole.

Limiting the research to buildings that partnered with the Reading Partners (2020) program was important for drawing conclusions, as mentioned above. It did create an additional limitation, however, by narrowing the pool of potential interview candidates. This will be discussed in more length in Chapter Five, but this was an unexpected challenge in the research process. When ten out of the thirteen possible respondents either denied the request for an interview or did not respond to the request, there were no other sources from which to draw participants. For this reason the conclusions based on the research, while insightful, are drawn from a small number of interview subjects.

Summary

This chapter began by restating the research question and proceeded to outline my research methods. Explanation was provided to support the decision to conduct qualitative interviews with a semi-structured format, as well as the decision to focus on schools in a specific metropolitan area that work with the Reading Partners (2020) program to provide one-on-one tutoring delivered by volunteer tutors. There were descriptions of the participants and school settings included in the study and an explanation of the research methods followed by an explanation of the data analyzation process. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion of limitations of the research, which will be expanded in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four will include a summary and analysis of my findings as a result of the qualitative interviews. I will review the methods of research and display the findings that resulted from the interviews. I will explain five major themes that emerged from the research and discuss ways the interviews answered my research question: *How do administrators of volunteer reading tutoring programs describe the reasons that these programs can be successful with struggling readers?*

Chapter Five will consider the findings of the qualitative research. There will be connections drawn between major themes that emerged from the research and the literature review from Chapter Two, and a description of some of the major findings from the research. These findings will be applied to major stakeholders and the implications of the research will be discussed, and a deeper discussion of the limitations of the study will be included. Finally, Chapter Five will suggest ideas for future study and address my own personal reflections on the thesis process.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

Chapter One introduced the thesis topic by considering my personal interest in volunteer reading programs and noting the lack of research about administrator roles that contribute to these programs' success. The research question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* was introduced and an outline of the paper was presented. Chapter Two considered the literature in the area of volunteer reading programs and noted best practices for implementing a successful program. The gap in research about administrator roles in volunteer programs was considered, further supporting the rationale for the research question. The research paradigm and methods of a semi-structured qualitative interview were described in Chapter Three. Chapter Three also provided a rationale for the qualitative interview process and introduced the Pre-interview Survey (Appendix B) and Interview Protocol (Appendix C).

This chapter will outline the results from this qualitative study. Analysis of data obtained via the researcher designed pre-interview surveys and the analysis of the 45-minute interviews is also presented. The first section will describe the results from the pre-interview survey completed by both Respondents, an elementary principal at School A and a literacy coordinator at School B. Next, the major themes that emerged from the

interviews will be described and explained using information from the interviews, and these themes will be considered in light of the research question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

The chapter will consider the time restrictions of administrators and the way that affects their ability to be involved in the Reading Partners (2020) program in their building. Next, there will be a consideration of the critical role of the on-site volunteer coordinator, an employee of Reading Partners who is responsible for managing the program in each building. The chapter will also discuss the role teachers have in the success of the Reading Partners program, as well as the ways administrators use assessment and data to guide their decision making around the program. Finally, student benefits will be considered, and a description of some of the social and emotional benefits that cause administrators to support the program will be given.

Pre-Interview Survey Results

The pre-interview survey (Appendix B) was sent to the two respondents prior to the interview in order to gather basic information about the Reading Partners (2020) program in their school before the interview took place. The results of the pre-interview survey gave a more complete picture of the Reading Partners program at each particular school, and answered basic questions about the program that were more efficiently addressed in the survey rather than taking time during the interview. With the time constraints on administrators, face-to-face time was reserved for questions that would require explanation, such as the benefits of the program and enablers and barriers to the success of the program. It was important to make sure there was sufficient time to hear

about the unique experiences of the administrators rather than a simple recitation of logistics. The results of these surveys are described below.

Both administrators have been at their schools in an administrative role for 0-5 years, Respondent A for five years, and Respondent B for two years. Both buildings have been implementing their volunteer reading program for more than five years with an onsite coordinator employed and chosen by the Reading Partners (2020) program. This coordinator works with the tutors and students in a room dedicated to the program. The principals in each building meet with the on-site coordinators 2-3 times each year, and the literacy coach does not meet with the coordinator on a formal basis. Table 2 gives a brief description of the two Respondents and their roles.

Table 2. Summary of Respondent Roles and School Settings

Respondent	Role	Length of time in administrative position	Length of time School has been implementing Reading Partners program	Frequency of meetings with Reading Partners Coordinator
A	Elementary School Principal	5 years	5 years	3x/year
B	Literacy Coordinator	2 years	5 years	never

Both respondents reported that from their perspective, all teachers support the program. Respondent A indicated that only 50%-75% of the teachers supported the program during its first year of implementation, but now she believes that the support is close to 100%. In both buildings, assessments created by the Reading Partners (2020) program and the classroom assessments determine how many students participate in the program, with about 15-20% of students eventually participating in the program. In

Respondent A's school, where the Reading Partners program is five years old, the

Reading Partner volunteers work with students who are six months to a year and a half

behind their grade level peers, and they work with students at all grade levels, one

through five. In Respondent B's school, where the program has been implemented for

two years, Reading Partners volunteers only work with students in grades 3-5 who are six

months to two and a half years behind their grade level peers. Both schools also use

another volunteer reading program for students who need support and are not part of the

Reading Partners program.

The pre-interview survey provided useful information to guide the interview

process, as I was able to determine that both schools were using Reading Partners (2020)

in a way that was consistent with the design of the program and teachers were supportive.

The next sections will describe the five major findings that emerged as a result of the

qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Administrator Time Crunch

The previous section discussed the results of the pre-interview surveys, which

helped to guide the qualitative interviews. Knowing that the Reading Partners (2020)

program was well established and met with support by the teachers and administrators

allowed the interview to focus on the key ideas that made the program successful, and the

administrator's view of their roles in these ideas. One of the major findings in the

research process was that administrators have many things demanding their time, and

they are not able to be closely involved in all the programs in the school buildings. This

supports the research by Lynch (2012) that describes the pressures administrators face to

manage so many parts of an elementary school while also being instructional leaders.

The recruiting process for these interviews further demonstrated this idea. As described in Chapter Three, out of thirteen administrators contacted, and ten who were not restricted by district policies, only two were able to participate in an interview.

Due to this large number of demands on elementary school administrators, a major attraction for both schools was the fact that Reading Partners (2020) was a self-run program. Finding a program that would train volunteers, assess students, and create plans for volunteers to use was a significant benefit. Respondent A noted that these factors made it seem like "a solid program that had the necessary components that would actually benefit a school and not end up taking too much away from it." Respondent B noted the confidence she was able to have in the instruction being delivered by the tutors. She said, "It is very controlled as far as what you can do. It is laid out so that anyone could do it which is good because that was one of my biggest questions for a volunteer, 'how are *you* going to do a reading intervention?'" Both interview transcripts contained descriptions that were equated to mean there was an enthusiasm for Reading Partners, a program that demanded little from the administrator in the way of organization and execution. This emphasizes the limitations that administrators have when it comes to their time.

In addition to finding a program with an established curriculum and training protocol, during the interviews both Respondent A and B described the heavy demands on administrators that require them to rely on support from other people to make a program run smoothly. Respondent A, a school principal, talked about the importance of a coordinator who can initiate meetings because she does not have time to meet regularly. She also commented on my difficulty of finding more participants for this research

project by saying, "We [principals] are just so busy, and we get so many requests, that at some point we need to just say no."

