NAVIGATING A CHANGE IN CURRICULUM

A CASE STUDY OF ONE SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO SUPPORT TEACHERS DURING THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW LITERACY PROGRAM

A Capstone Project

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education and Human Development

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by

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Abstract

Oak City Lower School administration recently transitioned to incorporating evidence-based literacy instruction in all classrooms. Teachers needed to change the ways in which they taught reading after years of teaching in a model that was not evidence-based. This study examines the professional learning experiences offered to teachers at Oak City to support teachers during this transition. It describes their perceptions of the effectiveness of these professional learning experiences and their views towards the implementation of these practices in their classrooms. A descriptive case study was used to collect and analyze data in two phases, incorporating data collection through document analysis, a survey, and interviews. Findings and recommendations are discussed as supported by the data from the study. The results of this study may be useful in determining the next steps for evidence-based literacy implementation and other future curriculum changes at Oak City School.

Keywords: literacy, professional learning, professional development, Science of Reading, curriculum implementation

Dedication

To my parents, my husband, and my children, thank you for always believing in me.

Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this capstone project without the help and support of Dr. Jen Pease. Her advice has been tantamount to the completion of this project.

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I am grateful for all the work and cooperation of the lower school faculty and administrators, who graciously participated in this study and supported my research.

Finally, I could not have done any of this without my husband, Danny Bostic, or my children, Isaac and Elias, who have never once complained about the long hours of work that I've poured into this project. Thank you for always believing in me and supporting my pursuit of this degree.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Every day, new innovations in education are being introduced. Thomas Guskey writes, "when innovations are implemented, change takes place in two directions. Individuals must adapt in order to implement new policies and practices. But the innovation must also be adapted to fit the unique characteristics of the context" (2021, pp. 56–57). Teachers are challenged to learn new strategies to meet the needs of students, but without professional learning support, teachers can struggle to implement these new practices.

One recent trend in education is the increased use of evidence-based literacy practices in schools across the country. The 2022 Nation's Report Card, the first following the COVID-19 pandemic, reports reading achievement across the country at levels equal to those measured in 1992, representing the undoing of thirty years of reading progress (The Nation's Report Card, 2022). Current research focused on the body of knowledge collectively known as the Science of Reading calls into question literacy methods that have been widely used by nearly every elementary school teacher for decades, leaving school leaders scrambling as they seek ways to help their teachers adjust their instruction to reflect these evidence-based literacy practices (Duffy et al., 2024). In response to this measured drop in reading achievement and the results of Science of Reading research, schools across the country are making changes to their reading programs (Schwartz, 2022b).

This chapter will outline the problem of practice driving this Capstone research: one school's effort to shift from whole language literacy instruction to explicit, evidence-based instruction and the professional learning provided to teachers to facilitate this shift. In the sections

that follow, I introduce the problem of practice and outline the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were utilized in this investigation. This chapter will close with an overview of the methods used to evaluate the study's research questions and the definition of key terms used throughout this report.

Problem of Practice

Schools across the country are adopting new literacy instructional methods based on findings from the body of work referred to as the Science of Reading (Schwartz, 2022b). Science of Reading research focuses on the five core areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Armbruster et al., 2001). In some ways, this collection of approaches contrasts with other commonly used methods in schools, such as the balanced literacy or whole language approaches (Duffy et al., 2024). Although there are many significant differences between these approaches to literacy instruction, one illustrative example of the differences can be seen through word recognition instruction. Balanced literacy incorporates the principles of the whole language approach of word recognition, which emphasizes understanding the meaning of text, rather than learning individual sounds and their associated spellings (Duffy et al., 2024; Kim, 2008; Stevens et al., 2021). Balanced literacy's approach to word recognition is based on repeated exposures and cues (e.g., context) to read words (Armbruster et al., 2001). Science of Reading research suggests systematically teaching the relationship between sounds and their spellings by emphasizing the decoding of each word into its individual sounds while de-emphasizing sight words (Armbruster et al., 2001).

Using a more systematic, explicit approach to word recognition instruction as opposed to the more implicit approach of balanced literacy represents a seismic shift in the field of reading

instruction, requiring teachers to adopt new practices and approaches to literacy. Most teachers across the country were taught how to teach reading using a balanced literacy or whole language model (Schwartz, 2022a). Through their teacher preparation programs, teachers practiced balanced literacy methods, such as memorizing sight words and choosing books based on a student's tested "instructional level" (Duffy et al., 2024; Schwartz, 2022a). Practices used in balanced literacy are based on the belief that "reading develops naturally when students are surrounded with a literacy-rich environment" (Duffy et al., 2024, p. 537), yet findings from the Science of Reading show that is not true for many students. In contrast to balanced literacy, Science of Reading research clearly shows learning to read is far from a naturally developing process. The human brain is not hardwired for reading like it is for spoken language and, therefore, students must directly be taught how to read (*The Orton-Gillingham Academy Principles of the Orton-Gillingham Approach*, 2022).

At Oak City Lower School[1], many teachers were not taught Science of Reading principles in their teacher education programs (Personal communication, 2024). Therefore, this shift in literacy instruction requires a major shift in the teaching practices for Oak City Lower School's teachers. This study investigates the methods that Oak City Lower School has employed to assist teachers in changing many of their long-standing literacy practices.

Implementing the Science of Reading at Oak City Lower School

This study examines the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction at Oak City Lower School. Oak City is an independent school in the southeastern United States. As an

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[1] pseudonym

independent school, it establishes its own curriculum and learning standards based on their alignment with its core mission statement (Educational Records Bureau, 2023). Teachers are not required to have a teaching certificate but are expected to have degrees in education (Personal communication, 2024). Oak City Lower School administrators, like many other schools around the country, have chosen to shift literacy instruction to the evidence-based practices presented in the Science of Reading research.

Oak City has three divisions: lower school (grades preK-4), middle school (grades 5-8), and upper school (grades 9-12). For the 2024-25 school year, the school has a student population of 261 lower school students, 224 middle school students, and 188 upper school students. The faculty is currently comprised of 123 teachers, including 18 homeroom teachers in the lower school. Each division is led by a principal, with the three principals operating in conjunction with one another, not as separate entities. Curriculum decisions are made by the principal of each division, but these decisions routinely include consultation with other members of the administration and school academic leaders.

In addition to having the freedom to select their own curriculum, independent schools are also responsible for providing professional learning support for their teachers. Teachers at independent schools can be diverse in their education and teaching background, making it challenging to meet the learning needs of all teachers (Educational Records Bureau, 2023). Many independent schools rely on outside curriculum providers or professional organizations to meet the learning needs of their teachers (Educational Records Bureau, 2023; National Association of Independent Schools, n.d.). As an independent school, Oak City Lower School administration

makes curricular decisions based on the needs of its students, while also aligning with the school's mission.

Public schools in the state where Oak City School is located were required to begin the shift to Science of Reading based instruction beginning in the 2022-23 school year; other neighboring states also followed suit (Schwartz, 2022a, 2024). Administrators and teachers at Oak City Lower School noted continual challenges helping all students learn to read following the COVID-19 pandemic and felt driven to make curriculum changes to literacy instruction. With the climate of literacy instruction at the forefront of local discussions, administrators at Oak City considered what the next step in literacy should be (Personal communication, 2024). Teachers from Oak City visited other independent schools who were also facing literacy challenges and had already made a shift in adopting and implementing curricular materials that utilized findings from the Science of Reading research (Personal communication, 2024).

In March 2023, administrators at Oak City Lower School decided to adopt several new methods of literacy instruction, including teaching phonics, building phonemic awareness, and providing intervention when students struggle to learn to read (Interview, January 31, 2025). After deciding to revise literacy instructional methods to those based on the Science of Reading, administrators at Oak City soon realized that taking on such a monumental shift in curriculum and instruction would require additional teacher support and training (Personal communication, 2024).

During the 2023-24 school year, teachers received Orton-Gillingham training through both an intensive workshop led by a certified reading trainer and individual coaching from the curriculum and instruction coach (Personal communication, 2024). Teachers continue to receive ongoing curriculum coaching in a variety of areas as they integrate additional literacy approaches for the

2024-25 school year (Interview, January 31, 2025). Implementation will continue for the next several years through the leadership of the principal and curriculum and instruction coach (Personal communication, 2024).

The transition to evidence-based literacy practices at Oak City Lower School requires teachers to change instructional practices they have been using for their entire teaching careers. Teachers have been asked to follow an explicit curriculum after years of having autonomy in how they taught reading and writing, what materials they selected, and how they monitored student progress. To make this significant change to their practice, teachers require effective professional learning experiences that involve ongoing, sustained support. This study seeks to document the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers at Oak City Lower School and the teachers' perception of these opportunities. The results of this study may be useful for other elementary school administrators who are onboarding curriculum initiatives and aiming to provide high quality, effective professional learning experiences for their teachers.

Research Questions

The goals of this study are to examine how teachers at Oak City Lower School have been supported in the shift in literacy instruction, describe teachers' perceptions of the professional learning opportunities they have received, and document the perceived impact of the professional learning on their teaching practices. To meet these goals, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills?

2. How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

Theoretical Framework

The research questions guiding this Capstone seek to identify how teachers' learning needs have been addressed during the transition to new literacy teaching methods. Schools are designed to meet the learning needs of students, but teachers have learning needs, too. If schools are to change and evolve over time, teachers' learning should be prioritized along with students' needs. Yet, the learning needs of adults are different than those of young learners. This study draws on two distinct, but interrelated, theories related to teacher learning and teacher change. First, Adult Learning Theory suggests that adults have different learning needs than children and adolescents (Knowles et al., 2015). Secondly, Teacher Change Theory specifically addresses the needs of teachers as learners seeking to facilitate change within classrooms (Guskey, 1985). The following sections draw connections between Adult Learning Theory, Teacher Change Theory, and the learning needs of teachers during a curriculum change.

Knowles' Adult Learning Theory

Knowles et al. (2015) have written extensively about the concept of andragogy, or "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 40). The theory proposes that adults have a specific set of learning needs that are different than those of elementary and secondary students. Facilitators of adult learning experiences need to help adult learners understand why new knowledge is worth integrating into their existing knowledge (Holyoke & Larson, 2009; Knowles et al., 2015). Knowles et al. (2015) posit that teaching for adults should be tailored to the needs of the adult learner, allowing the adults to be active participants in shaping their own learning. These suggestions reflect the

definition of professional learning, described by Guskey (2021) as an active learning process in which teachers are involved in determining the trajectory of the learning activities. Adults are more likely to learn new skills when they are involved in the development of their own learning (Knowles et al., 2015).

Additionally, Adult Learning Theory proposes that adults must have a motivation and readiness to learn if new skills are to be acquired (Holyoke & Larson, 2009; Knowles et al., 2015). As with all learners, adults build new knowledge on a foundation of previous knowledge (Knowles et al., 2015). Knowles et al. (2015) suggest these learning needs should be addressed when planning a professional learning experience for teachers.

Prior to the presentation of a new approach to classroom instruction such as the one at the center of this study, Adult Learning Theory suggests that teachers should be prepared and primed to learn (Knowles et al., 2015). This may involve school administrators intentionally fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous learning (Hadar & Brody, 2010; Knowles et al., 2015). By justifying the need for change, administrators can increase motivation to adopt a new practice (Clausen et al., 2009; Knowles et al., 2015). Administrators increase the likelihood of success when addressing the learning needs of their teachers during the development of a professional learning opportunity (Holyoke & Larson, 2009).

Knowles et al. (2015) describe four influential characteristics of adult learners, including the strong impact of prior experiences, the need to know why learning is necessary, a required readiness to learn, and a clear motivation to learn. The impact of prior experiences and the need for a clear motivation to learn are also reflected in Teacher Change Theory described below.

Teacher Change Theory and Professional Learning

Several researchers have proposed models illustrating the process of teacher and educational change (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Fullan, 2015; Guskey, 1985). Guskey (1985) argues that the purpose of teacher professional learning is to change a teacher's beliefs, practices, and student learning outcomes. He further articulates the process of teacher change in the form of Teacher Change Theory, describing a linear sequence by which teachers adopt new practices, and then, after noting a change in student learning outcomes, change their beliefs (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Teacher Change Model
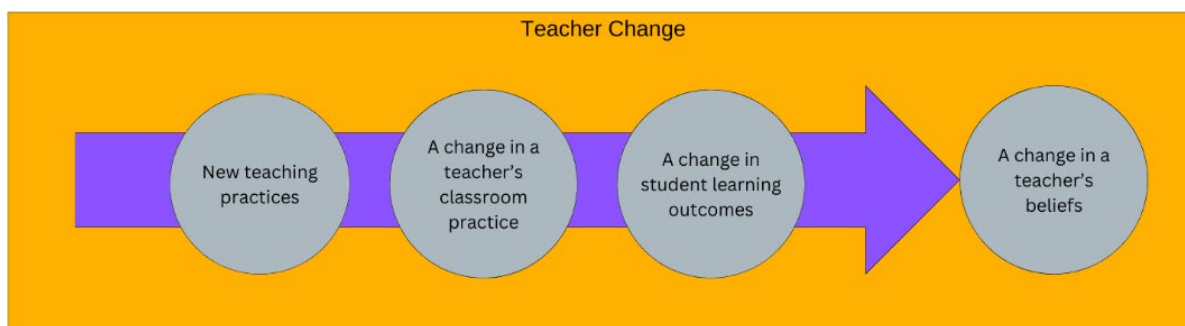
adapted from Guskey, T.R. (1985, April). Staff development and teacher change. *Educational Leadership, 42*(7), 58-60.

This is especially true for teachers because administrators can often introduce the expectation of new practices. Guskey (1985) posits that if a teacher does not perceive positive student outcomes from the integration of a new practice, the teacher's beliefs will remain the same. Then, when given freedom to choose instructional practices for their classroom, the teacher will return to their previous practices, rather than integrating the newly presented practices.

Therefore, for lasting change to take place, teachers must observe a positive impact on student outcomes in their classroom.

Once teachers see results with improved student outcomes, eventually the teachers' beliefs are modified to reflect the change in behavior (Guskey, 1985). This is supported by Knowles et al. (2015) as they propose that teachers need motivation to learn new ideas. The motivation for teachers is the desire to improve student learning outcomes. Once positive student outcomes are observed, a teacher's beliefs can be changed.

Guskey (1985) proposes that teacher change happens when a teacher is able to move through the stages of change, first by practicing new skills in the classroom and then by observing improved student outcomes. Within this framework, teachers need to receive prolonged support as they work toward independently integrating new practices within the classroom. Guskey (1985) and Knowles et al. (2015) both suggest that a teacher needs to build on previous knowledge and receive support while learning a new skill to integrate within their classroom. Guskey (1985) argues that only when teachers observe improved student outcomes can the change become part of a teacher's beliefs.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) further expand on Guskey's Teacher Change Theory by proposing that teacher change is non-linear, with teachers moving back and forth through processes of reflection and enactment. Like Guskey (1985) and Knowles et al. (2015), Clarke and Hollingsworth note that professional learning should foster "teachers as active learners shaping their professional growth through reflective participation in professional development programs and in practice" (2002, p. 948). Unlike Guskey (1985), the Teacher Change Theory presented by

Clark and Hollingsworth (2002) considers a change environment, with multi-directional pathways for reflection and enactment through the change process.

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the Teacher Change Theory presented by Guskey (1985). The linear design, outlining the introduction of new teaching practices, changes in a teacher's classroom practices, changes in student learning outcomes, and eventually change in a teacher's beliefs, effectively captures the focus of the current study. Teachers at Oak City are beginning the transition to new literacy practices by first being presented with the new practices (through professional development), followed by the opportunity to try the new practices in their classroom. Oak City administrators have selected professional development and professional learning aimed at changing teachers' practices to improve student learning outcomes. Therefore, Guskey's (1985) model aligns more closely with the current study than Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) model, which focuses more on a change in beliefs and attitudes and de-emphasizes the change in classroom practices.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is influenced by Adult Learning Theory (Knowles et al., 2015) and Teacher Change Theory (Guskey, 1985), as well a variety of studies on effective professional development (Arya & Roberts, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Duffy et al., 2024). Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework Diagram
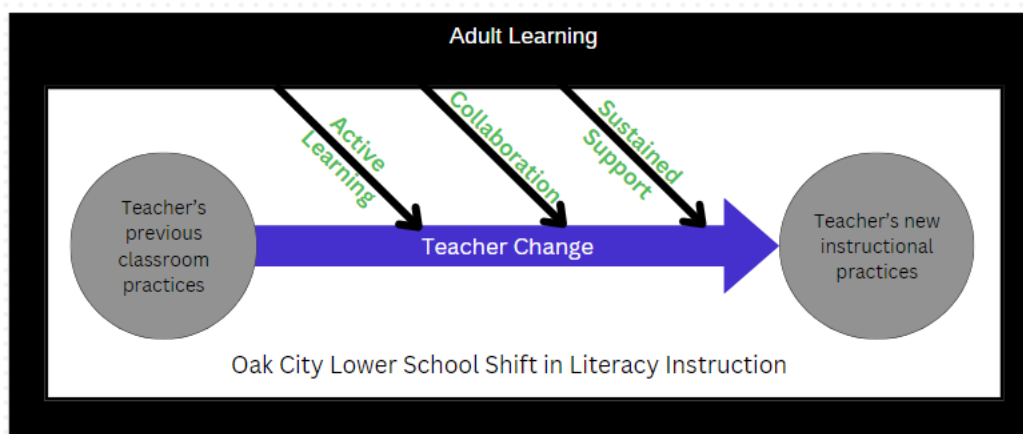
The large outer black box illustrates the broader framework of andragogy, or adult learning (Knowles et al., 2015). Adult learning and the framework of Knowles et al. (2015) provide the lens through which administrators at Oak City Lower School should decide how to meet the learning needs of their teachers as adult learners. The inner white box illustrates the specific context for this study: the Oak City Lower School shift in literacy instruction. It is situated within the concept of andragogy as a specific type of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2015).

The purple arrow illustrates the necessary shift in practice for teachers as they move from their initial classroom practices to the desired classroom practices. This corresponds to the Teacher Change Theory illustrated above in Figure 1. Professional learning (PL) and professional development (PD) can help to facilitate the teacher change process if it has the desired inputs. Active learning (Clausen et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Duffy et al., 2024; Ehlert & Souvignier, 2023), collaborative (Sun et al., 2013; Van Garderen et al., 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2017), and sustained over time (Sailors & Price, 2015) are identified as necessary inputs for teacher

change. Knowles et al. (2015) supports this in their description of the andragogical process for teaching, which includes active, responsive, and contextual consideration when designing professional learning for adults. This is echoed in teacher change literature and reflected in the conceptual framework above (Guskey, 1985).

Influence of Theory on Practice

The work of Knowles et al. (2015) and Guskey (1985) highlight the processes of teacher change and adult learning. Professional learning experiences that are active, collaborative, and sustained over time can lead to teacher change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 1985; Knowles et al., 2015). Teachers are more likely to change their practices to improve student outcomes when professional learning experiences are intentionally planned and implemented. Administrators should consider that professional learning opportunities using research-based practices are more likely to result in lasting teacher change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). During a curriculum transition, such as the one at the focus of this study, teachers benefit from sustained support throughout the steps of teacher change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Professional learning opportunities for teachers at Oak City Lower School should be designed with consideration of their pre-existing literacy knowledge. This major shift will likely take teachers several years of seeing improved student outcomes before their beliefs are changed (Guskey, 1985), so the teachers will likely continue to need support as they onboard these new practices in their classrooms for several more years to come.

Positionality as a Researcher

This study focuses on effectively helping teachers develop new instructional skills during the onboarding of a new curriculum. The theories described above, combined with my experience in education, have shaped my approach to supporting teachers. I believe that teachers must be both instructors and students, constantly learning and growing. Teachers must be able to adapt and change to meet the needs of their students (Guskey, 2021). As with any learner, teachers need to build new knowledge within the framework of their prior knowledge (Knowles et al., 2015). Teacher educators are tasked with ensuring teachers have the scaffolding and support to move from their current state to the desired state of knowledge.

Over my 22 years of working in schools, I have held a variety of positions that have shaped my views of teacher education. I have served as a classroom science teacher for middle and high school students in both public and private schools. Additionally, I have served in the roles of department chair, grade level chair, teacher mentor, mentor coordinator, director of academics, and middle school principal. I am currently both a teacher and administrator at Oak City School, where I have been employed for nearly 10 years. Though I do not directly work in the lower school, I have acquaintances and friends within the lower school faculty and staff. The views that I have on supporting teachers are directly shaped by the experiences and perspectives that I share from the student, mentor, teacher, and administrator roles.