During the interview process it became clear that these two administrators identified part of their role in any program's success was the degree to which they were able to gain support of qualified individuals in the building to ensure the program was run with fidelity. For example, Respondent A stated:

> It's really important that they [the on-site Reading Partners coordinator] hold me as the principal accountable, because I'm not going to remember [to have a meeting or check in on the program] until something comes up and I realize I have not had a meeting in a little while.

Similarly, Respondent B said that the building principal meets with the on-site coordinator only briefly twice a year. She explained:

> I think he [the principal] is kind of a "let it roll, do your thing, you take care of you kind of thing." Not in a bad way, but in a way that he needs to trust that the program is happening.

These comments highlight the importance of administrators developing support for any program operating in their school. The on-site coordinators are one of the key stakeholders in these support systems. The role of these coordinators will be discussed in the next section.

Critical Role of the On-Site Coordinator

The analyses of the interview transcripts provide support for the idea that time limitations are a significant factor when considering an administrator's role in a successful volunteer reading program. During the interviews both respondents described

the important roles of their Reading Partners (2020) program coordinators in ensuring the

program's success. For example, during the interviews the Respondents described the

need for the Reading Partners coordinator to act as a bridge between the administrator

and the program participants. Creating this bridge was described by these Respondents

resulting in them having more confidence in the running of the program. This section

will describe four major roles of the coordinator, as described in the interviews:

- Elicit teacher support

- Collaborate with teachers to report data and collaborate about instructional needs

- Maintain the program structure

- Report assessment data

According to these two Respondents a coordinator who is able to meet these demands

makes it more likely the administrator will have confidence in the program's success.

Elicit teacher support. Both respondents discussed the value of the on-site

coordinator in eliciting teacher support for the Reading Partners (2020) program.

Respondent B noted that a capable coordinator is critical in promoting the "teacher buy-

in" that contributes to the success of the program, and was quick to name the coordinator

as a major factor of the program's success. Both Respondents said that teachers often

feel apprehensive of new programs and can tend to be a bit hesitant to support a new

initiative until they have seen it be successful, and Respondent A said that it was only

after teachers saw the program work for a year that they fully supported the program.

During the interview Respondent A also described how the teachers determined

the validity of the Reading Partners (2020) program once they saw that the program

followed an organized format with frequent progress monitoring and sharing data with

teachers. She specifically commented on the high level of collaboration between the teachers and the coordinators to fill all of the available tutoring spots and make sure the maximum number of students are being served through reading partners. She said the coordinator has been effective in gathering teacher support because "she advocates for teachers and advocates for kids." This supports Potter (1999), who says teachers need to be part of the tutoring process in order to make it effective. Their collaboration is critical, and they will not be motivated to collaborate unless they see value in a program. The on-site coordinator is able to facilitate this buy-in.

Collaborate with teachers. These two Respondents also described how once the program has the support of teachers, it is important that the on-site coordinator is able to collaborate with teachers to inform instruction. Both Respondents mentioned Reading Partners (2020) reports that are shared with teachers about student progress. Respondent B said reports are shared with teachers every three weeks, and Respondent A paused during our interview to make a note wondering how often the coordinator does in fact share data with teachers. She noted, "they [the Reading Partners reports] help guide their guided reading groups, and that would be much more helpful." Based on the analyses of the interview transcripts my assumption is that the degree to which teachers in a specific school and the Reading Partners site coordinator work together is dependent on the person in the coordinator role, but for both administrators interviewed this was a significant factor of a successful program.

Maintain program structure. In addition to working closely with teachers, both Respondents also describe how the on-site coordinator is a valuable asset to assure that the program is being run with fidelity at the program site. Fidelity in this situation meant

that the tutors were maintaining consistent attendance, the students were going to their

tutoring sessions each day and the tutoring sessions contained all of the required elements

and lasted the full forty-five minutes. As mentioned earlier, one of the benefits of the

Reading Partners (2020) program is the minimal pressure the program puts on teachers

and administrators to run smoothly. Respondent A noted the way the on-site coordinator

was in charge of not only recruiting but more importantly training all volunteers with the

training program created by the Reading Partners organization. Respondent A further

noted how the coordinator also oversees the volunteers to assure that they are following a

protocol during tutoring sessions. Both Respondents also noted how having a dedicated

room where the tutoring takes place at their site was helpful.

Respondent A elaborated that having a dedicated room for tutoring was a positive

part of the program. When referring to the classroom that was dedicated to the Reading

Partners tutors and students, she stated, "It's really nice, just a place where the students

and volunteers can be really focused, and the coordinator can really keep track of what is

going on." Since the coordinator spends their time in this room, they are able to

continually monitor the volunteers and students to make sure best practice is being

enforced. They are also able to administer assessments and support progress monitoring,

since they can observe daily reading sessions. Both respondents shared that they not only

have confidence in the assessment data they receive from the coordinator, but have

confidence that the coordinator is able to gather informal data as they observe tutoring

sessions in progress. Respondent B noted that while many of the administrators and

teachers in the building are unable to keep close track of the tutoring sessions, they do not

worry about this because they are confident that their coordinator will "make it all

happen." Regarding the relationship the coordinator has with the students in the program, Respondent B went on to state that the coordinator "sends a message to kids that says 'I want to work with you, please come in and, you know, be comfortable and be yourself. It's okay if it is hard, we will go through it together.'"

Report assessment data. Respondent A made strong connections to her feelings about the Reading Partners program and her analysis of data. She meets with the on-site coordinator three times a year, and during these meetings they discuss assessment data. Respondent A was eager to discuss her requests that the program look at how to align data so that the tutors and teachers can make sure they are seeing the same gains. She noted that if the Reading Partners assessments were saying one thing and the school assessments were saying another, she would see a red flag. She wondered how to align assessments so that the Reading Partners tutors were targeting the same skills as the classroom teachers, and noted the importance of a coordinator that can help to do some of these things.

Respondent A recalled two different coordinators, one that would send frequent emails to schedule meetings and check in on student progress and assessment data, and one that had not initiated meetings to check in after the first meeting in the fall. She stated, "last year the coordinator sent me emails saying, 'we need a check in' and I have not gotten anything this year and it starts to make me nervous." She paused during the interview to make a note to herself about asking the coordinator to send a regular update report so that the principal knew it would happen without the responsibility of initiating it.

Respondent B said that the on-site coordinator shares information with teachers every three weeks, but only meets with the principal twice a year. A literacy coordinator in the building, Respondent B said that the principal trusts that the program is being implemented and does not feel the need to be very hands-on with the coordinator. It seemed in School B the coordinator had more interactions with teachers themselves, and in School A most of the reporting was sent directly to the principal.

This section described the importance of the on-site coordinator to the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program as described by administrators. The on-site coordinator must be able to gain teacher support and confidence as they collaborate with teachers, assure that the volunteers are trained and the program is run with fidelity, and be able to effectively initiate communication about the assessment data with the administrator or teachers to promote collaboration. The interviews highlighted another group of key stakeholders to the success of the reading partners program, and that is the classroom teachers. The next section will examine the important role of teachers to the success of the program.

Critical Role of Teachers

Another major theme that emerged from the interviews was the important role of teachers when considering the Reading Partners (2020) program. As previously mentioned, administrators depend on many others to ensure the success of any volunteer program. The on-site coordinator is one of these key stakeholders, but another important group is teachers. During the interviews, three themes related to classroom teachers surfaced:

- Teachers do not have the capacity to meet every need in their classroom

- Many teachers met the program with skepticism initially

- Initial skepticism faded after about a year, and at this point teachers began to strongly support the program and even seek to collaborate with the on-site coordinator about students

This section will describe the information that emerged from the interviews about teachers and their role in the program.

One of the things both respondents said a variety of times throughout the interview was that the Reading Partners organization (2020) supported teachers who do not have the capacity to meet the needs of all of their students. This is supported by Potter (1999) who states that teachers are unable to meet the needs of the wide variety of students in their classroom. Respondent A stated:

We don't have any other interventions, any other way to scoop up that child, so when teachers are trying to teach kids that are here, and here [indicating opposite sides of a line with her hands], you know when someone from the community comes in and says they can actually be an intervention for us, that is a big thing.

Respondent B echoed this sentiment, and when asked about the most significant benefit Reading Partners offers for teachers, said:

That one on one that they can't always give. That extra support, knowing that, 'if I could only sit down with you and read during the week, but I can't because I have other kids.' So having that extra person because it's not that you don't want to give kids that time, you just can't because you're one person.

While both respondents could describe benefits for their teachers that contributed teacher support it was also noted how this was not automatic.

For example, strong teacher support did not happen automatically in Respondent A's building. One thing that she described was an initial hesitation among many teachers when the program was introduced into their building. While both respondents report a high current level of teacher approval, gaining support of teachers was a process rather than an instant occurrence. Respondent A, when discussing the initial feeling of teachers, said, "teachers can be very protective and want to hold on to their kids . . . they want to keep them and say, 'I am the teacher, I can probably do this better.' " As an administrator, her response to this reaction was to exert some pressure and mandate that teachers choose 3-5 kids for the program based on data, and wait for the "program to prove itself." Respondent B was not working at the school when the program began, so she did not have knowledge about the initial reception of the program.

Respondent A, the school principal, described the change that occured in terms of teacher support after the first year of the program in their building. She credited this change to a well organized program with frequent reporting to teachers. Once teachers saw these things in action, Respondent A's perception was that her teachers saw the value of it. After the first year, Respondent A, the building principal, notes that the teachers in her building have completely supported the program, and showed this support by identifying students who need tutoring and sending kids to their tutoring sessions consistently.

When asked about the teacher reaction to the Reading Partners (2020) program, Respondent B noted that during her meetings with teachers as a literacy coach, teachers have consistently said, "I don't know what we would do if we didn't have Reading Partners." She also notes that the teachers appreciate the frequent reporting (teachers in

this school receive reports every three weeks), and labeled the teachers as "strong advocates for the program." She commented that the reason for their strong support of the program is the results teachers have seen combined with the collaboration provided by the on-site coordinator.

The idea of teachers and the Reading Partners (2020) tutors collaborating was a significant theme that emerged from the interview data. While collaboration with teachers is not part of the Reading Partners design, both respondents noted the potential value in this possibility. Respondent A noted that the teachers get reports from the on-site coordinator, but paused during the interview to make a note to herself to check on the regularity of this. She noted that frequent information from Reading Partners could help with teacher planning of guided reading groups and in-class interventions.

Respondent B described a relationship between the teachers and the on-site coordinator with very open communication lines and a collaborative nature. While the teachers do not collaborate on goals or activities for students, they talk often about student progress and development informally, and teachers receive formal reports every three weeks. Respondent B was not able to describe the specifics of these reports, but noted that the teachers described them as helpful. Respondent B, when describing the coordinator's relationship with teachers, stated, "She's supportive and she's real and she kind of tells it like it is but with a growth mindset. She will bend over backwards to serve as many kids as she can." Respondent B works as a literacy coordinator, but her position is paid for by a grant and she noted that her roles are very specific. When asked what she would envision as her role if she could have involvement with the program, she quickly

commented on the potential of collaborating with Reading Partners (2020) coordinators and staff to make sure they are finding the best instructional fits for all students.

This section and those before discussed the important role of some major stakeholders in the Reading Partners program (2020). The administrators themselves who are under tremendous pressure to utilize their time well, the on-site coordinators who manage the execution of the Reading Partners program in the school and communicate results with school staff, and the teachers who send students to the program and benefit from the extra support their students gain. When considering the thesis question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?,* the interviews have revealed that administrators rely on a variety of other groups of people to support the program in order for it to be successful. In addition to the coordinator and teachers, the administrators must also consider the results of data and assessments that provide information about the program's success. The next section will consider the role of data and assessment in the administrator's considerations about the Reading Partners (2020) program.

Critical Role of Data and Assessments

Reading Partners (2020) is designed to help students increase their reading achievement. Their program works with students who are determined to be reading six months to two and a half years behind in grade level expectations related to reading. The goal is that these students will begin reading closer to their grade level as they progress through the program. This goal of increasing achievement is the reason administrators choose to partner with the Reading Partners program, and it is important for the administrators to have a way of assuring that these goals are being met. In order for them

to do this, they need to be able to see assessment data to ensure students enrolled in their Reading Partners program are making progress. This section will describe the role of data and assessment described by the two administrators interviewed for this research. During the interviews the two respondents described several topics related to the role of assessments in identifying students for the Reading Partners program, demonstrating student progress in the program, and contributing to collaboration and the targeting of student needs in the building.

Both of the administrators interviewed described the students who are targeted through the Reading Partners (2020) program. In school A, the principal characterized the students receiving the support of Reading Partners as "bubble kids." She defined these "bubble kids" as those in grades one through five are half year to a year and a half behind their grade level peers in reading. School A also uses a program called Reading Corps (Reading & Math, Inc., 2019), and students in the Reading Corps program meet with tutors each day, as opposed to the twice a week meetings for the students in Reading Partners. Because of the difference in frequency, Respondent A, the building principal, said that the students involved in the Reading Partners program are less behind their grade level peers than those who do Reading Corps. The identification criteria for students targeted to participate in the Reading Partners program at school B is a bit different.

According to Respondent B, the literacy coordinator, students at their school are recommended for participation in the Reading Partners (2020) if they are in third through fifth grade and are a half year to two and a half years behind. School B also uses the Minnesota Reading Corps (Reading & Math, Inc., 2019), but focuses that program on

first-third graders who do not participate in the Reading Partners program. Respondent B

described how all of these determinations for supplemental reading programs are made in

response to assessments that are given by teachers and the Reading Partners program

early in the school year. According to Respondent B these assessments identify who will

participate in the program, and they are a valuable tool for administrators, tutors, and

teachers.

Another topic described by both respondents is the importance of knowing if their

students involved in the Reading Partners (2020) program are making progress with their

reading while progressing through it. Respondent A spoke often of assessment and data

during the interview. She noted that one of the things that led her to support the Reading

Partners program for her building was their use of assessments and progress monitoring.

When asked about her involvement with the program in her building, she said:

> I want to see that data. I want you to show me the kids are growing. And then,
>
> are they growing in one area and not another? So I always want to have another
>
> data source, to align and see if they are saying the same thing. I can't have data
>
> here saying the child is not moving but we're seeing them move, because then the
>
> data is not authentic.

Respondent A described one thing she would like to see going forward [with the Reading

Partners Program] is a greater collaboration in regards to data and assessment.

In explaining her desire for greater collaboration related to data and assessment

Respondent A noted that one of her concerns about the program was her lack of

confidence in the degree of growth the students are making. For example, Respondent A

noted that the data from Reading Partners (2020) demonstrated that her students are

making gains in their general reading ability as determined by the Reading Partners assessments. However, the gains indicated by the Reading Partners assessment were not aligned with other data related to students reading at grade level. In other words, Respondent A did not have concrete evidence that students involved in the Reading Partners program were making equivalent growth towards the goal of reading at grade level.