As a teacher, I have experienced a wide range of professional learning experiences – some that worked well and many that did not work well. The implementation of a new curriculum can quickly fail if teachers' learning needs are not considered. Teachers will not implement a change if they fail to understand the reason for the proposed transition; they must have the motivation to

change (Knowles et al., 2015) which can be provided by improved student learning outcomes (Guskey, 1985). Teachers make the difference in the classroom each day. Our students' successes are only possible when we have equipped our teachers to assist students in meeting their learning goals. I am passionate about helping teachers know how to best meet the needs of their learners and empowering them to implement new strategies as the needs of their students evolve over time. While my passion is a strength that I bring to the study, it may also influence my interpretations of the data.

My positionality as a researcher is shaped by my experiences both as an educator and as a student. I have completed two programs in science education and am currently completing a deeper study into the field of education through the Doctor of Education program in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Virginia. The experiences I have had as a post-secondary student in the education field have informed many of the decisions that I make as a teacher, administrator, and researcher. The action research I have conducted through my programs gives me the researcher lens through which to study education problems in my current context.

The Current Study

This capstone case study was conducted in two phases to address the research questions. Each phase allowed me to explore the impact of this instructional shift as well as the related PL and PD from the lens of the administration and faculty.

Phase I: Administrator Insights

Phase I began with a request of administrators to provide documents that reflect PL for teachers during the literacy instruction transition. These documents included presentations,

coaching session notes, division meeting agendas, and other communication that provided direction for teachers. Documents were reviewed for the purpose of answering RQ1: What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills? Following the document review, administrators were interviewed to learn about the professional learning opportunities provided to teachers, the structure of the learning opportunities and why they were selected for the literacy transition (Appendix A). Documents and interview data were then triangulated to confirm the findings and further inform the answer to RQ1 (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

Throughout Phase I, reflective memos were used to document themes that emerged during data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Reflexive analysis was performed to ensure alignment of the current study within the conceptual framework described above before beginning Phase II (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Phase II: Teacher Perceptions

Phase II built on the findings from Phase I to explore teachers' experiences with the PL opportunities. Data analysis from administrator interviews in Phase I led to the refinement of survey items for teachers, ensuring that each type of professional learning opportunity was addressed in the survey (Appendix B). All Oak City Lower School homeroom teachers were invited to participate in the survey (Appendix C). Survey data were sorted and coded. Findings from the survey led to further development of the teacher interview protocol (Appendix D).

Purposeful sampling was used to select a cross-section of teachers for interviews. One teacher from each grade (K, 1, 2, 3, and 4) was selected, with a range of teaching experience

represented. During interviews, teachers were prompted to expand on their perceptions of the professional learning opportunities and how those experiences have impacted their literacy practices. These findings were then coded and triangulated with the survey and document review data. Reflective memos outlined and documented emerging themes and the addition of new codes. These data from Phase II were reviewed to answer RQ2: How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a framework and design to investigate the literacy instruction transition at Oak City Lower School. Chapter 3 provides additional detail regarding the study's methods. Prior to that, Chapter 2 illuminates the study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks, Adult Learning Theory and Teacher Change Theory, and their relationships to teachers' professional learning, specifically when onboarding new curricular initiatives. Chapter 4 will present the findings from the study. This report concludes in Chapter 5 with recommendations for Oak City School administrators.

Definitions of Key Terms

Within the context of this study, the following definitions are used:

Balanced literacy: An approach for teaching reading which includes guided reading with leveled books. A whole language approach is used to emphasize sight words and word recognition through a variety of decoding strategies, including using pictures and context (Schwartz, 2022a).

Effective teacher professional learning: Effective professional learning opportunities for teachers result in a change in teaching practice leading to improved student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Evidence-based literacy practices: Teaching techniques based on findings from the body of knowledge collectively known as the Science of Reading. These strategies focus on a variety of language development skills, including reading, writing, spelling and handwriting (Duffy et al., 2024; *Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction*, n.d.).

Professional development: Professional development is characterized by teachers receiving information and training directly from a teacher educator (Bon & Inpin, 2024). This can be in the form of a workshop or presentation but is usually restricted to reserved professional development time; support does not typically continue after that point in time.

Professional learning: Professional learning is an active learning process where teachers are involved in determining the trajectory of the activities of support (Guskey, 2021). Coaching, mentoring, and collaborative communities are generally professional learning activities and continue to provide ongoing support over a period of time, rather than merely a singular event (Guskey, 2021).

Science of Reading: In this capstone proposal, the term Science of Reading (capitalized) refers to the body of research conducted over the course of 40 years that promotes evidence-based reading techniques (Duffy et al., 2024).

Structured literacy: An approach for teaching reading that emphasizes phonics instruction prior to guided reading. The emphasis is on developing students' vocabulary and background knowledge before introducing texts that apply their newly developed knowledge (Schwartz, 2022a).

Teacher educator: An individual who facilitates learning for teachers; examples include school administrators, curriculum coaches, workshop instructors, and university professors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Oak City Lower School leaders have embraced Science of Reading research to transform literacy instruction. Teachers require effective professional learning experiences that involve ongoing, sustained support to make this significant change to their practice. This study investigates how teachers can be supported during a change in their instructional practices and seeks to address the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills?

- **RQ2:** How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

This literature review builds upon the frameworks of Chapter 1 by describing methods for supporting teachers during a curriculum change. Teacher Change Theory is presented as a lens that can be applied when faculty must adopt new literacy practices after using a different method for many years. The literature review will also present research on professional development and professional learning within the specific context of a curriculum change that requires teachers to apply new instructional practices.

Teacher Change

Teacher Change Theory applies to the current case study as it provides a description of the process by which teachers change their practice (Guskey, 1985). Chapter 1 described the basis of Teacher Change Theory through both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Helping teachers

change their practices requires an understanding of the process by which they navigate change. Guskey (1985) describes teacher change as a process that takes time, with teachers only shifting their ideas and beliefs once they see students positively impacted by the new practices.

A significant change in curriculum and instruction requires intentional support and training of teachers as they navigate the teacher change sequence. Teacher beliefs can be difficult to change and teacher change theory suggests that teachers move through the stages of change at an individualized pace as a result of student response to the implemented changes; therefore, it can take a great deal of time for teachers to make a change in practice (Guskey, 1985).

Teachers as Adult Learners

Adult Learning Theory posits that teachers learn differently than their students (Knowles et al., 2015). Adults require a clear reason for why a new skill should be learned and they need to actively participate in implementing those new skills (Knowles et al., 2015). An appropriate professional learning model designed with Adult Learning Theory in mind can result in a successful transition to a new curriculum and a change in teacher beliefs (Arya & Roberts, 2023; Duffy et al., 2024). However, when teachers do not receive effective support, the change is unlikely to be successfully implemented (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Coaching, modeling and mentoring are examples of professional learning for teachers (Arya & Roberts, 2023; Sailors & Price, 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2017) and curriculum leaders must consider which of these options, or others, best meet the teachers' needs within their context. Oak City Lower School leaders have offered a variety of professional learning opportunities to support teachers during the curriculum shift to evidence-based literacy practices. The following section outlines key themes from research related

to meeting teachers' learning needs during a period of instructional change such as the one under investigation at Oak City Lower School.

Professional Development and Professional Learning

Administrators can provide teachers with the support they need through professional development (PD) or professional learning (PL). These two terms, PD and PL, are often used interchangeably as methods of facilitating teacher change, yet there are subtle and important differences between these two concepts. Professional development is characterized by time-limited events and activities with the objective of sharing knowledge with teachers. PD often takes the form of lectures, workshops, or general instruction designed to meet the needs of a broad group of teachers as learners (Bon & Inpin, 2024). Professional learning, on the other hand, is typically customized for the learners and tailored to the individual learning needs of each participating teacher (Bon & Inpin, 2024). These professional learning experiences may not take place in a single day but often take place over a longer period of time, such as coaching, mentoring, and collaborative learning groups.

Professional learning and professional development are utilized to promote teacher learning. Some models combine both initial PD and subsequent, ongoing PL to support a change in participants' practices (Sailors & Price, 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2017), although with varying results. Bon and Inpin (2024) conducted a case study of 15 English teachers at two schools in Thailand. Teachers at the schools received both professional development through a workshop and collaboration in professional learning communities as they onboarded new technology into their curriculum. Through semi-structured interviews, teachers identified the PL experiences as more effective at facilitating a change in practice rather than PD alone (Bon & Inpin, 2024). The schools

provided both pre-service and in-service training by trainers situated within the school context. Teachers reported that the PD did not provide enough example lessons specific to their needs as English teachers (Bon & Inpin, 2024). Interview responses suggest that they did not have enough time for hands-on practice. Teachers identified the PLCs as effective in facilitating change because they were situated within their specific teaching context and allowed them to practice with the tools that were best tailored to their classrooms (Bon & Inpin, 2024). While this study is limited in terms of scope and location, the findings echo professional development characteristics described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) that effective PD includes sustained professional learning that is hands-on and content-specific.

While both PD and PL provide a means of sharing information with teachers, research suggests that PL may be more effective for advancing long-term teacher change than professional development alone (Bon & Inpin, 2024). The following sections outline specific characteristics of effective PL experiences that lead to teacher change.

Characteristics of Effective Professional Learning

Effective PL opportunities assist teachers in implementing new curricular and instructional approaches. Desimone (2009) describes five "critical features" of effective PL experiences: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (p. 183). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) further explored the work of Desimone in *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. This report from The Learning Policy Institute was developed to assist teacher educators in designing effective learning experiences that guide teachers through the teacher change process. They identify effective learning opportunities for teachers as having the following characteristics:

content-focused, active, collaborative, sustained over time and include modeling, coaching, and constructive feedback (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. v-vi).

These two sources indicate some overlap of important characteristics of PL experiences: content-focused, active, collaborative (or coherence) and sustained over time. The following sub-sections highlight a collection of four characteristics described by both Desimone (2009) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) as key traits of PL in an educational context: active, collaborative, sustained over time, and collective participation. Each of these characteristics align with the context of the current study, as described below.

Active. Desimone (2009) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identify effective professional learning experiences as active when teachers are able to practice new teaching strategies. Beni et al. (2022) studied the implementation of a new physical education teaching model. Teachers were active participants in the study experimenting with new teaching practices, with two years to "'tinker and play'" in their own classes while working alongside other PE teachers in a Community of Practice (Beni et al., 2022, p. 575). Interviews and observation data studied the perceptions of teacher participants. Alongside collaboration and modeling, the opportunity for teachers to experiment during the long-term workshop was identified as a characteristic that contributed to the successful implementation the new teaching model (Beni et al., 2022). The study was small, involving only 10 teachers, but was longitudinal in nature. It is one of multiple studies suggesting that active PL opportunities are effective at facilitating change (e.g., Sailors & Price, 2015; Sindberg, 2016).

Collaborative. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) describe collaborative learning opportunities as those that include space and time for teachers to share ideas with one another.

Doppelt et al. (2009) studied the impact of active, collaborative, and content-based PD workshops on teacher practice during a science curriculum change in an urban school district. The workshops were offered over a two-year period during the transition to a new design-based science unit. Teachers in the experimental cohort (n=13) attended five half-day workshops throughout the period, designed to provide an active learning environment for teachers. The control group (n=5) did not implement the curricular changes, while a second experimental cohort (n=5) implemented changes without attending the workshops.

At the workshops, teachers in the experimental group actively participated as if they were the students in their classroom. They collaborated with one another to provide feedback and collectively reflected on their teaching practices. Two workshops were offered prior to the curriculum change and two workshops were offered during the period of curriculum implementation. The final workshop was specifically designed to facilitate collaborative reflection on the integration of the new science unit into their teaching practice (Doppelt et al., 2009).

The study found a positive impact on student achievement of teachers attending the PD over those that did not based on pre- and post-assessment data (Doppelt et al., 2009). Additionally, workshop videos and classroom observations supported the conclusion that teachers had made a change to their teaching practices as a direct result of the workshops, often implementing the skills they had practiced when attending the workshops (Doppelt et al., 2009). While this study supports the findings that active and collaborative PL experiences can be effective at facilitating teacher change, there are some limitations. First, teachers self-selected into the program, indicating those who participated were already interested and willing to adopt the new curriculum changes; these study results may not be transferable to a setting where teachers are required to make a change.

Second, the study only looked at a change to half the science curriculum within a single grade, so integration of the new content was minor. Despite these limitations, the study highlights the important positive impacts that PL opportunities may have during curricular changes, particularly if they are active, collaborative, and sustained over time.

Sustained. Another identified characteristic of effective PL experiences includes the integration of ongoing, sustained support for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) describe sustained support as providing "teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice" (p. vi). The QUEST (Quality Elementary Science Teaching) program in Missouri is designed to provide a sustained system of support for elementary teachers following two weeks of summer PD (Van Garderen et al., 2012). Working with faculty at the University of Missouri, teachers receive one week of active learning and a second week using modeling, observation, and collaboration (Van Garderen et al., 2012). During the school year, teachers work with instructional coaches once a week to continue to improve their implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the 5E lesson model in science instruction (Van Garderen et al., 2012).

This case study documents 36 teachers' experiences with the QUEST program throughout a single school year. The data collected are all qualitative in nature, with vignettes from single participants and some anecdotal observations from the investigators. They found that the design of the program, with two weeks of in-person summer workshops followed by weekly coaching appointments, was positively impactful in improving the confidence of elementary teachers in their science content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and how to best serve students with

special needs (Van Garderen et al., 2012).

This model of PL (a workshop followed by instructional coaching) is reflective of the findings previously mentioned as an effective method for teacher instruction (Bon & Inpin, 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2021). The initial workshop provided training for teachers regarding the instructional model of UDL and the curriculum structure of 5E lesson plans. The sustained support that followed was perhaps the most impactful as teachers practiced their new skills in their own contexts and received individual feedback from instructional coaches (Van Garderen et al., 2012). While generalizability of the study is limited by size and data constraints, it does provide further evidence that coaching and sustained support may be key when implementing a new curriculum.

The importance of Collective Participation

PL experiences are most likely to result in teacher change when all members of the school participate in a collective learning experience together (Clausen et al., 2009; Johnson & Fargo, 2010). Clausen et al. (2009) conducted a small case study in Canada to investigate the effects of PL communities as a replacement for traditional professional development workshops (Clausen et al., 2009). In the study, 4 teachers and 1 principal at a Canadian elementary school were interviewed twice during the year to track the impact of professional learning communities (PLCs) to foster teacher change. Researchers found that when school administration aligns schoolwide expectations with the learning community model, learning communities can be an effective tool for furthering teacher change (Clausen et al., 2009). Participants self-reported on the changes they made to their practice. The greatest perceived values to support that change came from the active learning, a collaborative environment, and alignment with the principal's vision for the school

(Clausen et al., 2009). These findings align with the recommendations from Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), specifically for active learning and collaboration.

While this study affirms the best practices recommended by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), this study is limited in size and context. Given the small learning community and sample group, these findings may not be generalizable to a larger setting. However, a key takeaway from the study is that the principal's support and alignment of expectations is paramount to the success of PLCs. The findings suggest administrators can provide support by aligning expectations for learning communities with schoolwide goals and establishing set times for the learning communities to meet during the school day (Clausen et al., 2009). This collective participation of the full faculty is identified by Desimone (2009) as a critical component to PL.

Johnson and Fargo (2010) investigated the impacts of "transformative professional development" on teacher change among science faculty (p. 9). Science teachers (n=16) from two urban middle schools attended science workshops over the course of two school years. The workshops were designed to be collaborative, sustained over time, and involved all the science teachers at participating schools. The 2-year longitudinal study compared the two participating schools with two counterpart schools in the same district. Observation data suggested participating teachers exhibited a noticeable positive change in lesson design and implementation of the lesson (Johnson & Fargo, 2010). Having all science teachers participate in the PD provided an opportunity for teachers to conduct peer observations of one another (Johnson & Fargo, 2010). These mutual peer observations increased collaboration between faculty at the same school, as well as with teachers at other participating schools. The researchers also found that teacher change takes time, as students of participating teachers showed greater achievement gains after

two years of their teachers' participation than after just one year. This supports the previously

discussed recommendation that professional development should be sustained over time to

positively impact teacher change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). The findings

reflect the Teacher Change Model described by Guskey (1985) whereas a change in practice can

lead to a change in teacher beliefs if positive student outcomes are observed.

Promoting Teacher Change through Professional Learning

Teacher change is supported when PL experiences are thoughtfully designed and

incorporate research-based practices, such as those identified above (hands-on, sustained, and

content-specific). Ehlert and Souvignier (2023) compared teachers' perceived (felt) needs for

learning support with the characteristics identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) as effective.

Researchers conducted individual interviews with 43 primary school teachers in Germany (Ehlert &

Souvignier, 2023). Teachers were asked to identify their felt learning needs for integrating a new

system of reading intervention. Teachers reported that they needed PL that aligns with their

immediate work, provides the opportunity to actively practice, and sustains support over time

(Ehlert & Souvignier, 2023).

One interesting finding that emerged from their research is that teachers did not want

increased time in PD but did want *sustained support over time* in the form of a contact or coach

that could serve as an ongoing resource (Ehlert & Souvignier, 2023). This finding aligns with the

conceptual framework for this capstone project (outlined in Chapter 1) and the work of Guskey

(1985) that teacher change takes time. While Ehlert & Souvignier (2023) recommended increasing

time for PD, other sources suggest a structure of support over time in the form of a coach may be

more effective than additional hours in PD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sailors & Price, 2015;

Van Garderen et al., 2012). The findings of Ehlert & Souvignier (2023) illustrate a key difference between PD and PL. In contrast to PD offered at a single point in time, such as a workshop or conference, PL can be more beneficial for teachers because it allows time for teachers to change and develop (Guskey, 1985; Sailors & Price, 2015). The following section will explore models of PL opportunities that include the characteristics identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) as effective at facilitating teacher change.

Models of Professional Learning

Each of the studies mentioned above describe characteristics of PL opportunities that have been found to influence teacher change, such as collaborative, active, sustained, and collective. The following section will outline additional studies that have investigated different types of professional learning that integrate these characteristics and their impact on teacher change (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Chung, 2023; Hadar & Brody, 2010; Sailors & Price, 2015; Sun et al., 2013; Yu & Chao, 2023).

Coaching. Instructional coaching is an identified method of effectively facilitating teacher change. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) describe coaching and expert support as "the sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on teachers' individual needs" (p. vi). Many formats of coaching exist, but most include the processes of observation and feedback. The Support for the Improvement of Practices through Intensive Coaching (SIPIC) model provides teachers with a workshop followed by sustained coaching support. SIPIC combined PL and PD, as teachers attended a workshop to learn methods of explicit reading instruction and were provided coaching throughout the year to support the implementation of the reading instruction model (Sailors & Price, 2015). Instructors of the reading workshop were trained in Teacher Change

Theory (Guskey, 1985) and encouraged to incorporate its insights when developing the program for teachers (Sailors & Price, 2015).

One hundred and twenty teachers in Texas participated in the control and experimental groups. Teachers of 2nd-8th grades were included, representing a varying amount of experience, certifications, and degree levels (Sailors & Price, 2015). The study investigated the effects of SIPIC on improving instructional teachers' reading comprehension practices through the use of explicit reading instruction. The results showed that there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups (Sailors & Price, 2015). Students whose teachers participated in the SIPIC program demonstrated a 13.8 point gain in reading achievement, as compared to the control group results of an 8.69 point gain (Sailors & Price, 2015). Teachers of the control group attended the workshop but did not receive sustained support with instructional coaching (Sailors & Price, 2015). These findings support the value of long-term, sustained support of teachers during new curriculum and instruction implementation, confirming the findings of studies mentioned above (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009; Van Garderen et al., 2012).

A limitation of the SIPIC program is that participation was voluntary, so participants had a demonstrated interest in receiving coaching and changing practice. The program did not involve the entire faculty, so it may be difficult to draw comparisons between the Sailors & Price (2015) study and other studies. However, the model described in this study, combining PD and PL to help teachers develop literacy instructional practices, shows promise as an effective way to support teachers through the teacher change process.

Campbell and Malkus (2011) conducted a study investigating the impact of instructional coaching on student achievement. Three cohorts participated in a three-year longitudinal study

with different coaching treatments. One cohort had instructional math coaches that were in place at the school for three years, one cohort had instructional math coaches in place for one year, and the control cohort did not have instructional math coaches at the school. Campbell and Malkus (2011) found that instructional math coaching had a positive impact on student achievement in math over the period of the three year study. Schools with instructional coaches in place for the full three years saw the greatest impact. This finding supports the conclusion that it takes time for coaching to be effective, as the instructional coach needs time to adjust to the needs of the teachers within the unique context of the school (Campbell & Malkus, 2011). The Campbell and Malkus (2011) study is limited in that it was only conducted in a single state (Virginia) using a single achievement test (Virginia Standards of Learning assessment in math).

Modeling. Modeling is a strategy identified as an effective method of facilitating teacher change and is often used in conjunction with other forms of professional learning, such as workshops and coaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; McMahon-Morin et al., 2023). Modeling can take different forms, from recorded example lessons to an instructional coach demonstrating how to incorporate a new technique (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). McMahon et al. (2023) studied the impact of in-class modeling as a primary delivery mode for professional learning. Kindergarten and pre-Kindergarten teachers participated in the study. They first received a half-day workshop on interactive book reading (IBR). Then, a trainer modeled IBR strategies in the teacher's classroom three times a week for 30 minutes over the course of 10 weeks during the school year. In addition to observing in-class modeling of IBR strategies in their classes, teachers participated in discussions with the trainer, planning workshops, and an online Community of Practice for sharing IBR lessons developed by participants (McMahon-Morin et al., 2023). Of the participating teachers

responding to the end-of-study survey, 86% of teachers stated that they changed their literacy

teaching practices as a result of the in-class modeling (McMahon-Morin et al., 2023). Furthermore,

93% reported that they planned to make further changes to their teaching practice (McMahon-

Morin et al., 2023).

It is important to note that typically, modeling is not used as a standalone method and this

study is no exception (McMahon-Morin et al., 2023). While the study was designed to only

investigate the impact of in-class modeling as a method of professional learning, it was used in

conjunction with other methods (workshop and a collaborative learning group). Additionally, not all

participating teachers responded to the final survey, so indications of teacher change may be

incomplete. However, the findings of this study suggest that modeling is a professional learning

method that has the potential to facilitate teacher change.

Collaborative Learning Groups. Collaboration has been identified as an important aspect

of supporting teacher change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Doppelt et al., 2009). Collaboration

can be a form of professional learning through collaborative learning groups. Collaborative learning

groups have been identified as an effective way to meet teachers' ongoing professional learning

needs within the unique context of each school (Vangrieken et al., 2017). In a literature review of 40

studies, two prominent systems of teacher communities were studied by Vangrieken et al. (2017):

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CoPs). PLCs are generally

facilitated by school leaders with a formal structure, while CoPs are generally facilitated by their

members and are "guided through their development" (Easton, 2008, p. 49). Both types have been

recognized as highly valuable in supporting professional learning if they have strong leadership,

positive interpersonal dynamics, and a mutual trust and respect among members (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

   Professional Learning Communities. Collaborative learning groups can effectively facilitate teacher change. A long-term, investigation of the impact of PLCs on teacher change indicated the importance of PLCs in providing the emotional support teachers often require during the process of implementing a new curriculum (Sindberg, 2016). Seven music teachers participated in a PLC for the purpose of onboarding a new method of music instruction, Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP). The process of making a significant change in teacher practice evoked an emotional response from teacher participants because they were forced to challenge their long-held beliefs on how to prioritize music instruction (Sindberg, 2016). The study found that the PLC mitigated those emotional challenges by providing the participants with a team support approach. The PLC members collaborated on ways they implemented the new instructional method and supported one another in their efforts. This study, though small in scope with a single school participating, supports the suggestions of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) that PL should be active and collaborative. The PLC was not a stand-alone PL opportunity but was designed to support the implementation of new teaching methods following workshops and classes in which the design and purpose of CMP was initially presented. The ongoing support provided through the PLC increased the likelihood that teachers made a change to their practice (Sindberg, 2016). This echoes suggestions that active, collaborative, and ongoing

support is necessary to facilitate teacher change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1985).

Communities of Practice. Communities of Practice, though less formal, can also effectively meet the learning needs of teachers. CoPs have been described as organic in nature, changing form to meet the changing needs of the participants (Vangrieken et al., 2017). CoPs grow out of the needs of the teachers who participate, depending on their shared goals and objectives (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Findings from Akerson et al. (2009) suggest Communities of Practice may not be effective as a stand-alone PL opportunity. They studied the influence of CoPs on a teachers' beliefs and practices around the Nature of Science model. They found that the CoP was helpful for teachers to exchange ideas and reduce isolation as they processed new ideas for teaching science following a workshop. However, the CoP did not necessarily advance teachers' use of practices or a change in beliefs (Akerson et al., 2009). As a result of their findings, Akerson et al. (2009) recommend providing additional support, such as lesson modeling, to further improve the rate of change in teaching practice, rather than relying on CoPs alone.

This study suggests collaborative learning groups can provide ongoing contextual collaboration to facilitate teacher change, as suggested by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Desimone (2009). Teachers and schools can benefit from collaborative learning groups as a form of continual support when strong leadership and additional PL opportunities are provided (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Spillover Effects with Collaborative Learning Groups. Collaborative learning groups, such as PLCs and CoPs, can provide a platform for teachers to share new ideas gained from PD with colleagues who did not attend the PD. Sun et al. (2013) investigated the impact of teacher *spillover*

effects on sharing instructional practices with colleagues after attending a workshop on writing instruction. They define *spillover effect* as "the effects of school-based professional development on instructional practices above and beyond the direct effects on teachers who participated in the professional development" (Sun et al., 2013, p. 345). In other words, they studied the impact of teachers who received training and served as experts at their school. An annual survey of teachers at 39 participating schools provided the data for the survey; teachers identified how they were impacted by these writing instruction experts in their schools. Teachers who did not participate in the training benefited from the experts' shared experience (Sun et al., 2013). A key finding from the study is that the greatest contributor to a teachers' impact on helping others with their writing instruction was whether or not they were described as collaborative before attending the workshop (Sun et al., 2013). This is an interesting finding, as it indicates that some teachers are already inclined to collaborate with colleagues. The researchers found that degree and experience did not influence the number of teachers an expert teacher assisted, but that their willingness to collaborate was the most important factor (Sun et al., 2013).

These findings may indicate that identifying natural leaders as resident experts could be beneficial when onboarding a new curriculum. Finding and identifying the teachers who already have a tendency to help their colleagues can be key in providing the ongoing coaching support that is needed to meet teachers' learning needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Ehlert & Souvignier, 2023; Guskey, 2021).

Survey responses from the study indicate that those who participated in the workshop helped 50% more teachers than those who did not attend (Sun et al., 2013). The findings of this study should be considered tentative, as the survey writers asked teachers to report the names of

those who assisted them, with a limit of five, so the data may be incomplete (Sun et al., 2013). Yet, the study illustrates that utilizing natural leadership within a group of teachers may be an important process to include when designing PL for teachers. While attendance at a PD workshop can instill some confidence, it is still important that the teacher be willing to help others and support the spillover of their knowledge into other classrooms at their schools. Perhaps the most effective way to train teachers in a new instructional approach includes training for how to coach others (Sun et al., 2013).

Professional Learning to Change Teacher Practices

Whatever form it takes, the common goal of PL experiences is to facilitate positive teacher change. Duffy et al. (2024) investigated the impact of a Science of Reading professional learning experience on teachers' literacy instructional practices. The study compared the impact of a change in teachers' practices on student reading achievement. This longitudinal study documented the Oral Reading Fluency performance of 1st-5th grade students from 2017-2021. The PL model from this study included principles from Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) as well as other evidence-aligned practices: the collective participation of the faculty, context-specific instruction, modeling, and sustained support over time in the form of instructional coaching (Duffy et al., 2024).

This longitudinal study included 434 1st-5th grade students in public schools in the northeastern United States (Duffy et al., 2024). Students receiving instruction from teachers incorporating Science of Reading practices experienced a 9% growth in Oral Reading Fluency, compared to the national norm of 6% (Duffy et al., 2024).

The COVID pandemic occurred through the course of the study, so results should be considered tentative due to the disruption of schooling during this time. Also, the data is compared

to the national norms for Oral Reading Fluency, rather than to the specific context of the study participants (Duffy et al., 2024). Despite these limitations, the study reflects that student achievement in reading can improve when teachers with effective professional learning support implement new practices into their classrooms, particularly when professional learning is provided in the form of instructional coaching (Duffy et al., 2024).

Professional Learning during Curricular Changes

Teachers require effective PL when a change in curriculum expectations requires a change in teaching practice. Teachers at three elementary schools in the midwestern United States participated in a study for one or two years to determine the impact of a PL experience on their literacy instructional practices (Arya & Roberts, 2023). Teachers were interviewed to assess their views on the effectiveness of the PL experience (Arya & Roberts, 2023). The study found active learning, collaboration, and sustained support as key characteristics of PL that support teacher change (Arya & Roberts, 2023).

The PL experience investigated by Arya and Roberts (2023) included a year of support following the introduction of a new literacy curriculum. Teachers attended workshops and worked alongside facilitators who observed lessons, provided feedback and modeled best practices (Arya & Roberts, 2023). Like the program studied by Sailors and Price (2015), the schoolwide efforts were aligned to support the literacy instruction provided through the year-long coaching experience. Principals at the three schools supported the efforts of teachers by encouraging experimentation in the classroom, aligning schoolwide goals with the PL, and acknowledging that teacher change takes time (Arya & Roberts, 2023; Guskey, 2021).

The study is relatively small, with 26 teachers participating from three schools in one region of the United States. Additionally, interviews in the study were conducted at the end of each year, requiring teachers to self-report what they remembered about the school year's professional development offerings throughout the previous year. Despite these limitations, Arya and Roberts (2023) offer insight on how to best meet the needs of teachers during the transition to a new literacy model. They suggest that many factors can lead to the success of a curricular transition, including administrator alignment with learning goals, regular interactions with PD facilitators, Communities of Practice within the school (Arya & Roberts, 2023).

Professional Learning Specific to Literacy Instruction

The history of literacy instruction is sometimes described as a series of pendulum swings from one method to another (Kim, 2008). By the end of the year 2022, 40 states enacted laws addressing literacy instruction and the Science of Reading (Neuman et al., 2023), so the challenges of a literacy instructional shift at Oak City Lower School are not unique. Many teachers across the country learned to teach in the balanced literacy model and now have to re-learn how to teach literacy with new methods (Schwartz, 2022a). The shift to a new curriculum and instruction model for reading requires extensive training and support for teachers currently serving in the classroom.

Studies have shown success when PL for literacy instruction includes sustained support in the form of curriculum coaching (Arya & Roberts, 2023; Duffy et al., 2024; Sailors & Price, 2015). The Arya and Roberts (2023), Duffy et al. (2024), and Sailor and Price (2015) studies demonstrate that teachers can exhibit positive change during a transition to a new literacy instruction model when effective PL opportunities are implemented. Each PL opportunity in these studies involved administrative support to prioritize full faculty participation and sustained support over time. They

each found success when using modeling and curriculum coaching over a period of one to five years following the initial implementation (Arya & Roberts, 2023; Duffy et al., 2024; Sailors & Price, 2015). These studies support the idea that evidence-based literacy implementation can be successful when administrators prioritize all faculty members' participation and sufficient coaching support is available to teachers. They also reflect the notion that teacher change takes time to fully take effect (Guskey, 1985). These models demonstrate that the transition to a new literacy program can be successful when coupled with the intentional design of PLopportunities over the course of several school years.

Application to the Current Study

This literature review highlights research on supporting teachers during a period of curricular change. Teacher Change Theory has been included as part of a theoretical framework for how teachers move through the process of making changes to their instructional practices and pedagogical beliefs. PD and PL have been described within the context of curriculum shifts as methods to assist teachers through the teacher change process. Finally, examples of PL models used during curriculum changes have been described.

The next chapter will describe the present study to determine how the curricular change at Oak City Lower School has been implemented with the support of PL opportunities. The study reviews the offerings for teachers and seeks to describe the viewpoints of teachers on how those offerings have influenced their approaches to the literacy instruction.

Chapter 3: Methods

This study examines how teachers at Oak City Lower School have been supported in the transition to evidence-based literacy practices and describes teachers' perceptions of that support. Guskey's Teacher Change Theory (1985) influenced the development of this study design to better understand how teachers at Oak City Lower School are moving through the teacher change progression during the implementation of the new literacy model. In Chapter 1, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks outlined the important influence of Teacher Change Theory on the implementation of a new curriculum. In Chapter 2, Teacher Change Theory was explored in relation to the literature on professional learning, professional development, and literacy instruction.

This two-phase case study describes the influence of professional development and professional learning on teacher change. Both phases of the study were reflective in design to allow the researcher to further describe the phenomenon of evidence-based literacy implementation at Oak City Lower School. Data analysis from Phase I was used to inform Phase II. The following chapter outlines the methods used to answer the two research questions.

- **RQ1:** What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills?
- **RQ2:** How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

Case Study Model

A descriptive case study model was utilized to evaluate these research questions. Hancock & Algozzine (2017) define a descriptive case study as "used to illustrate or explain key features of a phenomenon within its context" (p. 39). Case studies are used to collect a detailed description of the conditions at a certain point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In this investigation, the case study illustrates the current perceptions of participants at a single point in the implementation of the evidence-based literacy approach.

The phenomenon illustrated in this case study is the onboarding of evidence-based literacy practices at Oak City Lower School and the experience of the teachers involved. Descriptive methods were used, which are described by Creswell and Creswell (2023) as an approach that "comprises coding the data and developing themes" (p. 196). For this case study, data was coded in Phase I of the study using both emergent and *a priori* codes. It was then reflexively analyzed before moving to Phase II, when coding was completed again using both emergent and *a priori* codes.

Phases of the Study

This case study used sequential data collection to allow for reflection following each phase of the study. Reflective memos were written during each step of the data collection process to document the emergence of themes and to inform the following steps of data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Figure 3 illustrates the sequence of data collection and analysis.

Figure 3

Phases of the Study
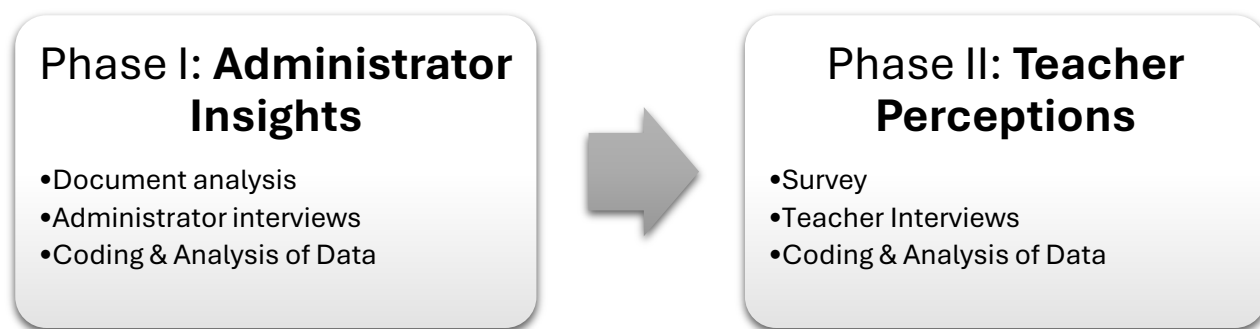
The sections that follow provide details on the setting, participants, sampling strategies, and instrumentation used in each phase.

Description of the Setting

Located in the southeastern United States, Oak City School is an independent school with a mission statement that reflects a commitment to preparing students for college and life by challenging them in the areas of faith, virtue, and knowledge. For the 2024-25 school year, 673 students are enrolled across the lower, middle and upper schools. Oak City Lower School, specifically, has a current student enrollment of 261 with a faculty of 18 full-time homeroom teachers. Students in the lower school range from 4-10 years old in PreK-4th grade. The administration of Oak City Lower School includes a principal and a curriculum and instruction coach. A reading specialist provides targeted, short-term intervention to lower school students. Additionally, three academic learning specialists provide specialized, individualized learning support year-round to fourteen lower school students.

As an independent school, Oak City School academic leaders select the curriculum based on the needs of the students. This contrasts with public schools where state and local school boards make curricular decisions. Instead, independent schools are governed by their board of trustees and decisions are made by administrators based on alignment with the school's mission. Curriculum transitions at independent schools, such as the one at the focus of this case study, are determined by the school's administration. The administration is also responsible for deciding the professional learning experiences offered to support the faculty.

Overview of Participants

The participants in this study are all full-time employees of Oak City Lower School. They fall into two main categories: administrators and teachers. Every participant has been employed by the school since at least the 2023-24 school year and was involved in the initial introduction to evidence-based literacy instruction for the school.

Administrators. Two administrators participated in this case study: the lower school principal and the curriculum and instruction coach. The lower school principal is the head of Oak City Lower School. She has been in the role since the 2020-21 school year but has served at the school in some capacity for more than 20 years. The curriculum and instruction coach serves as a support for teachers to ensure alignment with school curriculum. She supports the principal by conducting classroom observations and providing curriculum coaching for teachers. She has been in the role since the 2024-25 school year. Prior to that, she served as the reading specialist.

Teachers. Oak City Lower School has 18 homeroom teacher with each of the all-female faculty working alongside teacher assistants. Seventeen of these teachers were invited to

participate in this study. One of the lower school homeroom teachers was not employed at Oak City during the 2023-24 school year and was excluded from the study. All teachers at Oak City Lower School have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in education. The majority of the 17 teacher participants (10) have been at Oak City for 5 years or less. The other teachers have been at the school for 6-10 years (2), 11-15 years (2), 16-20 years (1) and 21-25 years (2).

Phase I: Administrator Insights

Phase I was designed to answer RQ1: What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills? To answer this question, this phase included a document review and interviews with Oak City Lower School administrators.

Document Review and Analysis

Phase I began with a request for documents that outline the PD opportunities that have been offered to teachers at Oak City Lower School. Administrators were asked to provide documents from the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years that reflect PL for teachers during the literacy transition. Documents were used to compile a list of the opportunities that were offered to teachers. All documents that met the following criteria were included in the study:

- Division meeting agendas: the division meeting agendas from 2023-2024 and 2024-25 school years were reviewed for incidents of literacy instruction support for teachers.
- External communication records: newsletters, emails, or publications from the 2023-24 or 2024-25 school years that communicated information about the shift in literacy instruction were reviewed for additional context.

- Additional communication records: any email or other written communications sent to teachers during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years from the principal or curriculum and instruction coach that provided tips, processes, expectations, or feedback on Science of Reading literacy instruction were reviewed.

- Other administrative documentation: Curriculum meeting minutes were reviewed for background on administrators' discussions around the shift in literacy instructional practices and the support that followed the implementation. The administration also provided a timeline of implementation and a Science of Reading commitments document.

Documents were reviewed to catalogue the different PL opportunities that were provided to teachers at Oak City Lower School from the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. On copies of each document, key passages and quotations were highlighted, with codes added to the margins. Then, highlighted passages were added to a spreadsheet, along with the associated codes from the codebook (Appendix E). After sorting the spreadsheet, a list of the opportunities was created to outline the support provided to teachers. Then, the administrator interview protocol was adjusted to ask specific questions about the opportunities.

Administrator Interviews and Analysis

Following the document review, interviews with both administrators were conducted using the interview protocol for administrators (Appendix A). Qualitative interviews are utilized in case studies to describe the phenomenon at the center of a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p. 199). This study focused on the phenomenon of the implementation of Science of Reading based practices at Oak City Lower School. The administrator interview protocol was adjusted following

the document analysis to ask specific questions about the variety of professional learning

opportunities provided to teachers.

The proposed interview protocol for administrators (Appendix A) reflects questions that

seek to answer RQ1. Administrators were asked about their role in the implementation of evidence-

based literacy practices and the selection of the professional learning opportunities for teachers.