To gain support for greater collaboration during the interview Respondent A commented on the way she has "pushed" the Reading Partners (2020) program to look closely at the type of assessments they use and consider where they could align reading assessment. Respondent A described how collaborating on assessment could produce data that would drive instruction (both in the classroom and the Reading Partners tutoring room). It seemed to be Respondent's A belief that with common assessments, the interventions happening in the classroom during guided reading groups and other instruction could be more closely aligned to the tutoring sessions and the skills being targeted by Reading Partners could be supported by data as the targeted intervention students need.

Respondent B, although an administrator in her building, does not have the responsibility of evaluating the Reading Partners (2020) program in her building, and commented less on data. She did not have specific data or report regular meetings with the on-site coordinator, but did say that the data is showing the students are making gains in reading. Like Respondent A, Respondent B was interested in knowing how the Reading Partners data matched up with the classroom data, but did not have that

information. Respondent B also commented on the reports provided to classroom teachers at her school related to students involved in the Reading Partners program.

Due to Respondent B's role in the building, she does not work with the Reading Partners (2020) program, but she hoped that her role would be renewed for the following AY 2020/2021 school year and grow to include collaboration with the Reading Partners program. When considering the possibility of working with the program, Respondent B stated:

> I'd like to understand it a little bit more and maybe we could collaborate with teachers and all of us together about who we are targeting and who this is best helping. We could work together to find the sweet spot of who benefits most from this structure or this type of experience.

This section described the perspectives of Respondent A and B regarding the importance of assessment and data when considering the success of the Reading Partners program. In consideration of the thesis question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?,* it is critical to consider how administrators can use data to determine success. While there are many reading gains that can be clearly illustrated by data, there are also a number of affective factors that are more difficult to define. The next section will consider the critical role of some of these factors and the impact on students.

Critical Role of Student Benefits

In order for an administrator to evaluate the success of a program, it is important for them to consider all of the ways the program benefits students. During the interviews, Respondents highlighted various impacts the program has made on students. The first

benefit, related to the mission of Reading Partners (2020), is student growth in reading. The previous section discussed some of the ways that assessment data is used to determine the degree to which the program is meeting that goal. In addition to those measurable gains, however, both Respondents listed some of the most important benefits to students in terms of things that are not related to assessment scores. This section will describe some of these benefits, as described by the administrators in the interviews.

Perhaps the major similarity between both interviews was the response to the following interview question, *How does the Reading Partners program benefit students?* Both administrators first commented on benefits that did not relate to assessment data. Respondent A had the following response to the question:

> I think having a person who is saying, "I'm here only because I want to spend time with you and help you with reading . . . " it sends a message to the child that this is actually important. They may or may not be hearing that at home, but here someone is coming in to help them. It is really important that they do catch up, and when I see the hopelessness or frustration in kids or you see behavior stuff because work is too hard I think there's a hopelessness of "who can help me?" But when there is someone who is going to be here twice a week and they're going to help you, it gives an extra scoop of hope. First for the child to say, "I'm not dumb" but second of all, "someone is here to help me."

When asked the same question, *How does the Reading Partners program benefit students?*, Respondent B replied:

> I would say mainly with confidence with reading. The confidence of, "I'm going to come and read with you, I'm going to work with you on a skill or a game or

activity that will help you in a certain area," That relationship and the degree they

can count on that relationship is the biggest benefit.

These responses support the research of the Search Institute (n.d.) mentioned in Chapter

Two. This research states that young people need positive relationships with adults other

than their parents and they also need to feel valued by other adults in their community.

While these benefits may not be able to be measured by a specific assessment tool, both

Respondents reported that this benefit of increased confidence is a valuable result of the

volunteer reading program.

In addition to increased confidence, both Respondents discussed the change in

motivation they saw in students that participated in the Reading Partners program (2020).

This correlates with the research by Wasik (1999) who stated that the motivation to

approach reading activities increased in students who participated in volunteer reading

programs. Respondent B noted that the on-site Reading Partner coordinator has a

"growth mindset way of approaching kids" where they feel like they can approach hard

things together. Dweck (2015) defines a growth mindset as "believing intelligence can

be developed" (p. 243) versus believing that it is fixed. Respondent A also commented

on changes in motivation. She described that while she is not completely sure that her

students are making the academic gains she would like to see with Reading Partners, the

changes in their motivation and confidence are enough for her to continue implementing

the program in their school.

Summary

Chapter Four began with a review of the previous chapters, as well as an

overview of this chapter. The results of the Pre-Interview survey were revealed, and the

interview data was described based on major themes that emerged during the interviews. These themes were considered in light of the research question, *How do administrators of schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

The first theme that emerged was the demands that are felt by the two administrators interviewed to fulfill all of their duties in the school. With so many things to manage, it became clear that these administrators need to utilize qualified team members in order to ensure the success of a program like Reading Partners (2020). In light of these demands, there was a consideration of two groups of people that meet this need: the on-site Reading Partners coordinator and classroom teachers. First, the role of the on-site coordinator was described, and it became clear that this was a very important role in determining the Reading Partners program's success in a building. Next, there was a description of the ways teachers enable the program to run smoothly through their support and collaboration.

The following sections described the way that assessment and data play an important role in the program's success, and there was discussion of the ways an administrator uses that data to evaluate the success of the program. Finally, there was a consideration of the affective benefits to students, increased motivation and positive self-concept.

Chapter Five will consider the findings from these interviews in more depth. There will be connections drawn between the results of the qualitative research and the literature presented in Chapter Two, and a summary of major findings that emerged from the interviews. Limitations to the research will be discussed, and implications for future

research and study will be described. Finally, Chapter Five will close with a personal

reflection of the capstone journey.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction

My experience as a first grade teacher gave me insight into the wide range of literacy needs of students, and as I worked to find ways to utilize willing volunteers I began to think about how these volunteers could be used to support reading instruction. The capstone thesis process gave me the opportunity to look closely at volunteer based literacy programs, and as I explored the variety of programs that work with volunteers and literacy, I began to wonder what role administrators play in these programs. This led me to the research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

Chapter One described this process of arriving at my research question, and Chapter Two followed with a review of literature on the topic of volunteer reading programs. This review addressed why these programs are important, how they are often utilized, and best practice for making them successful for increasing student achievement. Chapter Three described the qualitative research study that involved interviewing administrators to gain a better understanding of their role in these programs. I limited the research to the Reading Partners (2020) program, which operates in 11 schools in the metropolitan area where the research was conducted. Focusing on one program allowed me to limit the variables in the study by choosing a program with it's own set of goals and routines. During the recruitment process contact was made with 13 administrators in

the buildings that use the Reading Partners program. However, I was only able to

interview two due to lack of response or inability to participate in the interview process.

Chapter Four introduced the two participants and detailed the results of the

interviews, noting five significant themes that arose:

- The limited capacity for administrators to participate in programs such as
  Reading Partners (2020)

- The critical role of the on-site coordinators

- The critical role of teachers

- The critical role of assessments

- Student benefits.

This final chapter will describe the connections that arose between my research and

literature on the topic of volunteer reading programs, major findings from the research

process, the implications of these findings on major stakeholders, limitations of the

research, and ideas for future study. The chapter will conclude with my own personal

reflections on the capstone journey.