The questions echo the process of teacher change described by Guskey (1985) and reflect the

inputs that facilitate teacher change at Oak City School (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Teacher Change at Oak City Lower School

Oak City Lower School Shift in Literacy Instruction
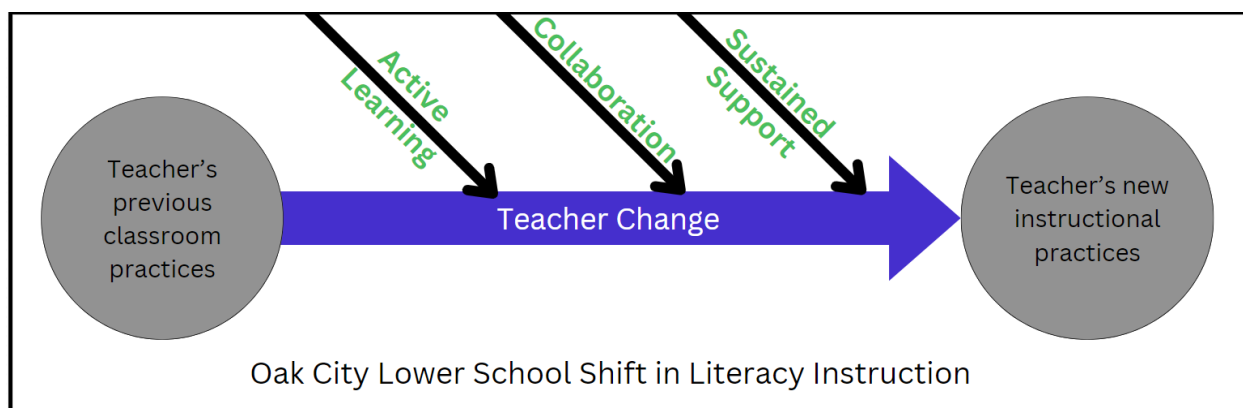
Sample for Administrator Interviews. A purposeful interview sample should reflect those

individuals who "may have the best information with which to address the study's research

questions" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 47). The lower school principal and curriculum and

instruction coach were interviewed individually for semi-structured interviews; they are the

members of Oak City Lower School that are involved in making the decisions regarding the

implementation of Science of Reading instruction and the selection of professional learning opportunities.

Each administrator was interviewed separately during the school day at a time that was convenient for them. Both participants were provided with a copy of the general study information sheet (Appendix A) and were asked to grant permission to record the conversation before beginning the interview. The semi-structured design allowed for follow-up questions depending on the responses provided throughout the interview (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Each interview was recorded using Zoom Workplace software and notes were taken throughout. A reflective memo was created following each interview summarizing the findings from the discussion. Each reflective memo includes my initial thoughts and reactions immediately following the conclusion of each interview. Interviews were transcribed and coded using the codebook (Appendix E). New codes were added to the list as themes emerged during data analysis.

To analyze the data of the interviews, the audio was transcribed using transcription software embedded in Zoom Workplace. Then, the validity of the transcription was verified by reviewing the recording and comparing it to the transcription. During the precoding phase, key phrases, words, and quotes were highlighted on the transcripts, with initial codes added to the margins of the document. These highlighted passages were added to the codebook (Appendix E). Each code, including *a priori* and emergent codes, were included in the codebook table. A reflective memo was written to detail the emergence of themes and the addition of codes. The findings from Phase I were used to create a list of the specific professional learning opportunities offered at Oak City Lower School. Specific questions for the teacher survey and interviews were then crafted to reflect this list.

Phase II: Teacher Perceptions

After completion of analysis during Phase I, Phase II began with a teacher survey. Following collection of survey data, teacher interviews were conducted. The survey and interviews were designed to answer RQ2: How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices? The survey was administered to allow all teachers to share their experience with the professional learning opportunities delivered to support the development of literacy instruction skills. Interviews with selected teachers provided an opportunity to dive more deeply into teachers' perceptions of the learning opportunities and the impact these experiences have had on their teaching practices.

Teacher Survey

Phase II of the study began with the distribution of a survey (Appendix B) to classroom teachers included in the participant group. The survey was announced with a pre-notification e-mail, followed by an invitation e-mail containing the link to the survey (Appendix C).

Survey Instrument. The survey utilized a mix of open-ended and rating scale questions that fit within the conceptual framework of this study. Part I of the survey asked specific questions about each of the professional learning opportunities identified during the document review and administrator interviews in Phase I.

To increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the survey, responses were anonymous. The survey did not ask for demographic data to protect the identity of participants. Additionally, data were aggregated to keep responses unidentifiable. These protections were communicated in

the instructions to encourage participants to be completely honest, thus increasing the validity of the results.

Survey Content. Part I of the survey (Appendix B) focused on collecting feedback on specific professional learning opportunities identified in Phase I of the study. Part II of the survey focused on the perceptions of teachers towards the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices in their classroom. These questions reflect the Teacher Change Theory described by Guskey (1985), that only when teachers view the improvement of student outcomes do teachers change their beliefs. Questions in both sections were included for teachers to share their views through both open-ended and rating scale selections. Their compiled responses were used to further shape the teacher interview questions.

Sampling for Survey. This study used a census method of sampling to include all teachers who were involved in the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction at Oak City Lower School. Seventeen teachers were invited to complete the survey. One teacher was omitted from the possible participant group, as she joined the faculty in year two of the evidence-based literacy implementation, missing the professional learning opportunities offered in the first year of the evidence-based literacy program.

By using this sampling method, I aimed to capture the perspectives of all participants who were involved in the curriculum transition and allow them to share their perceptions of the shift to evidence-based literacy instruction. This collection of data provided a more complete description of the processes at the focus of this study. The survey was anonymous, and all members of the survey group were encouraged to respond.

Survey Administration. A pilot test of the survey was conducted to ensure validity of the instrument prior to administering the survey to the lower school faculty. Three individuals employed by Oak City Lower School, but not part of the survey sample, completed the pilot survey. Pilot survey participants were asked to provide feedback regarding clarity of the questions, the functionality of the online software, and the amount of time it took to complete the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Based on the feedback of the pilot test, no modifications were made to the survey before distributing it to the participant group.

Teachers received a pre-survey notification email the week prior to the survey distribution. Then, a second email was sent to participants asking them to respond to the survey via the link provided. Survey responses were collected using Qualtrics software. The survey was available for eight days. A reminder email was sent to all eligible participants halfway through the survey window. Fifteen of the seventeen teachers completed the survey.

Survey Analysis. The steps described by Creswell and Creswell (2023) were followed to analyze the survey data. First, survey data was organized by professional learning opportunity, with an aggregated collection of responses grouped together for each question. Then, the data was reviewed, with important quotes and passages highlighted to indicate possible trends in teacher responses. Third, data was coded by "bracketing chunks . . . and writing a word representing a category in the margins" of the spreadsheet (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p. 207). After codes were recorded with *a priori* codes from the codebook, additional emerging codes were added to the codebook (Appendix E) and noted in a reflective memo.

Teacher Interviews

Following the teacher survey, Phase II included interviews with teachers to further explore

the answer to RQ2. The interview protocol for teachers (Appendix D) reflected questions situated

within the contextual framework for this study. The questions also reflected the process of teacher

change by describing the inputs for teacher change at Oak City Lower School (Figure 4) (Guskey,

1985). The semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to learn more from the teachers on

their perceptions of the evidence-based literacy implementation. Due to the reflexive design of this

study, questions in the teacher interviews were also influenced by responses to the teacher survey.

The interviews provided the opportunity for further exploration of those topics covered in the survey

(professional learning opportunities and evidence-based literacy practice implementation).

Sampling for Teacher Interviews. Qualitative research typically uses purposeful sampling

to select participants "that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research

question" (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p. 198). Teacher participants for interviews were selected

from the survey participants using purposeful sampling to collect a representative group of teacher

voices. Following the administrator interviews, it became clear that teachers in each grade from

kindergarten through fourth grade had different experiences. Administrators described different

professional learning experiences offered to each grade level tailored to the needs of their students.

To capture each grade level's unique experience, a single teacher from K-4th grade was invited to

participate in the interviews. According to the curriculum and instruction coach, prekindergarten

has not made significant changes to their instruction as a result of the transition to evidence-based literacy, so they were excluded from the interview sample (Interview, January 31, 2025).

Teachers from K-4th grades were selected to provide a wide range of teaching experience, with experience levels from less than 5 to greater than 40 years were represented. These selected teachers were invited to participate in the interview process as an additional opportunity to share their views on the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. Teachers who serve in a formal leadership capacity were excluded from the sample, as I wanted to prioritize teachers who do not have a regular opportunity to provide feedback to administration. Every teacher invited to participate in an interview accepted. Table 1 identifies each teacher participant with their pseudonym and the range in which their years of teaching experience falls.

Table 1

Teacher Interview Participants

Name	Years of Experience, Range
Leigh	0-10
Gina	10-20
Evelyn	10-20
Teresa	20-30
Stephanie	30+

Teacher Interview Procedures. Teacher interviews were conducted during the school day at a time when the teacher did not have students in their classroom. Each participant received a copy of the general study information sheet prior to the interview (Appendix D) and consent was obtained before beginning the interview. Interviews were conducted using Zoom Workplace software. They were recorded with the permission of the participant and transcribed for analysis.

Immediately following the conclusion of each interview, reflective memos were used to record my initial thoughts regarding the discussion.

      Teacher Interview Analysis. Following completion of each interview, the audio was transcribed using transcription software embedded in Zoom Workplace. Then, the accuracy of the transcription was verified by comparing the recording to the transcript. Once the transcripts were confirmed, pre-coding was conducted to add *a priori* codes to the transcripts, as well as emergent codes.

      Following pre-coding of the survey and interview transcripts, I realized there were two different emerging viewpoints that were represented in the teacher feedback data. Teachers had experiences as learners during the professional learning opportunities. Teachers also had different experiences as the role of teacher when implementing the literacy instruction in their classrooms. Once these viewpoints were identified, all Phase II data were reviewed two additional times. One data review was through the lens of the teachers' perceptions of the professional learning opportunities. The second data review was through the lens of the teachers' perceptions of the impact of that learning on the student experience in their classrooms. Each code was recorded in the codebook data table alongside the selected passage. Emerging codes were added and recorded in a reflective memo. As emerging codes were added, the transcripts were again reviewed looking for additional examples of emerging codes. The process of reviewing the data through several different lenses led to the identification of themes within the data. After reading and re-reading the teachers' interviews, three key findings came into focus and will be presented in Chapter 4.

Limitations

My positionality as the researcher is a limitation to the study. I served as the sole data collector for the study. I have worked at Oak City School since 2015 in the middle and upper school divisions and am familiar with all the participants. As an employee at Oak City School, I have pre-existing relationships with all participants in the study that may have influenced their answers during the interview and survey processes. My positionality at the school may have influenced the validity of the interviews as participants' responses could have been impacted by our pre-existing relationships. Additionally, I am situated within the study context, so my own views may be biased due to previous experiences within the school context and with the study participants. While I tried to reduce the bias influence on data analysis and method development, it is impossible to completely separate my own prior experiences from the study completely.

Trustworthiness

Member checking was used to reduce the impact of these biases and to increase trustworthiness of the data. Each interviewee was given their transcript for review to ensure accuracy. Following the conclusion of Phase II, data triangulation was conducted to increase the reliability of the data. Data from document analysis was compared with data from interviews and the survey to confirm alignment between each data source (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). A reflective memo was written to detail the extent of confirmability provided by the documents for the data collected in the survey and interviews. Every type of professional learning opportunity identified in Phase I was confirmed by at least one teacher on the survey, reflecting alignment of the findings for RQ1. The reflective memos, triangulation, and member checking all increased the reliability of the data.

Data Management

To increase the validity of the survey results, the survey was administered on a secure server through the University of Virginia license with Qualtrics. Personal identifying information was not included in the survey and data was aggregated to ensure anonymity. Results from the survey, interview recordings, and interview transcripts were stored on the secure UVA Box server. This data will not be used outside this study. The data will be retained in this secure manner by the researcher for five years and then destroyed.

Conclusion

This case study was developed to answer to the following research questions:

- **RQ1**: What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills?

- **RQ2**: How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

A survey, interviews, and document analysis provided insight into these two questions. Reflective memos throughout the data collection period reflect the results at each stage and documented necessary adjustments to subsequent steps in the data collection process. Chapter 4 provides the data collected during this case study and the resulting findings. Chapter 5 includes recommendations that can be utilized by Oak City and other schools who need to assess the effectiveness of professional learning opportunities when onboarding new curriculum and instruction methods.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This case study investigated the shift in literacy instruction at Oak City Lower School, which required many teachers to make major changes to their teaching practices. This study documents the methods that Oak City has employed to support and assist teachers in changing many of their long-standing literacy practices. The case study was conducted in two phases, collecting both administrator insights and teacher perceptions. Document review, survey, and interviews were used to explore the two research questions:

- **RQ1:** What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills?

- **RQ2:** How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

The collected data document the process of evidence-based literacy implementation at Oak City Lower School and the ways teachers have been supported through the transition. During Phase I, data revealed administrators' perspectives on the curricular implementation and were used to inform survey items and interview questions in Phase II. Phase II data, consisting of a survey and follow-up interviews, captured teachers' perspectives on the curricular implementation.

Analysis of data from both phases of the study revealed several findings outlined in the sections below. First, data related to RQ1 provide an overview of the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers to support the development of their literacy instructional skills. These findings are based largely on the administrators' perspectives, as illuminated from document review and interviews with the administrators. Findings related to RQ2 shed light on the perceptions

of teachers, as collected during the teacher survey and interviews with teachers. These findings demonstrate that teachers' perceptions of the professional learning experiences are more nuanced and do not fully align with administrators' perspectives. The chapter concludes with a discussion of all findings and a reconsideration of the conceptual framework for the study.

Professional Learning Opportunities at Oak City Lower School

To address the first research question, interviews with Oak City Lower School administrators Olivia and Julie, as well as the document review, revealed a multi-year timeline of the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction (Figure 5). New curricular expectations were rolled out in both the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, accompanied by several professional learning opportunities for teachers to support the implementation of new curricula.

Figure 5

Timeline of Evidence-Based Literacy Implementation
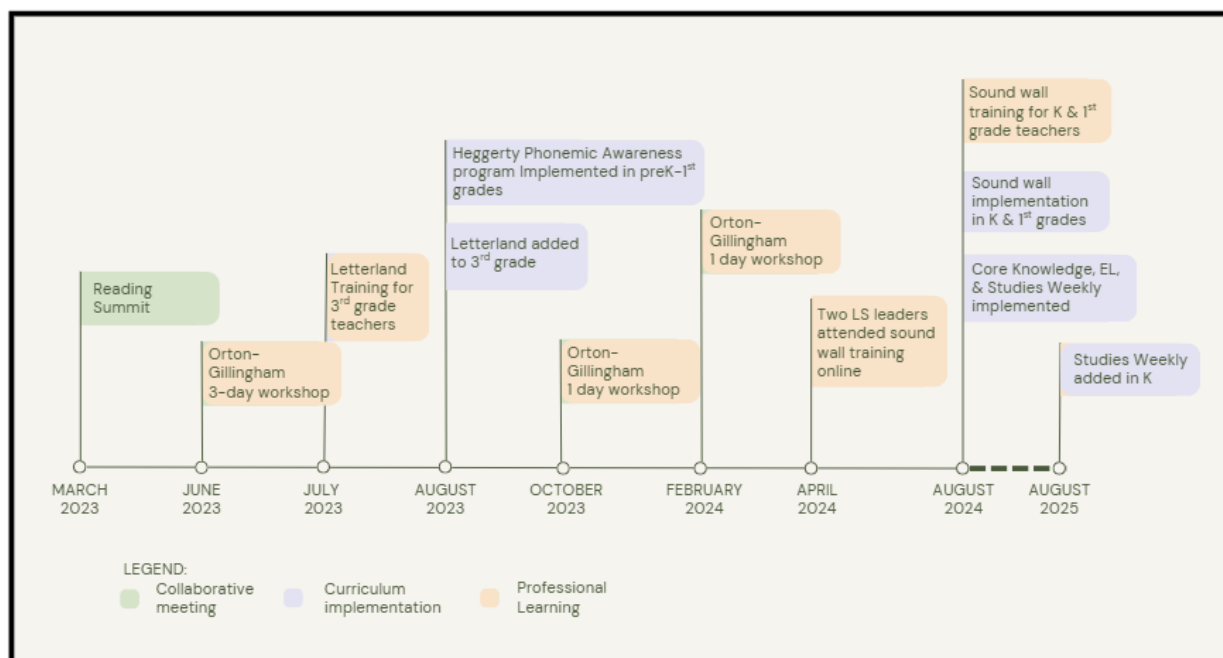
The process began in March 2023 at a meeting dubbed by Olivia as "the reading summit."

Olivia and Julie met with two lower school teachers (who also served as team leaders) and the

curriculum specialist to determine the action steps the school would take to onboard evidence-

based literacy instruction. A group of lower school teachers and leaders had visited another

independent school in February 2023 and returned from the visit determined to adopt many of the

other school's programming decisions, including training teachers in Orton-Gillingham and

integrating a phonemic awareness curriculum (Interview, February 3, 2025). Julie described the

visit, saying,

> I had teachers that came back [from the school visit] just so excited about what they had
>
> seen there and the contacts they had made there. And our curriculum instructional coach

at that time . . . connected with their coach there, and so we were able to get a little bit better knowledge of well, what was the training involved, you know, how does this work? So, you know, really it was, it was through peers and contacts, you know, just professional contacts, and going to another school and seeing how that was implemented was huge. (Interview, February 3, 2025)

The reading summit concluded with the decision for the lower school to transition to evidence-based literacy for the 2023-24 school year, including three core pieces: 1) adopting the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness program, 2) implementing a knowledge-based reading curriculum, and 3) training teachers in Orton-Gillingham literacy instruction (Interview, January 31, 2025). Olivia outlined the reasons the group decided to make the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction:

Two major factors really went into this. One being the body of research that we refer to as the Science of Reading being made more prolific and more well known within the school community, and watching the trends of our reading scores nationwide go down, and realizing that we have not . . . as a broader nation, responded to the research in the Science of Reading through our instructional methods . . . And then alongside that, we had a global pandemic in which we had a huge number of children that really missed their foundational phonics. And so, we noticed students . . . getting to second, third and fourth grade with some major gaps in their ability to decode and encode. So that sense of urgency for us really brought us to a place where we realized . . . we did not have a cohesive commitment from all of our faculty [towards a shared literacy program.] (Interview, January 31, 2025)

Julie added, "[The literacy curriculum] hadn't changed much [since 2003], except for, really what the teachers enjoyed teaching themselves. So, we were definitely looking for something to organize our instruction a little bit better" (Interview, February 3, 2025).

The following sub-sections outline the changes to literacy instruction that begin at Oak City School with the decisions made at the reading summit in the spring of 2023. Table 2 illustrates the literacy expectations for Oak City Lower School as a result of the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction.

Table 2

Oak City Lower School Literacy Expectations by Grade Level

	PreK	K	1	2	3	4
Reading Instruction & Intervention	Orton-Gillingham instruction (soft roll-out Fall 2023; full roll-out Fall 2024)					
Phonics Instruction	Letterland Phonics (in place prior to Fall 2023)				Letterland (beginning Fall 2023)	
Phonemic Awareness	Heggerty Phonemic Awareness (beginning Fall 2023)					
Sound walls		sound wall incorporation (beginning Fall 2024)				
Reading Comprehension & Vocabulary		Studies Weekly (beginning Fall 2025)	Core Knowledge, EL, & Studies Weekly (beginning Fall 2024)		Core Knowledge, EL, & Studies Weekly (beginning Fall 2023, though 3rd grade used Core Knowledge prior to that time)	

Curricula: Training, Professional Learning, and Implementation

Each major change, Orton-Gillingham training, Letterland Phonics additions, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness program, sound wall implementation, and knowledge building curricula, is

detailed in the sub-sections below. Olivia described the intent of these modifications to the phonics and reading instruction was to improve vertical curriculum alignment within the lower school (Interview, January 31, 2025). Data from the document review and administrator interviews, along with some additional insight from the teacher interviews, informed the descriptions of these areas of the evidence-based literacy implementation.

Orton-Gillingham Training

In the months following the reading summit, Julie worked with other Oak City School administrators and secured funding to train every lower school homeroom teacher on Orton-Gillingham literacy techniques (Interview, February 3, 2025). She described some of the reasons for choosing the Orton-Gillingham approach:

> Going to Orton-Gillingham with a multi-sensory program is very in line with the way we've made . . . all of our academics to be much more experiential, hands-on. And we know how well that helps students remember and master, you know, through multiple modalities. (Interview, February 3, 2025)

The school hired an Orton-Gillingham fellow to come to the school to lead a three-day workshop in the summer of 2023, as well as two one-day workshops during teacher workdays later in the school year. The Orton-Gillingham training required teachers to complete some pre-course work, such as watching videos, reading articles, and writing reflections (Document review, January 31, 2025). Teachers were given one half of a workday to complete the pre-course work and submit it to the Orton-Gillingham fellow prior to the first day of the workshop (Interview, January 31, 2025).

In June 2023, teachers participated in a three-day Orton-Gillingham workshop at the beginning of summer break to try to get everyone started on the learning process before they left for summer. The workshop was mostly lecture about the history of the English language, different methods of reading instruction, and how language acquisition takes place for children (Interview, January 31, 2025). There were some opportunities to collaborate in small groups during breakout sessions, but most of the time was spent sitting and listening (Interview, February 19, 2025). Olivia described how this was a hard way to start the evidence-based literacy implementation:

> That was what was hard. There wasn't a lot of built in time to say, "Okay, how could you use these comprehension strategies with the text you're using?" Or, "how could you take this idea of with the chips and counting phonemes and put that into a Letterland lesson?" That had to all kind of happen outside of the training side, which, as you know, can be tough to find the planning time for that. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

Teachers were in training for eight hours each of these first three days of their summer, with little time to collaborate and discuss implementation strategies as a team (Interview, February 3, 2025). Subsequent eight-hour training days also occurred on workdays in October 2023 and February 2024, when teachers attended the training sub-divided into two smaller groups: preK-1st grade teachers and 2nd-4th grade teachers (Interview, January 31, 2025). In both of those workshop settings, one day was set aside for collaboration, while the other was set aside for training with the Orton-Gillingham fellow (Interview, January 31, 2025). Administrators only expected teachers to integrate some Orton-Gillingham techniques in the 2023-24 school year due to training taking place at various times throughout the school year (Personal communication, 2024). For the 2024-25 school year, teachers were expected to implement all Orton-Gillingham techniques into their literacy instruction (Personal communication, 2024).

Letterland Phonics Additions

Letterland Phonics had been used for many years by Oak City Lower School. "Letterland is the phonics program that we have . . . used pre-K through second grade since 2014 and that is a very tried and true phonics program that's been around for a long time," said Olivia (Interview, January 31, 2025). She added,

> Historically, Letterland has stopped in second grade; however, in the fall of 2022 in response to the needs for more support and decoding and encoding and teaching this more advanced phonics patterns, and realizing that many kids missed their foundational phonics, they rolled out a third-grade curriculum. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

As a result, in July 2023, all 3rd grade teachers at Oak City participated in an online Letterland training, conducted by a certified Letterland Phonics trainer, over several days during their summer break (Document review, January 31, 2025). According to the Letterland website, the third grade training is designed to teach "strategies to help children master advanced spelling patterns with fluency and comprehension" (*Training: Letterland Phonics*, 2021). Given the online nature and limited feedback from teachers, it is unclear exactly how the training was executed, however, survey respondents described Letterland training as passive and independent (Survey, February 25, 2025). Third grade teachers began the implementation of the Letterland Phonics program in August 2023. Letterland Phonics was already integrated into preK-2nd grades; third grade was only added after teachers were trained in July 2023 following the Letterland roll-out of a third-grade curriculum in the fall of 2022 (Interview, January 31, 2025). The Letterland addition to 3rd grade was intended to support the Orton-Gillingham sequence through intentional alignment between both strategies (Interview, January 31, 2025).

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program

In August 2023, teachers in preK-1st grades began utilizing the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program for daily literacy instruction (Document review, January 31, 2025). The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness lessons are designed to "address phonological awareness to build the foundations necessary for students to decode words accurately" and are built on evidence-based literacy practices (*Phonemic Awareness Research*, 2021). Olivia added the importance of Heggerty's multiple modality approach, like Orton-Gillingham: "It's a 10-minute lesson every single day. It's scripted, it's predictable. It is multi-modal. It's very kinesthetic. The kids are hearing it, saying it, stomping it. Like it's whole body" (Interview, January 31, 2025). No specific training or support was provided for Oak City teachers, though the Heggerty website indicates live training can be provided to schools as a resource (*Professional Development*, 2024).

Sound Wall Implementation

Sound walls can be used in lower school classrooms to provide a visual for students. Letters and sounds are illustrated with pictures of how to articulate the mouth for each sound (*Science of Reading: Sound Wall Starter Kit*, n.d.). Olivia explained how sound walls can be integrated into literacy instruction:

> One of the things that we know now based on the Science of Reading research, is if a student can't say it, they can't read it, and then they can't spell it. So, a lot of times when a student has a spelling error, it is not because they don't know the letters or the sequence of letters that go with the sound. It's because their articulation is wrong . . . with the sound walls, we can say, move your mouth like this picture, and we can see if it's an articulation error or if they're still struggling to identify that pattern. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

Figure 6 below provides an example of a sound wall.

Figure 6

Sound Wall Example
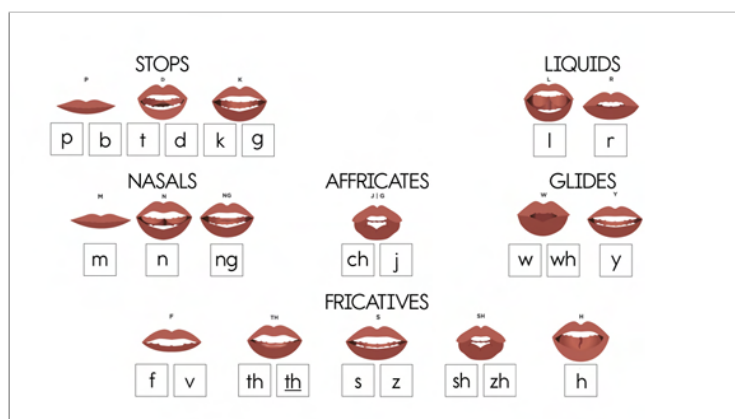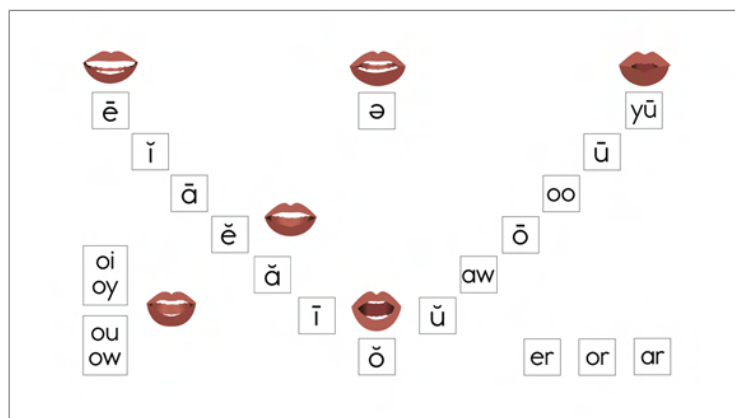
Source: *Science of Reading: Sound wall starter kit*. Learning A-Z

Olivia and a first-grade teacher (who was also a teacher-member of the reading summit in March 2023) attended a virtual training on sound walls in April 2024 (Document review, January 31, 2025). Sound wall training was then conducted by Olivia for the Kindergarten and 1st grade teams in

August 2024. This in-house sound wall training occurred during a teacher workday and included an introduction to sound walls, modeling of how to use them, and resources to learn more about integrating sound walls into literacy instruction (Document review, January 31, 2025). Survey responses described sound wall training as passive, but also collaborative (Survey, February 25, 2025). Teachers of Kindergarten and 1st grades were expected to implement sound walls for the 2024-25 school year (Interview, March 6, 2025).

Knowledge Building Curriculum

Concurrently with the transition to evidence-based literacy practices, resources were provided for teachers in 1st-4th grades to integrate a "knowledge building curriculum" (Document review, January 31, 2025). These resources included Studies Weekly, EL Education, and Core Knowledge units. Materials were selected to provide nonfiction texts to build students' reading comprehension skills and vocabulary, while also teaching science and social studies concepts (Interview, January 31, 2025). Olivia explained why these curricula were included in the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction: "Supported by Science of Reading, this [knowledge building curriculum] is imperative for reading comprehension and vocabulary development" (Personal communication, April 14, 2025). She also describes why these resources are an important addition to the other literacy instructional pieces, saying "that [EL and Core Knowledge] is really taking concepts and objectives and taking a deep dive into them and providing really robust nonfiction to go along with whatever you're studying in your fiction study" (Interview, January 31, 2025).

Teachers were expected to implement these units in the 2024-25 school year; Kindergarten is expected to integrate Studies Weekly in the 2025-26 school year (Document review, January 31, 2025). No direct training or professional learning for teachers was provided for the Studies Weekly,

EL Education, or Core Knowledge curricula. Additional data regarding these knowledge building resources was beyond the scope of this study, although some teachers referenced these curricula in interviews.

Observations, Feedback, Team Teaching, and Modeling

As part of the literacy implementation, teachers were expected to conduct peer observations and provide feedback to one another during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Each teacher was instructed to observe three other teachers and provide constructive feedback, though no clear structures for these observations were identified through this study (Interview, January 31, 2025). Some teachers also participated in team teaching, modeling, and coaching at various times throughout the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years (Interview, January 31, 2025). Olivia described helping each grade level team in different ways, depending on what new instructional strategies the grade levels were implementing (Interview, January 31, 2025). In addition to this instructional support, Olivia created binders and other curriculum materials to assist teachers in integrating the new curricular expectations.

Data from teacher interviews revealed teachers' perceived utility of these professional learning opportunities. Gina said, "[Olivia] showed us how to even use [the sound wall], okay? Because, you know, with the Vowel Valley, she kind of gave us context behind why." (Interview, March 12, 2025). Leigh described how she benefited from working with a coach and observing her teach, stating "But what she did [in modeling reading instruction] -- that really kind of opened my eyes" (Interview, February 21, 2025). Stephanie also mentioned how it's been helpful to observe her team members teach lessons, "I've observed [one team member] doing a lesson, and so that helps

just to see what she or [another team member] or I are doing differently. And yeah, we can gain from

one another" (Interview, February 19, 2025).

Teacher survey respondents (n=15) reported minimal participation in these professional

learning opportunities. Ten teachers indicated completing peer observations, despite the

expectation for all teachers to complete three each year (Survey, February 25, 2025). Three

teachers reported participating in modeling and four reported receiving instructional coaching.

Team teaching was only reported by one teacher (Survey, February 25, 2025). The apparent gap

between administrators' perspectives of the opportunities offered and teachers' use of these

opportunities is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Confirmation of Professional Learning Opportunities Offered

To strengthen alignment between RQ1, which focused on the professional learning

opportunities provided to teachers, and RQ2, which explored teachers' perceptions of the

professional learning opportunities, each learning opportunity identified through the document

review and administrator interviews were added to the teacher survey (Appendix B). The survey

asked whether teachers recalled participating in or utilizing the identified professional learning

opportunity. Although responses were mixed, each type of professional learning opportunity was

confirmed by at least one teacher as being offered, indicating that the professional learning

opportunities outlined above were provided at some level.

Teacher Perceptions of Professional Learning Opportunities at Oak City Lower School

Survey and interview data were reviewed first through pre-coding and then through two

lenses: teachers' perceptions of professional learning opportunities and teachers' perceptions of

the impact of that learning in the classroom. Following these reviews of the data, groups of codes

were formed, falling into three categories: 1) *a priori* codes that described the professional learning experiences; 2) emergent codes that described teachers' perceptions of the professional learning experiences; and 3) emergent codes that described the teachers' perceptions of the students' experience in the classroom. Codes were then recursively reviewed to identify themes. Several themes emerged, including the influence of prior experiences, the benefits of collaboration, and the differences between administrators' and teachers' experiences through the implementation process.

After reviewing the themes, another level of analysis connected the themes to RQ2: How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices? Using these themes and reflecting on the research question, five key findings emerged which will be discussed in this chapter:

- **Finding 1:** Teachers and administrators reported differing perceptions of professional learning opportunities offered and how these opportunities impacted literacy instructional practices.

- **Finding 2:** Collaboration among teachers during and following professional learning experiences supported the implementation of new literacy practices.

- **Finding 3:** Observations, feedback, and modeling of lessons were impactful professional learning experiences for teachers during the implementation of new literacy practices.

- **Finding 4:** Teacher's prior experiences with professional learning influenced their perceptions of professional learning experiences in the present.

- **Finding 5:** While teachers reported incorporating new teaching practices into their instruction, it is unclear whether their beliefs about literacy instruction have changed.

Finding 1: Teachers and administrators reported differing perceptions of professional learning opportunities offered and how these opportunities impacted literacy instructional practices.

The transition to evidence-based literacy was led by the Oak City Lower School administrators. As detailed above, two teachers also participated in the reading summit in March 2023 (Interview, January 31, 2025). These two teachers were included in the survey participant group for this study, but were intentionally omitted from the purposeful sampling for teacher interviews to ensure teachers who were not part of the decision-making were given an opportunity to share their perspectives. Interviews with Olivia and Julie do not indicate other opportunities for teacher input, though they described the importance of everyone in the lower school having a shared commitment to evidence-based literacy. Stephanie described her lack of agency during the shift in literacy instruction, noting that one of her colleagues knew she had experience with evidence-based literacy, but the administrators did not acknowledge her prior experience, nor consult her to contribute to the professional learning of her peers. Stephanie described one specific interaction that happened during the Orton-Gillingham workshop. During the workshop, one of her colleagues used her as a resource for how to utilize evidence-based literacy practices. While the colleague knew Stephanie had experience with evidence-based literacy, administrators did not seem to utilize this experience as a resource, failing to even acknowledge Stephanie's background in evidence-based techniques. Stephanie described the interaction:

> At one point, [the colleague] said something. She turned around, asked me something during a session, like a talk out session, and said, "Well, let me ask [Stephanie], because she's got a [specific phonics method] background." . . . But yeah, but it was very, very similar

to Science of Reading stuff. So just that sitting, that was not helpful. (Interview, February 19,

2025)

Leigh also talked about the lack of input she had during the transition, particularly in the

selection of knowledge building curricula, stating "It was just kind of decided. It wasn't really like,

do we think this fits? And I would say it's going okay, but I wouldn't necessarily go straight ahead and

say that it's been successful" (Interview, February 21, 2025).

The limited opportunities for two-way teacher and administrator interactions resulted in

differing perspectives of the professional learning experiences and their impact on literacy

instructional practices. The following sub-sections detail three key areas where the administrators

and teachers described differing perspectives: collective engagement, change saturation, and the

success of the implementation.

Collective Engagement. The administrators, Olivia and Julie, emphasized how important it

was that everyone participate in the transition to evidence-based literacy. Both Julie and Olivia said

that it was important for all the lower school faculty to have a shared experience together. Julie

emphasized the importance of every teacher participating in the Orton-Gillingham training, saying,

"I can't really overexpress how important, really, that collaboration is, like everybody's sort of

working together for a common good" (Interview, February 3, 2025).

Both administrators emphasized that they intentionally developed a collective body of

knowledge so that every member of the lower school faculty would have a shared experience from

which to begin the literacy transition. This is described directly by Olivia:

And I think everybody was also excited about this commitment as a lower school, like as a lower school, we are committed to growing together. As a lower school, we are going to use best practices. As a lower school, we are going to be adaptive. Everybody was on board with that. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

Olivia also described the intentional way in which the administration prepared the faculty for the transition by providing them with resources intended to foster a shared commitment to make a shift in literacy instruction.

And then really it was the kind of slow trickle work of just the messaging of, hey, there's change coming, like we're going to go through this big training, and we want you to be ready. That we're going to start some new things, and we're going to put the infrastructure in place to be here to support you. But just, you know, that can be hard with faculty. Just kind of that constant messaging of . . . we want you to listen to this podcast. We want you to watch this documentary. We want you to be engaged with the research. And here's some research we're providing you. And some resources that everybody can do on their own time, but just to kind of get that paradigm shift started for teachers. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

This intentionality of the administrators may be best illustrated by the "Science of Reading Commitments" document (Appendix F) that Olivia shared with the lower school faculty in the spring of 2023 (Document review, January 31, 2025). This commitment document outlines a shared commitment for all lower school faculty to teach phonics in a structured, sequential, systematic way, using decodable texts, using multisensory strategies, explicitly teaching phonemic awareness, and collaborating and sharing ideas with one another (Document review, January 31, 2025).

Teachers reported a different experience than that described by Olivia and Julie. None of the survey responses or interviews with teachers referenced the Science of Reading commitments document (Appendix F). There was no mention of teachers (other than the two included in the reading summit) contributing to the shared commitments. While the administrators intended for this to be a collective experience for all faculty, there's little evidence that the teachers viewed the transition to evidence-based literacy as one where "everyone was on board."

This is reflected through the teacher interviews, when teachers expressed frustration about what was expected of them. Leigh felt decisions were made about curriculum without any buy-in from teachers on what is best for students, stating about the adoption of Core Knowledge, "it wasn't really a discussion, it was just decided" (Interview, February 21, 2025). Stephanie felt strongly that the expectations for Orton-Gillingham instruction, especially during year one of the implementation, were not aligned with what she knew was best for her students:

> When we first started, so not this year, but last year, the material we were given started us with "A says a as in apple"; a says a in fourth grade! I teach fourth grade! Yeah, I didn't like that at all . . . and my kids were looking at me like I was an idiot, and I felt like an idiot. (Interview, February 19, 2025)

Stephanie believed that starting at the beginning of how to read in fourth grade was not what the students needed, yet she was doing what she had been asked to do. Only after touring another independent school were Stephanie's beliefs affirmed:

> When that changed was when we went to [another independent school]. And there was a lady there who's OG certified, and in our talking with her, she asked a great question.

So, something she said led up to my being able to ask, "Are we supposed to start at, like,

card one?" And she's like, "No, fourth grade doesn't start there. You guys should be way

[further along]." I was like, "thank you!" That was a great sense of relief. (Interview, February

19, 2025)

Other teachers felt that the transition took place without effective planning before

implementation. "I believe we jumped into this implementation prematurely. We were asked to

adopt new approaches without a solid curriculum framework or accountability measures in place"

(Survey, February 25, 2025). Interviews and survey responses reveal that despite the administrators

claiming that "everyone was on board," the teachers felt differently. The teachers felt they were not

heard or given a chance to contribute to the changes before and during the implementation

process.

Change Saturation. The timeline of evidence-based literacy implementation (Figure 5)

reveals the extent of the changes implemented due to the shift in literacy instruction.

Administrators acknowledged that there were many changes being made at one time during the

transition to evidence-based literacy and tried to mitigate that, where possible. Julie said, "I wish we

had been able to do the sound walls [during year one], but again, we were trying to be so careful, to

not do everything at once" (Interview, February 3, 2025). She added "they didn't have to learn three

curriculums at one time. I mean, it was hard enough to really kind of change what they're doing"

(Interview, February 3, 2025).

Yet, teachers were being asked to incorporate several new curricula, including Heggerty

Phonemic Awareness curriculum, Studies Weekly materials for social studies instruction, and Core

Knowledge materials for science instruction – all while also attempting to incorporate Orton-

Gillingham intervention methods. Despite the administration's attempts to lessen the extent of the changes, the teachers still perceived the changes as too numerous to effectively integrate the new literacy initiatives into their teaching. The adoption of so many new curricular materials resulted in a perception by teachers that there were too many things added to the literacy instruction to do anything fully. Several teachers described a feeling of too many changes at once. Leigh said,

> We're trying to hit so many buttons each day that phonics instruction, Orton-Gillingham and reading instruction, Core Knowledge, aren't getting the full, you know, time allotted that they need, because we're also trying to fit in, like Voyages [writing curriculum] and handwriting skills and so it's too short to do it fully. (Interview, February 21, 2025)

Leigh added that "time doesn't quite allow for it, like time, how time is broken up in the classroom" (Interview, February 21, 2025).

An abundance of curriculum changes led teachers to feel as though students were missing out on quality instruction. Evelyn described the difficulty in making everything work within the Oak City Lower School schedule. "The process has kind of been difficult, I think, trying to figure out how to put it in with what we're teaching the curriculum" (Interview, March 20, 2025). A survey respondent said of the literacy implementation "so many changes makes it hard to see what works best" (Survey, February 25, 2025). Despite the administrators' reported attempts to reduce the impact of changes, the teachers sensed that simply too many things were being changed to implement anything fully and effectively.