The findings of the capstone project highlighted in Chapter Four reinforce ideas

presented in the literature review. There were three major areas from the review that

proved most important for my research. This first section will highlight the research in

light of these themes: Addressing the Matthew Effect (Stanvoich, 1986), The Reading

Partners (2020) alignment with Wasik's (1998a) eight essential elements of successful

tutoring programs, and implications of the research on major stakeholders. Each of these

areas from the literature review were supported by my research when looking at the

Reading Partners program.

Connections to Literature: Addressing the Matthew Effect

Stanovich (1986) described the Matthew effect in reading, stating that when students begin to fall behind in reading they continue to fall behind because of a lack of exposure to appropriate reading material. These lost opportunities make it incredibly hard for readers to catch up to their peers. As Torgesen (2004) and Allington (2012) both state, one way to provide students with the level of instruction necessary to catch up to their peers is to increase the intensity of their reading instruction by reducing the size of their learning group and/or increasing the time they spend receiving valuable reading instruction.

To follow the recommendation of Torgesen (2004) and Allington (2012) regarding reducing the size of the learning group the Reading Partners (2020) program offers students two 45-minute sessions each week in addition to their classroom reading instruction. Not only are these extra instructional times beneficial because they offer more intense instruction by reducing the size of the group (one student) and increasing the time spent learning, but these sessions are also beneficial as they give students time to practice reading at their instructional level. The addition of 90-min one-on-one instruction each week provides the exposure students need to appropriately leveled reading material so that they do not continue to fall behind in the way Stanovich (1986) describes with the Matthew Effect. In both of the schools examined in the interviews, the administrators noted that students participating in the Reading Partners program do not receive other formal interventions. This only emphasizes the importance of the time students spend with volunteers, as it allows them to spend valuable time participating in meaningful reading experiences.

Connections to Literature: Essential Elements of Successful Tutoring Programs

While the Reading Partners (2020) program assures that students are getting more intensity in reading, it is also important to make sure that this time is well planned and consists of research-based instruction that is proven to increase reading skills. Wasik (1998a) offers guidance in checking the validity of a reading program with her eight essential elements of a volunteer reading program. These elements were described in Chapter Two and are summarized in Table 1. The research in this capstone and findings described in Chapter Four highlight a number of these elements, and in this section, I will focus on the role of the three of these elements that emerged most strongly from the interviews: The presence of an onsite reading specialist, ongoing assessment, and a program that is coordinated with instruction.

The presence of an onsite reading specialist. Wasik (1998a) states that a successful volunteer reading program should have an on-site coordinator who acts as the "core of the program" (p. 565). Jacob, Armstrong and Willard et al. (2015), when describing the organizational structure of the Reading Partners program, mention program managers who are the "primary literacy program expert" (p. 17). These program managers supervise a group of on-site coordinators who are given the task of overseeing the program in a specific building and managing the logistics for that building. During the interview process, however, I did not hear mention of a program manager. Instead, administrators discussed the value of the on-site coordinator as a literacy leader in their building. One of the major themes that emerged from the interview transcript data was the importance of these on-site coordinators, who seem to be the true "core" of the program from the administrator point of view. Not only does

this coordinator supervise the tutors and lesson plans, according to the interviews they also play a critical role in using and sharing assessment data.

Ongoing assessment. Wasik (1998a) highlighted the importance of assessment that is consistent and ongoing so instruction can be frequently adjusted as needed to meet student needs. This assessment can check for student progress and identify themes that may emerge in student performance. This assessment is to be used to inform the instruction done in the tutoring sessions, and Wasik (1998a) notes the importance of the on-site coordinator to help tutors effectively respond to the assessment.

Assessment was one of the key themes that emerged from the interview transcripts, and both administrators noted that assessment results help them evaluate the quality of the program. They discussed the importance of this data in helping to promote teacher support for the program as well. In addition to mentioning the importance of the assessment that is already happening, both interview subjects mentioned a desire to align assessment data more closely with classroom data so that they can better be used for collaboration among the teachers and tutoring program.

Tutoring that is coordinated with classroom instruction. Potter (1999) states that coordinating tutoring programs with classroom instruction is important, because teachers "hold the key to why a particular child needs tutoring" (p. 13). Wasik (1998a) includes coordination with instruction as one of the essential elements of tutoring programs, largely because it is important not to add to student confusion by introducing different approaches and teaching strategies than what they are experiencing in the classroom. This was the only element from Table 1 that is not a part of the Reading Partners (2020) program, and it was also one of the major themes that emerged from the

interview transcripts. Both interview participants expressed a desire to have the Reading Partners tutoring more closely aligned with classroom instruction. This is a significant finding, which will be addressed later in the chapter when I consider next steps.

Implications for Stakeholders

The literature review considered four major stakeholders: students, tutors, teachers, and administrators. During the qualitative research in this study, connections were made especially to students and administrators, and these connections will be discussed in this section.

Students. Potter (1999) noted that students do not only benefit academically from extra tutoring support, but they also experience benefits that go beyond increased reading ability. These other benefits include increased motivation and a positive relationship with an adult in addition to their teachers. These benefits were highlighted by both administrators interviewed as some of the greatest benefits of the Reading Partners program.

Administrators. This research question, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* looks specifically at administrators, who play a vital role in the success of programs in their building. In Chapter Two, it was noted that Sebring and Byrk (2000) state that administrators not only coordinate logistics in a building, but also "breathe life" into a school. This "life" refers to the result of how people behave and work together rather than simply the formal structures of a school. This idea was one I considered as I listened to the respondents talk about the Reading Partners (2020) program in their building.

Both interviews revealed participants that saw the value of this "breathing life" into the volunteer program. Respondent A, the elementary principal, had strong support for the Reading Partners (2020) program, specifically the impact it had on student achievement. She was passionate about the students and the academic and relational gains they were making as a result of the program, and this support was evident in our discussion. Respondent B was a literacy coordinator, and from her responses to the interview, it was apparent that the building principal was not as involved in the program, but rather the on-site coordinator seemed to be a primary source of "breathing life" into the program with her passion for students and literacy.

Respondent B's responses correlate with the research of Mackey, Pitcher and Decman (2006) who state that principals, in order to be effective instructional leaders in the area of literacy, benefit from having specialized literacy knowledge. If they do not have this knowledge, however, they can be effective leaders if they rely on others in the building with literacy knowledge. From the interview data, it seems that the principal at School B, who did not respond for an interview, relies heavily on the on-site coordinator and literacy coordinator to support the Reading Partners program in his building.

In addition to cultivating this supportive culture, administrators contribute to the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program by communicating the importance of the program (Helf & Cooke, 2011) and driving teacher support (Potter, 1999). Respondent A noted initial hesitation on the part of some teachers during the first year or two of the Reading Partners program in her building, and she discussed her role in maintaining strong support for the program until teachers saw the value of the program for their students. This administrative support was critical to the success of the program. Without

a strong administrative presence ensuring that the program was running as designed in the building, the teachers may not have had the chance to see the growth. This was perhaps one of the biggest contributions of the administrator in the early years of the program.

The literature review in Chapter Two provided a solid base of understanding for the reasons behind the implementation of volunteer reading programs and indicators of success for these programs. Wasik's (1998a) research on essential elements for tutoring programs was used as a framework for evaluating programs, and major stakeholders were explored. The literature review helped in the interpretation of the qualitative interviews and offered a way to consider the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program in each building. The next section will discuss limitations to the research in this capstone.

Limitations to Research

The need to develop a focused research question limits the scope of participants and settings for a research project, and this is no exception. In addition to a scope that was limited by the research question, unanticipated events caused me to have a much smaller group of interview subjects than I had intended. These limitations will be explored in this section, and they are important to note when considering next steps.