Success of the implementation. Teachers and administrators also had differing points of view towards the success of the curricular changes, particularly those related to literacy

instruction. Administrators were consistently positive regarding the success of the implementation, while teachers had varied opinions that were largely dependent on their individual classroom experiences. Every interview concluded with the question "Do you view the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction as a success? Why or why not?" (Appendix A; Appendix D). The administrators answered the question with an emphatic yes. Olivia remarked,

> Yes, I do think it's a success. I think anytime you get a faculty completely on the same page with commitments together and that get to do a training where everybody's sharing ideas, from the first-year teacher to the teacher that's been teaching for 37 years, and you have a culture of wanting to learn more. I think that's a win. It is absolutely a win that we have moved away from strategies that are not founded in research and that have been debunked. That's a win. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

She did, however, admit there was still work to be done, adding:

> It's been hard work, and we still have our challenges . . . It's hard to move away from things that you've done for a long time, to build new lessons, to teach small groups differently. But I think we also have a culture of trust too, and that's important. (Interview, January 31, 2025)

Julie shared a similar sentiment about the success of the literacy implementation, saying "I think our literacy implementation has been very successful" (Interview, February 3, 2025).

The administrators described everyone being "on the same page" as a metric of success, but the teachers looked to their own classroom experiences to assess whether the implementation had been a success. Teachers provided a range of responses to the question of success of the implementation. Gina observed positive results in her classroom, so she viewed the

implementation of evidence-based literacy as a success, saying "I do based off the results of my students. I do. . . I think it lessens the need for interventions, because you're hitting a lot of the stuff early versus waiting to the mid-year" (Interview, March 12, 2025).

Evelyn was optimistic, but not fully convinced, saying,

I do. I think it's a success. I think there's still growth. I think there's still learning that needs to happen. I think we still need coaching, and whether it's someone comes in and helps us with ideas and looking at a lesson and planning it with us, and kind of looking over trajectory of what could you add to this Letterland lesson each week . . . Yeah, but I do think it's off to a good start. (Interview, March 20, 2025)

Stephanie felt the implementation was a success because it confirmed her pre-existing beliefs about the value of evidence-based literacy practices. "Yes, I do, just because its phonics based, and I think that's the best way to learn to read. It makes sense" (Interview, February 19, 2025).

Teresa and Leigh were not yet ready to declare the implementation a success. Teresa said, "I am optimistic, but at the same time, I'm comparing where my readers have been in the past this time of year to now, and there are differences" (Interview, March 6, 2025). She continued, explaining the differences,

What I have noticed is that although my students are very good at decoding new words, I feel like their fluency has taken a hit in reading, because they almost tend to decode words that they do not need to decode. (Interview, March 6, 2025)

Leigh also felt it was too early to declare the implementation a success:

I would probably say it's too soon to tell honestly, because it just started, and I feel like we

as teachers are just now getting the hang of it. But if I had to say yes or no, I'd probably say

no . . . we're trying to hit so many buttons each day that phonics instruction, Orton-

Gillingham and reading instruction, Core Knowledge, aren't getting the full, you know, time

allotted that they need . . . so, in that sense, I would think, no. (Interview, February 21, 2025)

While teachers looked at the effects of the professional learning on their students'

outcomes, the administrators looked at teacher participation in the implementation as a gauge of

success. These different metrics resulted in the mismatch of perspectives between administrators

and teachers. Recommendations in chapter 5 will outline methods that can mitigate this mismatch

with intentional planning prior to beginning a curricular transition in the future.

Finding 2: Collaboration among teachers during and following professional learning

experiences supported the implementation of new literacy practices.

Despite the differing views of the implementation process, there was cohesion within the

teacher responses when asked about their experience with different types of professional learning.

Teachers expressed that collaboration was an important factor in supporting their implementation

of new literacy practices. Every teacher mentioned collaboration during the individual interviews

and several teachers also mentioned the value they perceived in collaboration. Stephanie said

"During the OG training, we did some work, like together in little pods or groups or stuff like that.

That was helpful" (Interview, February 19, 2025). Teresa mentioned the importance of collaboration

when implementing the new literacy expectations, citing the value she finds in collaborating with

her grade level team when planning lessons (Interview, March 6, 2025).

Evelyn described the ways she has benefited from collaborating during the literacy implementation, saying she finds it helpful:

> Getting ideas from other people, I think that always helps seeing something. And I think we all have lots of great ideas, and one is just because you have a great idea doesn't mean you're a fabulous teacher, or you're not a fabulous teacher because you didn't have a great idea, yeah, but using those to help our kids? Yeah. (Interview, March 20, 2025)

Teachers also consistently used "we" language rather than "I" when describing the transition to evidence-based literacy practices. Evelyn said, "I think everyone's trying to apply something" (Interview, March 20, 2025). Stephanie also said, "we're all doing it" (Interview, February 19, 2025). Teresa said, "we have a great team" (Interview, March 6, 2025).

Leigh mentioned how her grade level team collaborates for literacy instruction, saying "then, we come together to kind of discuss plans" (Interview, February 21, 2025). Gina spoke at length about the importance of collaboration for successful implementation of evidence-based literacy:

> So, we took all three. We took Letterland, Heggerty and OG before, during the summer . . . We plan for our whole year during the summer. And so, we actually took all three and looked at it and figured out, how can we merge them? How can we cross them over as we're going along? And so, it's really cool to see how we merged it where Heggerty was working on the same thing we were working on in the diagraphs, like we were able to, so the schedules were seamless. (Interview, March 12, 2025)

Survey results also reflected the positive impact of collaboration on further advancing the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. One survey respondent specifically mentioned needing more collaboration as an additional learning opportunity to support evidence-based literacy instruction (Survey, February 25, 2025). Another respondent requested more collaboration with the grades before and after her grade level to ensure vertical alignment (Survey, February 25, 2025). A survey respondent said she wished the Orton-Gillingham training had been more active and collaborative (Survey, February 25, 2025). Yet another respondent said, "it would be beneficial to establish a more robust system of collaboration and coaching" (Survey, February 25, 2025). Survey and interview data consistently support the benefit of collaboration for helping teachers during a transition to a new curriculum. Chapter 5 will outline ways to further expand collaboration when implementing new curricular expectations.

Finding 3: Observations, feedback, and modeling of lessons were impactful professional learning experiences for teachers during the implementation of new literacy practices.

In addition to collaboration, observations (conducted both by peers and the curriculum and instruction coach), feedback, and modeling were consistently indicated as impactful learning experiences during the transition to evidence-based literacy practices. The rating questions on the teacher survey illustrate these findings:

- 2 out of 3 reported changing their instruction as a result of modeling
- 3 out of 4 reported changing their instruction as a result of coaching
- 3 out of 4 reported coaching as useful in revising literacy instruction
- 5 out of 10 reported changing their instruction as a result of peer observations
- 7 out of 10 reported peer observations as useful in revising literacy instruction

Open-ended responses on the survey specifically requested more observation and modeling opportunities. "We need more peer observations . . . and more modeling of ideas" (Survey, February 25, 2025). Another identified that it would be helpful to "observ[e] more classrooms and watch videos of how to incorporate science of reading components into my lessons" (Survey, February 25, 2025). One respondent provided a specific request for observation, feedback, and modeling:

> I think it would be beneficial to have an OG certified teacher to observe us at the beginning of the week as to how we are communicating and meeting the needs of our students. Also, to provide feedback as to how we may better meet the needs of our students. So, in essence, a follow-up on our OG training (Survey, February 25, 2025).

Another respondent requested more instructional coaching, saying it would "allow teachers to share best practices, receive feedback, and refine their instructional strategies" (Survey, February 25, 2025).

In interviews, teachers also indicated they valued observation, feedback, and modeling. Evelyn said,

> I really learned well from modeling . . . and seeing that expectation, whether it's watching someone teach it . . . whether it's someone in the classroom, yeah, and getting ideas from other people. I think that always helps seeing something. (Interview, March 20, 2025)

Gina identified modeling as a helpful aspect of the Orton-Gillingham training.

> The how was really cool, how to implement the methods, how to implement the scope and sequence . . . It had some really good things. It had some really good strategies and

methods that I would have never thought . . . I really get into a training when you can

actually show me how I can apply it to my classroom" (Interview, March 12, 2025)

Leigh also identified the modeling aspects of Orton-Gillingham training as helpful, saying "we

practiced doing it, and it was almost like we were the second graders, and she was a teacher, and

so we did what the second graders would do. That was so pivotal" (Interview, February 21, 2025).

Teachers frequently reported the value of modeling, observation, and feedback throughout

the interviews and survey. Chapter 5 will outline ways to further expand the instructional support

provided by observation, feedback, and modeling when implementing a new curriculum.

Finding 4: Teacher's prior experiences with professional learning influenced their perceptions

of professional learning experiences in the present.

Feedback from teachers indicates that their prior experiences influenced how they viewed

each professional learning experience and how they viewed the impacts of the new literacy

practices in their classrooms. This was particularly evident when discussing the Orton-Gillingham

workshop with teachers. Two teachers, Stephanie and Leigh, described the ways that they learned

to teach reading in college as being consistent with the content covered during Orton-Gillingham

training. Stephanie was the teacher interviewed with the most experience (40+ years), yet she

described learning to teach reading in a model that she identified as very similar to the training of

Orton-Gillingham. Additionally, she had been required to attend a Science of Reading training

several years before coming to Oak City School. She indicated that she did not have a positive

attitude about attending the Orton-Gillingham training:

I had a really bad attitude about it, because for the length that I've taught, and that I've

taught that, right, and went to a college where that, you know, um, I just thought I'm the last

person that needs to be in here. (Interview, February 19, 2025)

Leigh was the teacher interviewed with the least experience (less than 5 years) and also

viewed the need to attend Orton-Gillingham training as unnecessary for her: "I thought, 'I already

know this. I don't want to take a class for it,' because I had just graduated college and everything

was Science of Reading" (Interview, February 21, 2025). Both Leigh and Stephanie described

approaching the Orton-Gillingham training as something they dreaded because they felt they knew

all the content.

Teresa, Gina, and Evelyn did not approach the Orton-Gillingham workshop with negative

feelings. They all expressed an interest in learning additional ways to help their students learn to

read. However, they did indicate the influence of previous experience on how they perceived

professional learning opportunities. Evelyn said, "I think a lot of education is like that. If I was really

being honest. I think sometimes we have meetings to meet" (Interview, March 20, 2025). Gina also

described frustration with having to spend three days of summer in a workshop, asking "Why do we

have to give up our summer?" (Interview, March 12, 2025).

All five teacher interview participants started the shift to evidence-based literacy instruction

from a different starting point, adding another layer of difficulty for the literacy transition. In

interviews, the administrators did not acknowledge these different experiences and attitudes

among the teachers. Instead, Olivia and Julie attempted to create a collective experience so that

everyone had a similar place from which to start the training (described in Finding 1). However, this

led to some teachers having a negative attitude towards the learning opportunities, rather than all

teachers approaching the professional learning with an openness to learn something that would improve their teaching methods. Recommendations in Chapter 5 will outline how prior experiences should be considered when determining future professional learning opportunities for teachers at Oak City Lower School.

Finding 5: While teachers reported incorporating new teaching practices into their instruction, it is unclear whether their beliefs about literacy instruction have changed.

Teachers' comments reflect that while they may be incorporating new teaching practices, their beliefs about how to effectively foster student learning may not align with these changes. Administrators presented the Science of Reading commitments in the spring of 2023 with the expectation that all faculty would adopt them (Interview, January 31, 2025). The interviews reflect that teachers have incorporated these new literacy practices. Through the implementation, some teachers have witnessed enough evidence to change their beliefs, while others have not.

Gina and Stephanie both noted students performing much better than in previous years, confirming the effectiveness of their new teaching practices. Gina noted positive growth in her classes with the shift to evidence-based literacy, noting:

> We've seen some big jumps, especially with some students . . . for some of my friends who at the beginning of the year were pretty low and struggling in some areas, we've seen some really big jumps. So, [I'm] pretty happy about that. (Interview, March 12, 2025)

Stephanie mentioned that she's observed the students making greater progress in spelling, stating "since Christmas, the [spelling] words have gotten more complex, and they're like, 'whoa,' but they're able to handle it because of the stair step" (Interview February 19, 2025). Gina and

Stephanie both stated they viewed the implementation of evidence-based practices as a success because of perceived improvement to student outcomes, as observed in their classrooms.

Leigh, Teresa, and Evelyn did not yet seem convinced that the literacy transition is making a positive impact on students. In fact, both Leigh and Teresa specifically said that it's too early to tell if the literacy implementation has been a success. Evelyn expressed a feeling that incorporating additional practices was more of a burden, rather than strengthening her classroom instruction, saying "Yeah, because last thing we need is more work, right? Or more little things that we want you to do to make sure you're doing what you're doing, which it's clear we're doing what we're doing," (Interview, March 20, 2025). Leigh also expressed concern that the addition of new literacy expectations was at the expense of other strategies that she deemed more important, such as reading groups:

> So, we haven't really done reading groups this year. We haven't had time in the day to do reading groups. So, what we've been doing this year is everything's been a whole group. Which works in terms of getting things done, but it doesn't work . . . in terms of getting each kid what they need. (Interview, February 21, 2025)

Teresa mentioned that while she is incorporating the new practices, she still believes that their old practice of using mentor texts is valuable and should not be discarded:

> We just find value in those mentor texts and that program that we've had. It had a lot of strengths. It really supported their writing, things like that. So that'd be the one thing that I'd like a little bit of a better balance. (Interview, March 6, 2025)

Both Teresa and Evelyn referenced how their current students were not as far along in their reading development as students they had in past years. Teresa mentioned,

> What I have noticed is that although my students are very good at decoding new words, I feel like their fluency has taken a hit in reading, because they almost tend to decode words that they do not need to decode. (Interview, March 6, 2025)

This observation was used to support her hesitation to declare the literacy implementation a success, but she did admit that it could just be that her current class was slower to develop fluency. Evelyn also struggled to see progress in her students, noting "I'm still struggling . . . I'm seeing more and more kids who cannot read, who cannot write, by the time they enter third grade" (Interview, March 20, 2025). These viewpoints underscore the discussion above that while teachers may be adopting the new curriculum and instruction expectations, they may not have made a change to their beliefs regarding what is best for students.

Teachers have varied feelings towards the transition to evidence-based literacy and its level of success. Some teachers have seen positive growth, while others do not see any evidence of improvement. If evidence-based literacy is to be implemented with fidelity, there is some additional work for administrators to do in building confidence that these changes are worthwhile, because at least some teachers are not yet convinced that it is making a difference. Recommendations in Chapter 5 will outline ways to further develop teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of evidence-based literacy practices to ensure full implementation of the literacy program.

Discussion

  The five findings highlighted above are supported by the literature and conceptual framework of this study and can illuminate the process of evidence-based literacy implementation at Oak City Lower School. The following sub-sections will highlight the connections between theoretical research and the data collected in this study.

Differing Perspectives

  While it is not unusual for teachers and administrators to see things differently, the enthusiasm and energy exuded by Olivia and Julie for the new literacy curriculum was not matched by the teachers. After years of having the freedom to select their own literacy practices, a uniform expectation was given to all teachers in the lower school to adopt a number of instructional approaches aligned with the new curricula. Teachers no longer had free choice of how to teach reading beginning in the 2023-24 school year. While the administration viewed the effort as collective and "everyone was on board," the findings of this study present a different story. Teachers felt they were being asked to do things that were counter to what they thought was best for their students. Practices that they believed to be most effective for literacy instruction, such as meeting in small reading groups or using mentor texts, were no longer accommodated in the new model. Stephanie thought they were teaching content that was too easy for her students, and she was later affirmed in that belief when they visited another school. It was only after the school visit that the expectations for reading instruction were adjusted.

  This mismatch between administrator and teacher perceptions is documented in other studies. Tichenor and Tichenor (2009) conducted a survey of teacher and administrator views towards professionalism. They found a significant difference between the views of teachers and

administrators towards the importance of a commitment to continuous improvement in seven key

behaviors (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2009). Two of those behaviors identified in their study are directly

related to the findings of this study: 1) Regularly observe other teachers to improve one's own

teaching and 2) Select teaching strategies based on best practices in current educational research

(Tichenor & Tichenor, 2009). In these two areas, administrators rated the practice as significantly

more important than the teachers. Tichenor and Tichenor's (2009) findings illustrate a disconnect

between administrators and teachers towards the importance of adopting new teaching practices.

This disconnect was also observed at Oak City Lower School, as not all teachers at Oak City

seemed convinced of the need to adopt so many different literacy strategies, even though they were

all based on current educational research. Yet, the administrators enthusiastically embraced and

adopted changes they deemed necessary to better align literacy instruction with current research.

Collective Engagement. The mismatch between administrators and teachers at Oak City

also differed in their views of collective engagement in the literacy implementation process. The

collective experience of all teachers attending the Orton-Gillingham workshop was described by

Olivia and Julie as an important component for building a collaborative mentality between the

faculty. They fostered this collective mentality from the top-down by creating and sharing a

"Science of Reading Commitments" document (Appendix F) and building a case for why the shift in

literacy instruction was imperative. Yet, the teachers did not indicate an opportunity to contribute

to the decision-making, resulting in a lack of buy-in when the Orton-Gillingham workshop began the

professional learning sequence in the summer of 2023.

Additional research highlights the importance of two-way collaboration between teachers

and administrators. Clausen et al. (2009) found that communication channels have to be open if a

collaborative learning community is to be successful. Their case study identified how important it is to have a two-way dialogue between teachers and administrators when building a collective, collaborative experience in a school (Clausen et al., 2009). Robinson (2018) posits that "if educators experience their leaders as listening and as responding to feedback in ways that build a more compelling theory for improvement, trust will grow, and they will become more internally and less externally committed to the change" (p. 4).

Oak City Lower School provided some limited opportunities for teachers to share in the decision making. Two teachers were involved in the decision to make the shift to evidence-based literacy instruction, but following that, a series of curriculum materials were implemented and expected to be fully adopted by the teachers. When sound walls were expected to be implemented in the 2024-25 school year, teachers received in-house training. However, when Heggerty, Core Knowledge, EL, and Studies Weekly were added to the literacy curriculum expectations, no training was offered to the teachers, only resources. Olivia spent time preparing teachers for the transition with resources on evidence-based literacy and viewed the implementation as a success because everyone was "on the same page." The teachers had more varied results, reflecting a difference between what the administrators believed to be true, and how the teachers actually perceived the implementation in their classrooms.

Omission of Assessment Information. Olivia discussed administering reading assessments during the 2023-24 school year (Interview, January 31, 2025). However, only one of the teachers interviewed referenced the utilization of assessments to determine the success of the literacy instruction. Gina discussed benchmark assessments as reflecting growth and observing some "really big jumps" in student reading ability (Interview, March 12, 2025). The other teachers

interviewed did not reference assessment data in their interviews. This lack of discussion of assessment data may be because assessment was not part of the teacher interview protocol. It also may be attributed to the fact that Olivia conducted assessments so that teachers did not need to do so (Interview, January 31, 2025). It may be useful in a future study to investigate the impact of this de-centralized assessment method on the reflective response of teachers towards their literacy instruction.

Teachers' Prior Experiences

Each teacher is impacted by their prior experiences with professional learning and literacy instruction. Teachers enter each new learning opportunity influenced by their previous experiences (Knowles et al., 2015). This can lead to teachers making decisions about the learning experience before even beginning the learning process.

Prior experiences are particularly influential with literacy instruction due to the historical pendulum swing around which practices are best for teaching students how to read (Kim, 2008). The fact that both Leigh and Stephanie learned to teach with a Science of Reading focus while their colleagues learned a whole language approach appears to be a symptom of the "reading wars" and the pendulum swing from phonics instruction and whole language instruction that has permeated the last 50 years of educational research.

The past experiences of Oak City teachers in literacy instruction were apparent throughout the study, as every teacher interviewed described a different method of learning how to teach reading, ranging from specific approaches, such as Abeka Reading, to "trial and error." Because every teacher entered the transition to evidence-based literacy with a different educational background, the shift in literacy instruction posed an extra level of challenge. Knowles et al. (2015)

write about the importance of considering learners' prior experiences when teaching adult learners. "It also means that for many kinds of learning, the richest resources for learning reside in the adult learners themselves" (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 45). Oak City administrators may have missed out on some of these "richest resources" by not accounting for the teacher's prior experiences with evidence-based literacy instruction.

Rather than drawing on the experiences of its teachers as a strength, administrators addressed the variety of prior experiences by sharing a body of knowledge to which all teachers could refer. Yet, two teachers in particular, Leigh and Stephanie, felt the time spent in the Orton-Gillingham workshop was not necessary for them to adopt evidence-based literacy practices because they were already using them in their classrooms. Knowles et al. (2015) describe this challenge, saying "as we accumulate experience, we tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions, and alternative ways of thinking" (p. 45). Indeed, the rich and diverse experiences of Oak City Lower School teachers led to some presuppositions that set up the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction to be poorly received. Oak City administrators could have benefited from gathering more information about teachers' experience with evidence-based literacy before beginning the implementation process. Chapter 5 will outline ways to use this prior experience of teachers as a benefit for the school.

Changing Teacher Practices, Changing Teacher Beliefs

Through both the survey and interviews, teachers indicated a range of challenges that impacted their ability to implement evidence-based literacy with fidelity. Some of these challenges were created by the literacy transition itself, such as the addition of curriculum expectations. Other

challenges described include the structure of the lower school schedule and other curricular activities outside of literacy instruction. The number of changes that happened in a short time frame also led to negative perceptions towards the shift in literacy instruction and served as a barrier to teachers embracing the literacy transition. Buchanan (2022) writes, "to many simultaneous initiatives can push ecosystems to the breaking point," (p. 24) which may be happening at Oak City.

Administrators acknowledged the challenges presented by making too many changes at once and tried to reduce them where possible. However, teachers still shared the view that the transition happened too quickly, making it difficult to accomplish all that was described in the "Science of Reading Commitments" document (Appendix F). Teachers are still considering the impact of these new expectations on their students. Both Teresa and Leigh would not describe the implementation of evidence-based practices as a success. Even though Leigh was trained in evidence-based literacy methods in college, she still views Oak City's current expectations for her students to be misaligned with what she thinks is best. Administrators at Oak City will want to continue to observe the process of implementation, as teachers may not be fully implementing the new practices with fidelity as they may not believe they will result in positive student outcomes.

Conceptual Framework Reflections

Figure 4 presented the conceptual framework of the Oak City Lower School shift in literacy instruction with the required inputs of active learning, collaboration, and sustained support. The findings from this study work within this conceptual framework. However, for the implementation of new literacy practices at Oak City School, a few adjustments to the conceptual framework would better represent the specific context of this study. Figure 7 illustrates a revised conceptual

framework. The following sub-sections explain the changes to the design and describe why revisions for the context of this study are warranted.

Figure 7

Revised Conceptual Framework for Teacher Change at Oak City Lower School
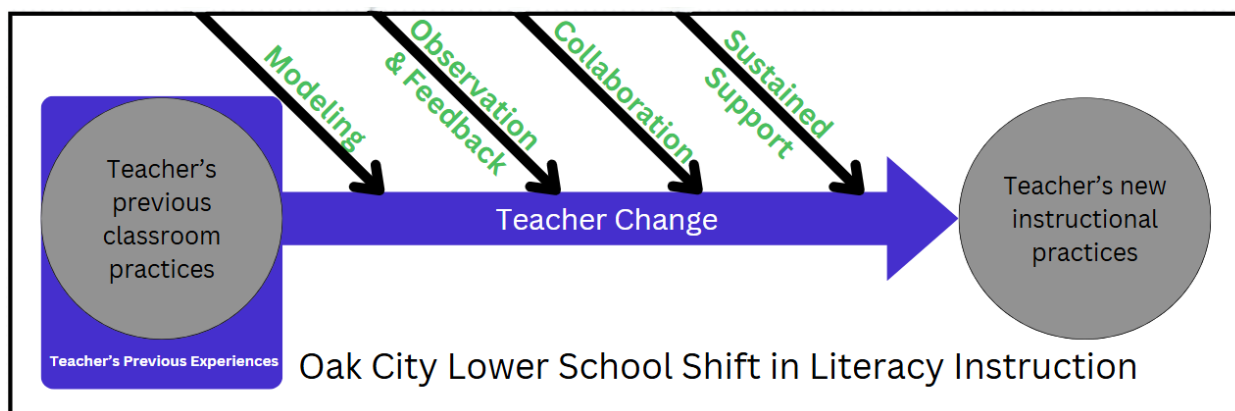
Collaboration. Collaboration was confirmed through the study as a significant input for teacher change. Collaboration was mentioned in every teacher and administrator interview. Additionally, survey respondents indicated the importance of collaboration, with one request for further collaboration: "We need more peer observations, collaboration and more modeling of new ideas." (Survey, February 25, 2025). Collaboration was supported throughout the study with input from teachers, as survey respondents and interview participants all pointed to the importance of working with other teachers to find ways to best meet the needs of their students. Finding 2 outlines that collaboration was consistently identified as having an impact on the implementation of evidence-based literacy. Formal structures within which teachers plan in teams were not identified in this study, but are confirmed in the literature as being an important component of developing a shared commitment to collaborate (Clausen et al., 2009). Chapter 5 will present action steps that

will further strengthen the collaborative environment at Oak City Lower School and ensure continued collaboration in future school years.

Sustained support. Sustained support was also indicated as a necessary input for teacher change. While sustained support was not specifically identified, several teachers indicated that change is slow and additional support over time will help to see if the evidence-based literacy shift is beneficial for students. Evelyn said,

> We've come a long way, and it's been exciting to watch, and knowing that we're only going to get better because we're hungry for it, you know, once you get a taste of it, and I've seen each of the grades start to bring more rigor into their teaching, into their lessons [as a result of the literacy transition]. (Interview, March 20, 2025)

Survey respondents also mentioned that change takes time:

> I appreciate all that the school does to give us opportunities to learn and implement new ideas. As with any new program, it takes a while for teachers to feel comfortable using new ideas. I imagine next year will be even better. (Survey, February 25, 2025)

Another respondent wrote "I like what we have implemented this year. It's really good, and I see no use in changing it. I want to master it by using it year after year" (Survey, February 25, 2025). Sustained support is reflected in these comments with the understanding that change takes time. However, as demonstrated by the implementation timeline in Figure 5, the intentional professional learning support seems to have declined over time. Chapter 5 will share recommendations on how to ensure professional learning support is sustained throughout the next stages of implementation, rather than continuing to drop off.

Active learning. The study's findings indicate active learning was a preference for most teachers responding to the survey. However, active learning does not appear to be required for teacher change. Survey data indicate Letterland training was very impactful in resulting in a change in practice (5 out of 6 described it resulting in a revision to their literacy instruction), yet it was described as passive by the same 5 respondents (Survey, February 25, 2025). Additionally, the Orton-Gillingham workshop was described as passive by 10 of 13 respondents, but all 13 noted that it had an impact on their literacy instruction (Survey, February 25, 2025). Therefore, I propose that active learning is not required for teacher change at Oak City Lower School.

Observation and feedback. Observation and feedback, from a coach or a peer, was indicated as an important aspect of facilitating teacher change. Curriculum coaching that involves both observation and feedback was described as useful and impactful in revising literacy instruction by 3 out of 4 respondents to the survey (Survey, February 25, 2025). Additionally, 7 out of 10 respondents to the survey indicated that peer observations and feedback were useful in revising their literacy instruction.

I propose that observation and feedback should be added to the conceptual framework as a necessary input for teachers to continue to improve and change. The survey responses, as well as the teacher interviews, reflect how important feedback and observation have been during the literacy implementation. Chapter 5 will present recommendations to ensure intentional cycles of observation and feedback are utilized during the next stages of literacy implementation.

Modeling. Modeling was mentioned often (in 6 out of 7 interviews) as important in making a change in instruction. Teachers shared specific examples of why modeling is helpful. Evelyn said,

"I really learned well from modeling . . . seeing that expectation, whether it's watching someone teach it, you can kind of catch up on it, whether it's someone in the classroom and getting ideas from other people. I think that always helps seeing something." (Interview, March 20, 2025)

A survey respondent also requested additional support through modeling, writing that "observing more classrooms and watching videos of how to incorporate Science of Reading components into my lessons" (Survey, February 25, 2025) would be helpful. Two out of three respondents described modeling as both useful and impactful in changing their literacy instruction. I propose that modeling should be added to the conceptual framework as a necessary input for teacher change at Oak City Lower School. Chapter 5 will present recommendations for ensuring modeling is offered consistently in the next stages of evidence-based literacy implementation.

Prior experience. As described in this chapter, previous experiences have a significant impact on the teacher change process. Therefore, they should be included in the conceptual framework for the Oak City Lower School shift in literacy instruction. On the conceptual framework, I added a frame to the teacher's previous classroom practices because the classroom practices are shaped by teachers' previous experiences. The frame is the same color as the teacher change arrow because previous experiences are the base from which teachers begin the journey through teacher change. Chapter 5 will offer recommendations on how to ensure prior experiences are considered for future curriculum transitions.

An updated conceptual framework reflecting these adjustments is included above (Figure 7). The inputs for teacher change now include modeling, observation & feedback, collaboration, and sustained support. Each of these inputs was indicated as crucial for facilitating teacher change

at Oak City Lower School. Additionally, the frame around the teacher's previous classroom practices includes the teacher's previous experiences. This represents how a teacher's previous classroom experiences influence their teaching practices. The frame of previous classroom experiences is where teacher change begins. With sufficient input, a teacher will incorporate new instructional practices into their classroom.

As with the conceptual framework presented in chapter 1, teacher beliefs are not included. This is because the focus of the literacy implementation is on facilitating a change in practice first. Guskey's (1985) Teacher Change Theory proposes that a change in beliefs will follow after teachers observe a positive change in student outcomes. In this study, teachers are still working towards incorporating all the new practices in their classroom and some teachers have not yet observed enough evidence to result in a change in beliefs about literacy instruction. In theory, that will happen if student outcomes improve, but it will take time.

Conclusion

This chapter reported data and findings stemming from a document review, teacher survey, and interviews conducted during Phases I and II of this case study, as well as subsequent analysis. Teacher and administrator viewpoints have been shared. These data and analysis were used to formulate the findings of this case study including:

- **Finding 1:** Teachers and administrators reported differing perceptions of professional learning opportunities offered and how these opportunities impacted literacy instructional practices.

- **Finding 2:** Collaboration among teachers during and following professional learning experiences supported the implementation of new literacy practices.

- **Finding 3:** Observations, feedback, and modeling of lessons were impactful professional learning experiences for teachers during the implementation of new literacy practices.

- **Finding 4:** Teacher's prior experiences with professional learning influenced their perceptions of professional learning experiences in the present.

- **Finding 5:** While teachers reported incorporating new teaching practices into their instruction, it is unclear whether their beliefs about literacy instruction have changed.

Chapter 5 will outline the recommendations generated from these findings to assist Oak City Lower School as they continue the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices and other future curricular transitions.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

This study investigated the types of professional learning opportunities offered to Oak City Lower School teachers during the transition to evidence-based literacy and the ways in which they viewed those opportunities. Interviews, surveys, and a document review retraced the processes utilized for the literacy transition at Oak City and captured administrators' and teachers' perspectives on these changes. This chapter will provide recommendations for Oak City School leaders based on these findings and grounded in the research conducted for this case study.

Chapter 4 shared findings in five key areas: differing perspectives, collaboration, observation, feedback and modeling, prior experiences, and teacher change in beliefs. The recommendations presented in this chapter suggest ways to further support teachers as they continue the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices, and to guide the selection of professional learning opportunities for future curriculum and instruction changes. These recommendations integrate the findings shared in Chapter 4 with the conceptual framework and literature review shared in Chapters 1 and 2.

Recommendations

Recommendations are intended for administrators at Oak City School to provide ongoing and additional support for lower school teachers as they continue to implement evidence-based literacy instruction and for future curricular and instructional changes.

- **Recommendation #1**: Build momentum for new curricular initiatives by gathering input from all stakeholders.

- **Recommendation #2**: Align professional learning opportunities to teachers' backgrounds and needs.

- **Recommendation #3**: Strengthen professional learning support by creating intentional structures that facilitate collaboration, observation, feedback, and modeling.

The following sections will explain how the findings and research of this case study were used to develop these recommendations and why they are important for supporting teachers in the future. Each recommendation is also accompanied by specific action steps to provide guidance and implementation suggestions for Oak City administrators moving forward.

Recommendation #1: Build momentum for new curricular initiatives by gathering input from all stakeholders.

Administrators at Oak City School stressed the importance of a shared commitment to implementing evidence-based literacy practices. Julie and Olivia described developing a shared "Science of Reading Commitments" document (Appendix F) that outlined the transition to evidence-based literacy (Interview, January 31, 2025; Interview, February 3, 2025). These commitments were referenced throughout the interviews with administrators and served as the "big rocks" for the literacy transition (Interview, January 31, 2025). However, teachers did not contribute to the development of these commitments. In fact, teachers at Oak City School reported having limited, if any, opportunities to contribute to the decision-making around the evidence-based literacy implementation.

The lack of agency felt by the teachers during the literature transition was reflected in some of the teacher interviews. At the end of our interview, Leigh thanked me because "this is like the first time being at [Oak City] that someone in administration, or really, anyone's asked me how things

are going with curriculum in my classroom" (Interview, February 21, 2025). Stephanie also felt

unheard, as her hesitation during the first few months of the literacy transition was not

acknowledged by administrators. Her beliefs were only confirmed as accurate when the group

visited another school where a specialist said they should not be reteaching the basics of reading in

a fourth-grade classroom (Interview, February 19, 2025).

Knowles et al. (2015) describe learners' motivations and understanding the rationale for

learning as essential components of adult learning. Adults need to know why learning is necessary

to be receptive towards new knowledge. I recommend the following action steps be taken by Oak

City School administrators to ensure that teachers can collaborate with administrators on future

curricular transitions, increasing teacher self-efficacy and building positive momentum for an

impending shift in expectations.

Action step 1.1: Prior to implementing new curricular initiatives, conduct focus groups

to allow all stakeholders to share their insight regarding new curricular expectations and

cultivate collective engagement with changes. Oak City School administrators can build

momentum for future curricular transitions by including stakeholders in collaborative

conversations prior to the implementation. Administrators should use focus group meetings with

each grade level to provide opportunities for all teachers to discuss the rationale for making a

change and to share their reflections on any additional teaching expectations. These conversations

can establish the need to learn that is necessary for the teachers, while creating the collective buy-

in that was lacking in the literacy implementation.

In future curricular transitions, presenting the reason for making a curriculum transition can

improve Oak City School's adoption of any new curriculum and instruction models. Olivia, Julie,

and other administrators should dedicate time to meet with each grade level before rolling out new curriculum expectations. These focus group meetings should involve administrators presenting the case for the needed change and provide teachers with an opportunity to ask questions and collaborate on how to make the transition a success. A set of shared commitments developed collectively by all faculty members can further strengthen the commitment for each teacher to make a change to their practice by creating a collective buy-in for the changes and increase the fidelity with which teachers implement changes (Clausen et al., 2009). This would create foster teacher agency, and it would allow teachers to speak into the supports that they would need during the change.

Action step 1.2: Set up regular opportunities to gather feedback from teachers when implementing a new curriculum. Collecting feedback from teachers at regular intervals during the school year will provide administrators with a picture of the barriers to continued implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. Then, administrators can take the necessary steps to try to mitigate those barriers to further advance evidence-based literacy instruction in the lower school.

The data collected in this study indicates that teachers at Oak City feel unable to do all that is expected of them due to factors beyond their control, including having too many things to do inside the classroom and an excessive number of responsibilities outside the classroom. The loss of control expressed by teachers may be mitigated by providing teachers a chance to contribute to the formation of shared norms and have the opportunity to weigh in on whether those norms have been honored throughout the implementation process during regular check-ins with administrators during the school year.

Administrators should develop a systematic way of collecting feedback about the transition using check-in meetings during grade level planning time. Questions should be centered on what is going well, what challenges teachers are facing, and what additional supports are needed. The interview protocol (Appendix D) or teacher survey used in this study (Appendix B) could be used as templates for feedback collection. Of the 15 respondents to the survey, nine listed additional learning opportunities that they would like to see offered in the future, indicating that there are additional learning needs for the lower school faculty. Olivia described the intention to have focus group meetings during the 2024-25 school years, and some of them had taken place at the time of our interview (Interview, January 31, 2025). However, these meetings could happen more frequently to make sure adjustments are made to the professional support offered to teachers as they continue the implementation.

Recommendation #2: Align professional learning opportunities to teachers' backgrounds and needs.

Adult attitudes towards learning are greatly impacted by their prior experiences with professional learning (Knowles et al., 2015). Two teachers interviewed, Leigh and Stephanie, felt the five-day Orton-Gillingham workshop presented information that they already knew, and they did not need to attend (Interview, February 19, 2025; Interview February 21, 2025). Stephanie mentioned that one of her colleagues asked for her insight during the Orton-Gillingham workshop, knowing that she was already trained in evidence-based literacy instruction (Interview, February 19, 2025). If their prior experience using evidence-based literacy practices had been considered, Stephanie and Leigh could have been used as experts throughout the process. Then, rather than feeling as though they had just been given another thing to do, they could have helped their peers throughout the

process. The decision to not address these teachers' prior experience resulted in them experiencing a lack of appreciation for their knowledge and they entered into the literacy transition feeling frustrated.

Knowles et al. (2015) emphasize the impact of learners' prior experiences on their approach to learning new practices. The concept of andragogy seems to be well illustrated at Oak City, as the authors note, "in any situation in which the participants' experiences are ignored or devalued, adults will perceive this as rejecting no only their experience, but rejecting themselves as persons" (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 45). Stephanie and Leigh's attitudes reflect a feeling of being ignored and their experience devalued.

In the Teacher Change model, prior knowledge and experience is the beginning framework within which teachers begin to implement new teaching practices (Guskey, 1985). Figure 7 reflects the addition of prior experiences to the framework within which teachers begin to incorporate new practices. Because of the influence of prior experience on the teacher change process, teachers' background and previous experiences should be identified by administrators prior to onboarding new curriculum and instruction expectations at Oak City School.

Action step 2.1: Assess teachers' prior experiences before onboarding a new curriculum or instruction model. Before beginning a new curriculum or instruction model, administrators should collect information about teachers' existing experience or beliefs around the new model. This information can be collected during the focus groups also mentioned in recommendation #1. Administrators can use the same meeting time to gather information about each teachers' prior experience with the area targeted for revision.

Gathering information on teachers' prior experiences could reveal those who are content experts and provide a way to tap into their expertise for the collective experience, serving as additional support for other teachers, rather than leaving those experienced teachers feeling as though they did not need to participate in the training (Ehlert & Souvignier, 2023). For instance, if Oak City decides to onboard new expectations for science, they should first gather information about each teacher's prior experience with science resources, training they've received about teaching science, and any pre-existing notions that they have about how to best teach science. They could then identify any in-house "content experts" and use them as anchors for instruction. This would build on expertise that already exists at Oak City and honor the experience that these teacher-leaders can share with their colleagues.

Action step 2.2: Tailor additional professional learning offerings to meet the needs of the teachers, as determined by a needs assessment. Data collected through classroom observations and focus group interviews can provide Oak City School administrators with the information necessary to plan professional learning tailored to meet the needs of its teachers. Teachers responded to both the survey and interviews with a wide range of learning opportunities they found to be helpful. They often mentioned preferring active learning opportunities, yet when responding to questions about what learning opportunities were most helpful, they identified a training (Letterland) that was consistently described as passive. Therefore, rather than considering the preference of learners, I recommend administrators determine the needs of teachers and tailor the professional learning offerings to those needs.

As part of collecting teachers' prior experiences, administrators should also collect data on teachers' needs as adult learners. Conducting a needs assessment can help to determine who

would benefit from intensive coaching, who needs to see models of instruction, and who needs additional observation and feedback. Grant (2022) writes, "learning is more likely to lead to change in practice when a needs assessment has been conducted" (p. 156). A needs assessment can be compiled through conversations, interviews, and classroom observations. Grant (2022) describes different methods and modes of needs assessment that may be useful as a reference for administrators who develop a needs assessment for professional learning. There are a wide range of ways to collect data for a needs assessment, including surveys, observations, self-assessments, and informal conversations (Grant, 2022).

Oak City administrators should determine the learning needs of teachers using information gathered during classroom observations. Administrators can use observation data to identify targeted areas for growth of each teacher. The focus group interviews used for action step 2.1 can also be used for action step 2.2, using the time meeting with teachers to collect both prior experiences and any self-identified learning needs that teachers may indicate. Collecting data through the observations and interviews for the needs assessment will increase the likelihood of success when gaps in teacher proficiency are directly addressed during the development of a professional learning opportunity (Holyoke & Larson, 2009). Utilizing data collected during a needs assessment, along with information on teachers' prior experiences, can ensure teachers receive the learning support that will help them move further through the teacher change process.