The first thing to consider when looking at limitations is the selection of a single volunteer reading program, Reading Partners (2020). This decision was very intentional as it was important to limit the variables involved in the research. For the scope of this paper it was helpful to look at one program in order to evaluate administrator experience rather than consider multiple programs and experiences. One area of future research,

however, would be to examine some of the themes that emerged in this project across other programs with similar goals in mind.

Another limitation involved the small number of interview subjects. Even though 13 administrators were contacted with requests for interviews, only two were able to complete a scheduled interview. This was an unanticipated development in the research process, and the research question that sought to examine administrator perspective about the Reading Partners (2020) program prohibited me from looking at other staff members involved in these programs. A further limitation related to the small number of participants is that one participant was a building principal, and another was a literacy coordinator who had little involvement with the Reading Partners program. Conclusions drawn from this research should be taken with caution realizing the limited number of respondents. Despite these limitations, there were ideas that emerged from the data that are worth considering.

Major Findings: Introduction

When I began the capstone process, my goal was to consider how volunteer reading programs could help students who were struggling to reach grade level reading benchmarks. My experience as a teacher taught me that even when teachers know how to support students, they do not always have the time to give one-on-one attention. Finding ways to provide additional one-on-one attention to struggling readers increased my interest in the topic of volunteer reading programs, and I made the decision to focus on administrators, asking, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?* My experience taught me that supportive administrators, such as building principals and

literacy coordinators, made it easier for teachers to explore different ways to meet student needs, and I wanted to know how administrators affected the success of volunteer programs.

The research process has resulted in three major learnings around this topic. First of all, administrators are key players in the implementation of a new program like Reading Partners (2020). Their initial support and enthusiasm often sets the tone for the program's success in a building. Another important part of the success of the program are the on-site coordinators that supervise the program in the buildings. These coordinators communicate with staff and volunteers, and help others in the building understand what is working with the program and what needs to be improved. Finally, while student achievement is often measured in test scores and reading levels, perhaps the most important benefits of students participating in the Reading Partners program are harder to measure, the affective factors that relate to motivation and self-concept. These major learnings will be described in more detail in this section.

Major Finding: Initial Administrator Support

It has been previously mentioned in this capstone that administrators have a significant number of duties related to their role in the school (Lynch, 2012). This is evidenced by the lack of response I received from my interview requests, and the comment of Respondent A, a school principal, that administrators were "just too busy" to participate in anything extra, even if they supported the topic. This is also one of the things that the interview participants noted about the Reading Partners (2020) program; it was attractive because an outside organization did a lot of the "work" of recruiting volunteers, planning lessons, and administering assessments. This alleviated pressure on

building staff and administration who would otherwise have to coordinate all of these pieces.

While it is helpful that the Reading Partners (2020) program does not require a high level of administrator engagement, my research revealed that it is beneficial for administrators to show a high level of support during the first year or two of a new reading program. Both interview participants mentioned that it took teachers a little while to fully support the program because they were skeptical of something new, and Respondent A, the principal, said that for the first year she had to require some reluctant teachers to send students to their tutoring sessions. This was only required until they saw the benefits of the program, however. Once they were able to see the students making progress in reading and their motivation to approach tutoring, the teachers became much more supportive. This supports Helf and Cooke (2011) who discuss the role of principal to communicate enthusiasm for new programs not only to school staff, but the community as well.

Both sites involved in the interview process have been implementing Reading Partners (2020) for five years, and had almost 100% teacher support of the program as described by the interview participants. At this point, the administrators do not have to enforce compliance with tutoring sessions, and both respondents commented that teachers were eager to help identify students for the program and support Reading Partners in the building. This offers some encouragement to administrators who feel like they do not have extra capacity to manage a new reading program. While it may take a level of involvement in the beginning to establish staff support, this will fade as time

passes, and the on-site coordinator will be able to manage most of the details of the program.

Major Finding: On-Site Coordinator

A second major finding is that the on-site coordinator is one of the most integral parts of the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program in a building. This was an unanticipated result, while suspecting this role was important, I did not realize how important this person was until listening to the interview responses. While I expected the coordinator to be important because they manage the logistics of the program, it became evident during the interviews that this coordinator was also vital for communicating enthusiasm for the program and understanding student learning and progress.

The interviews also revealed that it is important for the coordinator to have a strong understanding of assessment and instruction, as they are the ones communicating assessment data to administration and teachers. The administrators interviewed talked about the importance of the assessment data driving the tutoring sessions for students involved in the Reading Partners (2020) program, and the coordinator is the person responsible for understanding and using this data.

The coordinator also needs to have strong communication skills, as they share data and progress with teachers and administrators. Respondent A, a school principal, shared her thoughts about a former on-site coordinator who often initiated meetings and times to check in, saying that it was important for a coordinator to take the initiative of communicating because she (the principal) often did not remember to schedule these meetings. Respondent B, a literacy coordinator, talked about the communication style of the on-site coordinator being a major factor in how the teachers responded to the

program. She noted that the coordinator "prioritizes literacy and the program" and has an attitude with teachers that says, "we are in this together." A coordinator with the skills to gain teacher and student support is a valuable asset to the Reading Partners (2020) program in a building, and they have a significant role in student success.

Major Finding: Student Benefits

The goal of the Reading Partners (2020) program is to increase student reading achievement, and there are assessments and tools designed to measure their progress with these goals. One of the major learnings of this capstone research, however, is that some of the most valuable benefits to students who participate in the Reading Partners program are harder to measure.

One of the interview questions asked respondents to describe the greatest benefits for students involved in the Reading Partners program. Both respondents, rather than mentioning reading growth, discussed affective factors that they have seen grow in students. One participant discussed the confidence in reading that seems to improve as a result of having time reading at their level with a consistent adult. When students spend time successfully reading, they feel more confident in their overall reading ability and more willing to take risks in new reading experiences. The other participant said the biggest benefit was the feeling of importance that students gained as a result of having an adult who is committed to being with them twice a week at school. These benefits emerged as some of the most significant for students, and it is important to consider this when thinking about the overall success of the Reading Partners (2020) program.

This section described some of the major findings from the research, and these findings help to answer the capstone question regarding administrator roles in the success

of the Reading Partners program in their building. The next section will discuss

implications of these findings for stakeholders involved in this program.

Implications: Introduction

This capstone seeks to answer the research question, *How do administrators of*

elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their

role in the program's success? After a review of literature about volunteer reading

programs and a qualitative research study, major themes related to the success of these

programs were revealed. In addition to identifying themes evident in the research, there

are also implications of the research on future practice. Two implications will be

discussed in this section.

Implications: Careful selection of on-site coordinator.

The capstone research revealed that the role of the on-site coordinator is one of

the most important factors related to the success of the program. This is supported by the

findings of Wasik (1998a) described in the literature review in Chapter Two. As a result

of this research, it is recommended that the Reading Partners (2020) organization

carefully screen candidates for the on-site coordinator position. In addition to having

knowledge about early literacy and the logistics of the program, the coordinator needs to

be a strong communicator with the ability to take initiative in communicating with

administration and teachers about student progress.

Another element to be considered is the matching of on-site coordinators to

specific buildings. It would be beneficial for a member of the school administration to

have input in the selection of this coordinator, so they can consider a candidate that will

match the culture of the school building. In order to make sure the coordinator is a good

fit for the particular building, it would also be beneficial for the Reading Partners program (2020) to have a protocol for administration and teachers in a building to give feedback about the on-site coordinator to the organization. These steps would help to assure a good fit between the on-site coordinator and the school building, and this would help the administration in the building have confidence in the program in their building.

Implications: Collaboration with Instruction

The only essential element of those described by Wasik (1998a) that the Reading Partners (2020) program does not have is collaboration with instruction. This was also the element that both interview participants, administrators and instructional leaders in the building, wished was different with the Reading Partners program. Finding ways to increase the collaboration between the tutoring program and the school building is another recommendation that is taken from this research.

This is another way the on-site coordinator can be valuable, as they serve as a liaison between the tutoring program and the school. One way to foster this collaboration is to find ways for the on-site coordinator to become part of the school team. This could mean that they come to selected staff meetings and participate in occasional team meetings with teachers. Finding ways for the on-site coordinator to be a bigger part of the teaching team would increase collaboration between the program and the school.

Another suggestion for supporting this collaboration would be for the Reading Partners (2020) organization to consider their assessment strategies, and how they can more closely align these assessments with those that the school is already using. Perhaps the organization could adapt their assessments to more closely mirror the assessments that are given by the school, or even align their learning targets more closely to those of

the school. When contacting potential interview candidates for this capstone project, I

noticed that the majority of the schools that use the Reading Partners program are in two

major districts in our metropolitan area. The limited range of districts served could make

it easier for the Reading Partners program in this community to align their assessments

with district assessments. This would create a more unified way for teachers and

Reading Partners coordinators to communicate about student progress and goals.

Finally, the Reading Partners (2020) organization should consider developing a

protocol for communication between the on-site coordinator and building administration.

While a coordinator who initiates meetings to discuss the success of the program is

helpful, it would give more assurance to administrators to know that there is a protocol in

place for this communication, and it is the responsibility of the coordinator to initiate this

communication. The Reading Partners organization could also develop communication

protocols for coordinators and teachers, so there was a system in place that allowed this

collaboration to happen in a predictable manner.

The research process revealed that administrators are supportive of the Reading

Partners program in their building, and they are happy that students are getting one on

one time reading with caring and consistent adults. One of the ways this program could

be improved, however, is to increase the opportunities for collaboration between teachers

and the tutoring program. Ensuring that the on-site coordinators are strong

communicators who can foster this collaboration, and that there are appropriate systems

in place for assessment and communication will only help to improve this collaboration.

Future Research

As I began developing a research plan to answer the question *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*, I expected to learn about tangible things administrators did that promoted the success of the Reading Partners (2020) program in their building. However, the unexpected difficulty in finding participants for the study and the results of the interviews made me realize that one way administrators promote the success of the Reading Partners program is to ensure that there are people and systems in place to allow the program to be successful without heavy involvement from the administrators themselves. This is necessary because of the limitations of administrators' schedules.

I would be interested in examining some of the other systems that ensure the success of the Reading Partners program. One direction I would like to take would be to consider the program from the coordinator's perspective. It would be interesting to learn what factors the on-site coordinator considers that help or hinder the success of the program in the building. It would also be helpful to consider their thoughts about collaboration with school staff.

Another area of future research would be to take a more careful look at the training, curriculum, and assessments of the Reading Partners (2020) program. It could be beneficial to look at the program in light of Wasik's (1998a) research about essential elements of specific tutoring sessions, and look more carefully at tutor training. In light of data around race and achievement, it would also be worth considering how Reading

Partners addresses critical literacy and ways the program matches volunteers with schools.

Next Steps

This research project was a result of an area of interest for me into volunteer reading programs. When I considered the great need for students in our community to engage in reading experiences with adults in a one-on-one setting, I wondered if there was a way that volunteer reading tutors could provide valuable reading experiences for students who did not have access to at home reading experiences or sufficient instructional time at home. This capstone project gave me the opportunity to explore the research related to volunteer reading programs, and helped me understand the great deal of structure that must be in place for a program to be successful. This research will be shared in the Hamline University Digital Archives, and it may serve as a springboard for me to further explore the idea of volunteer reading programs and their impact on student achievement.

One possible direction for me would be to share this information with the Reading Partners organization (2020) and inquire about the possibility of looking more closely into their program to see if there are ways to encourage collaboration between teachers and the tutoring program. I would like the opportunity to explore the program a bit more in order to have a more complete picture of the program as a whole.

Personal Reflection

The capstone process was perhaps the most intimidating part of my work to earn my Master's of Literacy Education. I began the Master's program after spending almost ten years out of the classroom as a stay at home parent, and the task of a thesis paper

seemed daunting. Working through the process, there were several things that were incredibly helpful for me in completing the thesis paper.

First, it was important to find a capstone topic that I felt passionate about. As a former first grade teacher I was aware of the feeling of worry when my students fell behind in reading, so it was natural that early intervention in reading was an area of interest for me. Thinking of how to support students to reach the goal of reading closer to grade level was something I often thought about. Experiences prior to the start of the capstone process led me to think about volunteer reading programs, and reaching out to my professors and classmates helped me turn my interest into a thesis question that could support the research project.

Secondly, it was important to take the thesis process one step at a time. Thinking about designing my research plan was overwhelming before finishing my literature review. However, completing the literature review equipped me to design the interview protocol. It was helpful not to think too far ahead, but to work hard at the steps in front of me and trust the rest to come.

Finally, it was important to ask for help. Sometimes feeling stuck about a particular step of the process was hard but realizing it was okay to be stuck and OK to ask for help supported me in having the process go smoothly. Just like so many things in education, collaboration is always a helpful tool, and I encourage other students to embrace the opportunities to collaborate with classmates and professors.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a summary of the Capstone process and research design. After setting the premise for my capstone work, I looked at the results of my research as

they connected to the literature in Chapter Two. Specifically, connections were made to the way the Reading Partners (2020) seeks to reverse the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986) and offer effective intervention for struggling readers. Next, the Reading Partner's (2020) alignment to Wasik's (1998a) essential elements for tutoring programs was evaluated, specifically in the areas of the on-site coordinator, assessment, and collaboration with classroom teaching. The chapter also considered the results of the research as it related to major stakeholders mentioned in Chapter Two.

Next, there was a description of some of the major learnings as a result of the research. These learnings involved the role of the administrator in early support of a new program, the ways in which students most benefit from the Reading Partners (2020) model, and the surprising learning of the high importance of the on-site coordinator. The learnings around the on-site coordinator encouraged a consideration of coordinators in the Implications section, and the chapter also considered the implications of greater collaboration between the Reading Partners program and the school staff. Future areas of research were identified as well as possible next steps for investigating the Reading Partners program. Finally, the chapter ended with a personal reflection about the Capstone Journey for me.

One of the founding ideas that drove me to consider my capstone question was my belief in public education being, as Horace Mann stated, "The Great Equalizer." While there are many factors that make it difficult for students to have equal opportunities in education, I believe it is my duty as an educator to fervently fight for each student to have access to a strong education that will empower them for the future. Administrators share this goal, and implementing programs such as Reading Partners

(2020) is one way that community members, teachers and administrators alike can work toward this goal.

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APPENDIX A

Volunteer Reading Protocol

Book Box Volunteers

1. Grab clip board with class list and a pencil. You will be working with kids who have not been met with this week so far. If all of the students have met with an adult you can start at the top of the list.
2. Call a child's name, and ask them to bring their book box out to the table in the hallway with you
3. Ask the child to choose a book to read to you. They can choose any book they would like. If they are reading longer books, suggest that the child read a chapter aloud to you. Help as needed with hard words.
4. When they have finished the book, ask one-two short, simple questions about the book. Sample questions:
   - What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
   - Did you have a favorite character? Why?
   - Do you have any connections to this story?
   - Did you learn something new from this book?
   - Does the information from this story make you want to learn more about something?
5. When you are finished reading, ask students if there are any books they would like to switch out from their book box. They can return books to the correctly leveled tub and grab a book from the same tub or a level higher or lower if it seems like a better fit. If they pick a more challenging book you can ask them to do a quick preview to see if it feels like a good fit. Students should be able to independently read the books in their box without a lot of adult help.
6. You can walk the student back to class and choose the next student on the list. Be sure to record the date on the class list next to each student you work with.

Thank you so much!

APPENDIX B

Pre-Interview Survey

Pre-Interview Survey

Hello, My name is Heidi Frye, and I will be interviewing you on [date] to discuss the Reading Partners program in your building. In order to establish some basic information for the interview, please complete this online survey by [date].
This information will be collected and recorded along with the interview transcript, and the names of all people and schools will be changed to pseudonyms in order to protect your confidentiality. Responding to the questions below is voluntary, and you may leave any responses blank if necessary. Please contact me with any questions.

1. How long have you been the administrator/literacy leader at this building?

   0-5 years   6-10 years   10+ years

2. How long has your school been implementing the Reading Partners program (please circle)?

   5 years+   4 years   3 years   2 years   1 year

3. Is this the first volunteer based literacy program you have implemented/supported in your building (please circle)?

      Yes   No

4. How have the teachers responded to the implementation of the Reading Partners program? Please select a measure below:
   4- exceptionally well received by more than 75% of classroom teachers
   3- well received by 50% or more classroom teachers
   2- less than 50% of teachers supportive of program
   1- 25% or fewer classroom teachers are supportive of the program

5. Is there an onsite coordinator for the program?

      Yes   No

If yes, do you have regular meetings with this coordinator?

Yes   No

6. What percentage of elementary students participate in the program?
   5-10%
   11-25%
   26-50%
   50-75%
   75% +

7. How are students selected to participate? Please select all that apply:
   - Teacher recommendation
   - Classroom assessment data
   - Performance measures created by the Reading Partners organization
   - Parent request

8. Describe the logistics of the program:
   How many days each week and for how long do tutors and students meet?

   Is there a designated place in the building for tutoring to take place?

   Yes or No

   What is your level of involvement with the tutors themselves? Please select.

   4- Interact with tutors once a week or more
   3- Interact with tutors once a month
   2- Interact with tutors once a semester
   1- Interact with tutors once a school year
   0- Do not interact with tutors

9. Are there specific assessments that are used to track progress of students in the program?

   Yes   No

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Opening Paragraph:
Hello, My name is Heidi Frye, and I will be interviewing you today. The goal of this interview is to determine your unique administrator/leader perspective on the Reading Partners program in your building, namely your perceptions of how struggling readers react to it.
This interview will last about 45 minutes, and I will be recording our conversation for later transcription and review. When reporting my findings in my Capstone Thesis paper, names of all people and schools will be changed to pseudonyms in order to protect your confidentiality. This interview is voluntary and you have the option to stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions, to be used as guides in a semi-structured interview

- In the survey you completed prior to our meeting, you noted that this is the [first, or insert number] volunteer reading program you have implemented/supported in your building. Can you describe what led you to the decision to implement the Reading Partners program?

   You also reported that the teacher response has been [insert response]. How has this helped or hindered the implementation of the program in your building?

   What has been your response to the teachers' reactions to the Reading Partners program?

- In my review of the research for this capstone the primary goal of a Reading Partners program is to support struggling readers. I am interested in hearing you describe the degree to which the Reading Partners program in your building is meeting this goal.
      Prompts - How does this program benefit students?
      Teachers?
      Community volunteers?

      I heard you describe this benefit [insert the benefit].

In your survey you noted that your building [does/does not, insert response from survey] use assessments specifically designed to gain data from students who participate in the Reading Partners program.

[If answered yes to survey question 9] How do these assessments help you determine if your objectives for the program are being met?

Is there other evidence you use to determine if the goals have been met?

[If answered no to survey question 9] Can you talk about why you do not use assessments to track student progress as a result of the Reading Partners program?
Is there other evidence you use to determine if the goals have been met?

Struggling readers often receive a variety of interventions. Do you have a way to differentiate the progress students make as a result of the Reading Partners program vs other reading interventions?

- The central question for my capstone asks how principals and administrators describe their role in the success of volunteer reading programs. Can you spend some time describing your involvement in the program?

    You described participating in this way [insert involvement]. How do you think this particular thing enables the program to be successful?

    [If respondent answered yes to question 5 in survey] In your survey you responded that you have regular meetings with the onsite coordinator for the program. Can you describe these meetings?

- Implementing a new program can offer many challenges. Can you describe some of the barriers and/or enablers that have influenced the success of the Reading Partners implementation in your building?

    Have you had experience with other programs (volunteer or otherwise) aimed at increasing reading achievement that have not been successful? If so, what were some of the barriers to the success of these programs?

We are at the end of the interview is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

Letter to Administrators Sent via US Mail

Dear _____:

My name is Heidi Frye, and I am completing a Master's of Literacy program at Hamline University in St. Paul. My capstone thesis considers the role of elementary school principals in the Reading Partners volunteer reading program. My thesis question is, *How do administrators of elementary schools implementing volunteer reading tutoring programs describe their role in the program's success?*

I am writing this letter to request your participation in a voluntary 45 minute interview following a short 15 minute online survey about your experience with the Reading Partners program in your building. The interview will take place outside of your school building and be recorded for later transcription and review.

Your participation will allow me to gain a better understanding of the role Principals play in volunteer reading initiatives such as the Reading Partners program, and offer valuable insight into the unique role principals play in the success of these programs.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, please feel free to contact me at 651-269-7598 or hfrye01@hamline.edu. After hearing from you I will send you a short electronic survey and we will schedule the interview. Thank you for considering this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Heidi Frye
651-269-7598
hfrye01@hamline.edu

APPENDIX E

Email Sent to Administrators One Week After US Mail Letter

Dear [Principal name]:

My name is Heidi Frye, and I am writing an email to follow-up on a letter I sent to you last week. I am a student at Hamline University and I am working on my capstone thesis for my Masters of Literacy Education.

I am writing to request your participation in a 45 minute voluntary interview following a short, 15 minute online survey. The topic of the interview will be your role in the Reading Partners program in your building. This interview will take place outside of the school building and be recorded for later transcription and review.

If you would be willing to participate in this interview, please respond to this email or call me at 651-269-7598. Upon agreement to the interview process, I will send you a short online survey and then set up a time for the interview.

Thank you for considering this opportunity,

Heidi Frye

APPENDIX F

Phone Call Transcript, to be used for Administrator Calls, One Week After Email

Phone call to Principals as follow-up to email, script:

Hello, my name is Heidi Frye and I sent you a letter and email regarding my research project as part of the fulfillment for my Masters of Literacy at Hamline University. I am calling to follow-up on the letter and email to ask if you have considered your willingness to participate in a short online survey and a voluntary 45 minute interview. Would you be interested in participating?

[If respondent says no]: Thank you very much for your time, I hope you have a wonderful day.

[If respondent says yes]: Thank you! I will send you a letter of informed consent electronically that I will ask you to sign when we meet for the interview. In addition, I will send you an email with a link to the electronic survey to be completed before the interview. Would you like to set up a time right now, or is there a better time to schedule the interview?