Recommendation #3: Strengthen professional learning support by creating intentional structures that facilitate collaboration, observation, feedback, and modeling.

Teachers at Oak City Lower School identified collaboration, observation, feedback, and modeling as helpful methods of professional learning in the implementation of new literacy

practices. Research supports these methods as impactful characteristics of professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). According to the survey, these forms of professional learning were not accessed by all teachers at Oak City Lower School. Peer observations were conducted by 10 of the 15 survey respondents, despite being an expectation of all teachers (Interview, January 31, 2025; Survey, February 25, 2025). Instructional coaching was reported to be used by four of 15 respondents (Survey, February 25, 2025). Only two respondents said they had utilized modeling and only one responded to have used team teaching (Survey, February 25, 2025). With the low participation in these effective forms of professional learning, more emphasis should be placed on using these supports by creating intentional structures that require teacher participation.

The collaborative nature of the lower school faculty has been supported by dedicated planning time throughout the process. Olivia has led collaborative meetings with some grade level teams once this year, checking in on the progress they've made towards evidence-based literacy implementation (Interview, January 31, 2025). She has started the process outlined in action step 1.2 by meeting with small groups of teachers to check-in on literacy implementation.

Whether through PLCs or CoPs, each teacher can benefit from the collaborative effort (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Wilson and Berne (1999) identify successful professional learning experiences as those that involve communities of learners working together to develop teacher practice. They also describe successful professional learning experiences as those that "privilege[e] teachers' interaction with one another" (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 195). The action steps outlined below provide a blueprint of how administrators at Oak City School can further foster a spirit of collective learning and collaboration.

Action step 3.1: Create structures within the lower school to protect collaborative time for Communities of Practice. Set the expectation that all teachers participate on a regular basis. Additional time should be provided and protected during the school day for grade level teams to meet and discuss how to continue literacy implementation. Teachers should be required to meet as a grade level team at least once every two weeks to ensure the continuity of practice and collective support to learn from one another.

With supportive evidence from both the literature and data from this study, clear structures should be implemented within the school day and workdays to foster collaboration. A culture of collaboration appears to already be in place within Oak City Lower School faculty, with every teacher interview reflecting the language of "we" rather than "I." This culture of collaboration has created an opportunity for teachers to find support during the transition to evidence-based literacy. Collaboration can facilitate "new ideas and strategies to try. The experience helps solidify [teachers'] understanding of the content and develop their own knowledge about students' thinking about the concepts" (Van Garderen et al., 2012, p. 437).

Oak City School administrators should implement structures that protect time during the school day for teachers to participate in effective modes of professional learning and emphasize the expectation that these PL methods should be utilized by all teachers at frequent and regular intervals. This meeting time should be scheduled by administrators to occur at regular intervals and then protected against other schedule interruptions. Setting aside protected time for teachers to collaborate can increase teacher engagement and further strengthen teacher implementation of new practices (Clausen et al., 2009).

Action step 3.2: Use information from the needs assessment to target additional modeling, observation, and feedback for specific teachers who need additional support. Peer observations, feedback, and modeling should be further used to support the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices, as teachers at Oak City Lower School identified each of these professional learning opportunities as impactful. These professional learning structures are already in place, but should be utilized more frequently by teachers, especially those observed by administrators as needing additional support.

Data from this study suggests that teachers still need additional professional learning to continue to implement evidence-based literacy practices with fidelity. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) suggest that effective professional learning experiences provide modeling of practice and the integration of coaching and expert support. The findings from this study suggest that teachers at Oak City Lower School have found both modeling and coaching to be effective at assisting them during the literacy transition. While all teachers at Oak City have modeling and coaching available to them, not everyone has participated (Survey, February 25, 2025). Data from the study also indicated that observation and feedback through coaching has been valuable through the literacy transition, but underutilized.

All teachers are currently expected to conduct three peer observations and provide targeted feedback on their colleagues' teaching methods each year. However, not every teacher reported completing these tasks. The curriculum and instruction coach should maintain records on peer observations to ensure teachers are provided the time and opportunity to conduct these observations and hold teachers accountable to the standard. Coverage for teachers should be provided by the administration for teachers to observe another peer's classroom, making it easier

for teachers to meet this standard, rather than it being perceived as an additional burden of expectation.

Rather than only providing coaching and modeling to a few teachers, every teacher should be required to work with the curriculum and instruction coach to further improve their literacy instruction. Teachers at Oak City Lower School should receive specific modeling, observation and feedback from the curriculum and instruction coach, tailored to their identified specific areas of need. The curriculum and instruction coach, as well as the reading specialist, should frequently provide modeled lessons for all teachers at times set aside specifically for professional learning, such as division meetings or teacher workdays. This consistent modeling will improve the active participation of the faculty in their own learning.

Further Research

This study aimed to investigate the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices at Oak City Lower School and the professional learning provided to assist teachers through the process. After completing an analysis of the data, new questions and areas for follow-up research emerged, such as how much capacity do teachers have to integrate multiple curricular changes at once? When teachers are expected to make several changes at one time, how do they prioritize their focus? How can administrators and teachers collaborate to successfully navigate a curricular transition? These questions should be addressed through further research related to teacher professional learning and Teacher Change Theory.

The lack of existing feedback mechanisms currently utilized by Oak City Lower School led to the development of recommendations reflecting increased opportunities for all teachers to participate actively during future curricular changes. Julie referenced previous changes to the math

and writing curricula as recently as 2019 (Interview, March 3, 2025). It would be helpful to further

explore how those curricula were implemented and if any insight gained from those previous

changes was implemented during the transition to evidence-based literacy.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study. First, the interviews and survey were conducted

approximately 18 months into the evidence-based literacy implementation at Oak City Lower

School. Given the extended time frame, it is important to note that participants' recollections of

events and conversations may be limited and potentially inaccurate. Secondly, the document

analysis accuracy is dependent on the complete transfer of records from the administrators for the

study. It is possible that some documents were not provided for review. Additionally, there was a

limited time frame in which to conduct this study. The timeline followed for the study is included in

Appendix G, with approximately two weeks for each stage of data collection and analysis.

The anonymity of participants was protected through the results of the survey, as survey

responses were anonymous and data was reviewed in aggregate. Interview participants could not

respond anonymously, so their names have been replaced with pseudonyms. Given the small

sample size and the nature of the study site, however, it may be possible for the participant

identities to be deduced. Member-checking for administrator and teacher participants was utilized

for interviewees to review the transcript of their interview, allowing them to provide feedback and

request revisions to any problematic perceptions they felt were presented in the interview

transcripts.

A significant limitation to this study is that only five teachers were selected to participate in

the teacher interviews. Their inclusion aimed to create a purposeful sample with a range of

teaching experience, as well as the fact that they were not participants in the reading summit in March of 2023 or members of the curriculum committee for the 2024-25 school year. These parameters were used to ensure that teachers who do not usually get to provide input on curricular decisions had an opportunity to voice their views. This sampling method limited the teacher voices represented in this study to those who do not normally get to provide formal feedback.

The teachers who were excluded from the interview sample are likely to have different experiences in the literacy implementation process. Their voices were not privileged for this study and therefore are only represented in survey data. This is an impactful limitation because if all 17 teachers invited to participate in the survey were also interviewed, a wider and more complete view of the implementation process could have been formed. This would have taken significantly more time but would have produced a much richer data set. Given the limitations of this study, at least 5 teacher voices, who otherwise did not have an outlet by which to provide feedback, were able to share their experiences. Perhaps future studies could more robustly examine the experiences of all teachers during a curriculum change at Oak City School.

These recommendations are based on the findings of this case study, as well as the research outlined in Chapter 2. However, they are specifically for the context at the heart of this study: Oak City School, an independent school in the southeastern United States. While document review helped to confirm the accuracy of data, the study relied on the recollection of administrators and teachers when revisiting events that happened nearly two years prior to this study. Classroom observations could have strengthened any self-reporting made by teachers, but observations were not feasible within the time constraint of this study.

Some of these recommendations may be difficult to implement in a school with more teachers or multiple locations. Based on the theoretical framework including the work of Guskey (1985) and Knowles et al. (2015), it is likely that some of these recommendations are transferable to other schools of a similar context, but should not be considered broadly applicable to all situations.

Conclusion

Oak City Lower School began the process implementing evidence-based literacy instruction in the spring of 2023. This case study has outlined the implementation process and the professional learning opportunities offered throughout the process. Two research questions were addressed:

- **RQ1**: What professional learning opportunities have teachers at Oak City Lower School received to support the development of their literacy instructional skills?

- **RQ2**: How do Oak City Lower School teachers perceive these professional learning opportunities and the impact of these opportunities on their literacy instructional practices?

Following a document review, interviews, and a survey, data were analyzed and coded for themes. Five findings were identified as a result of the data analysis. Three recommendations arose as priorities based on the findings with action steps to provide Oak City with next steps to build upon the work already completed. While this Capstone focused on literacy curricula and professional learning Oak City School should consider conducting additional reviews of curriculum in other subjects and grade levels. The recommendations offered here can be followed not only for the evidence-based literacy transition, but also for any future curricular changes at Oak City

School. An incorporation of these three recommendations and their action steps can improve

literacy instruction at Oak City Lower School and promote success for future curricular changes.

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Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Administrators

Instructions: Please read this study information sheet carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Study Title: NAVIGATING A CHANGE IN CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO SUPPORT TEACHERS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW LITERACY PROGRAM
Protocol #: 7202

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to explore the processes by which teachers are supported during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

What you will do in the study: You will participate in an interview over Zoom. You will be asked questions about the professional learning support provided to teachers during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction and to share your individual experience with each professional learning experience. You will be recorded with video and audio using Zoom. You can ask to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You can also ask to stop the interview at any time.

Time required: The interview will require approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks resulting from your participation in this interview.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help school leaders understand how to best assist teachers during the implementation of a new curriculum.

Confidentiality: Because of the nature of the data, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential and it may be possible that others will know what you have reported. Your name will not be used in any report, however, due to the small sample size, it may be that you can be identified by the description of your role within the school. The recording will be deleted following completion of transcription.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your employment status.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you participate in the interview and choose to withdraw from the study, the recording will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. If you wish to withdraw from the study following the interview, you should contact the lead researcher, Molly Bostic. There is no penalty for withdrawing; withdrawing will not affect your employment status.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: This data will not be used outside this study. The data will be retained in a secure manner by the researcher for 5 years and then destroyed.

Please contact the researchers on the study team listed below to:
- Obtain more information or ask a question about the study.
- Report an illness, injury, or other problem.
- Leave the study before it is finished.

Molly Bostic
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You may also report a concern about a study or ask questions about your rights as a research subject by contacting the Institutional Review Board listed below.

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 400
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Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
UVA IRB-SBS # 7202

You may request a copy of this study information sheet for your records.

Interview Protocol for Administrators

Please state your name and position

1. Why did members of the St. David's community decide to make a change to literacy instructional methods used in the Lower School? How was that decision made?

2. Describe the process of the evidence-based literacy implementation at St. David's School.

3. How were decisions made in regard to selecting professional learning opportunities to support the implementation of evidence-based literacy?

4. In your recollection, how did teachers initially respond to the idea of switching to evidence-based literacy instruction?

5. Has St. David's Lower School onboarded a new curriculum model in the past? If so, describe that process. How were teachers supported?

6. What professional learning opportunities have been offered to teachers for evidence-based literacy instruction?
   For each professional learning opportunity:
   a. Why was this opportunity selected?
   b. Can you describe the format of this opportunity? *Were they pre-planned, lecture-based, active, collaborative, short-term, long-term, responsive?*

7. What professional learning opportunities do you perceive as the most impactful for changing teachers' literacy practices? Why?

8. What professional learning opportunities do you perceive as the least impactful for changing teachers' literacy practices? Why?

9. Do you view the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction as a success? Why or why not?

10. What do you see as the next steps for evidence-based literacy instruction implementation?

Appendix B: Survey of Teachers regarding Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction Implementation

The following survey supports the capstone research project for Molly Bostic. The information below outlines the purpose of the survey, as well as what you are being asked to do as a participant. Please read this study information sheet carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Study Title: NAVIGATING A CHANGE IN CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO SUPPORT TEACHERS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW LITERACY PROGRAM
Protocol #: 7202

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to explore the processes by which teachers are supported during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

What you will do in the study: You will complete an electronic survey that will ask questions about your experience with professional learning experiences designed to support the implementation of a new literacy program. You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the survey at any time.

Time required: The survey for the study will require about 15 minutes of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in participating in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help school leaders understand how to best assist teachers during the implementation of a new curriculum.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be anonymous. Your name and other information that could be used to identify you will not be collected or linked to the data.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your employment status.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study: At any time, you may choose not to complete the survey. Because the data are not connected to your identity, you cannot withdraw after you submit your data.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: This data will not be used outside this study. The data will be retained in a secure manner by the researcher for five years and then destroyed.

Please contact the researchers on the study team listed below to:
- Obtain more information or ask a question about the study.
- Report an illness, injury, or other problem.

- Leave the study before it is finished.

Molly Bostic
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Telephone: (434) 982-2638
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You may also report a concern about a study or ask questions about your rights as a research subject by contacting the Institutional Review Board listed below.

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Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants

UVA IRB-SBS # 7202

You may print a copy of this consent for your records.

Survey Instrument for Teachers

The following survey supports the capstone research project for Molly Bostic. The information in the study sheet attached to the email invitation outlines the purpose of the survey, as well as what you are being asked to do as a participant.

Questions on the survey ask about your experience during the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction at St. David's School. The survey for the study will require about 15 minutes of your time. You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the survey at any time.

1. Do you agree to participate in the survey described in the attached study sheet?
    a. Yes → move to next question
    b. No → Thank you for your response.
2. Were you employed by St. David's Lower School during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years?
    a. Yes → move to next question
    b. No → Thanks for your willingness to participate, but unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements to respond to this survey.

Part I: Professional Learning Opportunities

Training: Orton-Gillingham Workshops

1. Orton-Gillingham training was offered to Lower School teachers in the summer of 2023 and again on two separate professional development days during the 2023-24 school year. Do you recall participating in the Orton-Gillingham training?
    a. Yes → advance to question 2
    b. No → skip to next PL question
2. How would you rate the usefulness of the Orton-Gillingham training in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)
3. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of the Orton-Gillingham training (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?
4. Professional development can sometimes be described as <u>active</u>, meaning that teachers are actively practicing skills that are demonstrated or modeled for them. In contrast, <u>passive</u> professional development involves teachers sitting and listening. Professional development can also be described as <u>collaborative</u>, meaning teachers work together to learn from one another. Other professional development can be <u>independent</u>, meaning each teacher works on their own. Check all of the following that you think best describes the Orton-Gillingham training:
    a. Active
    b. Passive
    c. Collaborative
    d. Independent
    e. Other → response

Training: Letterland Curriculum

5. Letterland training was offered to some Lower School teachers at various times during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years, as well as summers. Do you recall participating in the Letterland training?
    a. Yes → advance to question 6
    b. No → skip to next PL question
6. How would you rate the usefulness of the Letterland training in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)
7. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of the Letterland training (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?
8. Check all of the following that you think best describes the Letterland training:
    a. Active
    b. Passive
    c. Collaborative
    d. Independent
    e. Other → response

Training: Sound Wall

9. Sound wall training was offered to some Lower School teachers at various times during the 2023-24 school year. Do you recall participating in Sound Wall training?
    a. Yes → advance to question 10
    b. No → skip to next PL question
10. How would you rate the usefulness of the Sound Wall training in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)
11. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of the Sound Wall training (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?
12. . Check all of the following that you think best describes the Sound Wall training:
    a. Active
    b. Passive
    c. Collaborative
    d. Independent
    e. Other → response

Training: Literacy presentations shared by the curriculum & instruction coach and reading specialists at different division level gatherings

13. Literacy presentations were offered at various times during the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Do you recall participating in any of these literacy presentations?
    a. Yes → advance to question 14
    b. No → skip to next PL question
14. How would you rate the usefulness of the literacy presentations in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)

15. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of the literacy presentations (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?

16. . Check all of the following that you think best describes the literacy presentations:
    a. Active
    b. Passive
    c. Collaborative
    d. Independent
    e. Other → response

Modeling: Sample lessons demonstrated with your class by the reading specialist to model literacy instructional practices

17. Modeling of literacy instruction has been provided during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Do you recall observing any modeling of literacy instruction?
    a. Yes → advance to question 18
    b. No → skip to next PL question

18. How would you rate the usefulness of modeling of literacy instruction in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)

19. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of modeling of literacy instruction (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?

Instructional coaching: A colleague observing and working directly with you to give feedback on your literacy instructional practices

20. Instructional coaching has been provided during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Do you recall participating in any instructional coaching?
    a. Yes → advance to question 21
    b. No → skip to next PL question

21. How would you rate the usefulness of instructional coaching in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)

22. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of instructional coaching (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?

Peer observation and feedback: A colleague observing and providing feedback to you about your literacy instructional practices

23. Peer observation and feedback has been provided to some teachers during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Do you recall having a peer observe your literacy lesson and provide feedback?
    a. Yes → advance to question 24
    b. No → skip to next PL question

24. How would you rate the usefulness of peer observation and feedback in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)
25. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of peer observation and feedback (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?

Team Teaching: Working with the curriculum & instruction coach or the reading specialist to teach a lesson together.

26. Team teaching has been provided for some teachers during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Do you recall team teaching with the curriculum & instruction coach or reading specialist?
    a. Yes → advance to question 27
    b. No → skip to next PL question
27. How would you rate the usefulness of team teaching in assisting you in further revising your literacy instruction? (3 indicates very useful and 0 indicates not useful)
28. To what extent have you modified your literacy instruction as a result of team teaching (3 indicates major changes to instruction and 0 indicates no changes to instruction)?

Part II Resources:

As part of the transition to evidence-based literacy practices, a variety of resources have been provided. These include:

- Background information: Podcasts, news articles, various videos,
- Curriculum materials: Core Knowledge Modules, EL Modules, Studies Weekly, the Heggerty Phonological Awareness Curriculum, Letterland materials
- Resources curated in-house: Pacing guides, spelling lists, curriculum notebooks

29. Which of these resources, if any, did you find to be useful in further revising your literacy instruction: _____
30. Have any of these resources resulted in a modification to your literacy instruction? Yes/No. If yes → which one(s)? _____

Part III: Next Steps for Evidence-Based Literacy Implementation

31. If you have changed your approach to literacy instruction as a result of these professional learning opportunities or utilizing these resources, have you observed a change in student literacy competencies?
    a. Yes → comment box below
    b. Somewhat → comment box below
    c. No
    d. I have not changed my approach to literacy instruction as a result of these professional learning opportunities.
    → If so, please describe those observed changes.

32. What additional learning opportunities would be useful for you to continue to implement evidence-based literacy instruction in your classroom?

33. Is there anything else you would like to share about professional learning opportunities or the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices?

Thank you so much for completing the survey!

Appendix C: Survey Invitation

Lower School Faculty Pre-notification Email

Dear Lower School Faculty,

The Lower School began the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction in the summer of 2023. As part of my capstone research project, I seek to understand the processes by which teachers at our school are and have been supported during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction. On Monday, February 17, I will send you an invitation to participate in an electronic survey about your experiences. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes; you may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the survey at any time.

The information that you provide in the study will be anonymous. Your name and other information that could be used to identify you will not be collected or linked to the data. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your employment status. This data will not be used outside this study. The data will be retained by me in a secure manner for one year and then destroyed.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Molly Bostic

Ed.D. Student

University of Virginia, School of Education and Human Development

IRB-SBS #7202

Email Cover Letter for Survey Distribution

Dear Lower School Faculty,

The Lower School began the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction in the summer of 2023. As part of my capstone research project, I seek to understand the processes by which teachers at our school are and have been supported during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction. I invite you to complete the electronic survey linked below. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes; you may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the survey at any time.

The information that you give in the study will be anonymous. Your name and other information that could be used to identify you will not be collected or linked to the data. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your employment status. This data will not be used outside this study. The data will be retained by me in a secure manner for one year and then destroyed.

[LINK TO SURVEY] Please complete the survey by Tuesday, February 25.

Sincerely,

Molly Bostic

Ed.D. Student

University of Virginia, School of Education and Human Development

IRB-SBS #7202

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Teachers

Instructions: Please read this study information sheet carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Study Title: NAVIGATING A CHANGE IN CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO SUPPORT TEACHERS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW LITERACY PROGRAM
Protocol #: 7202

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to explore the processes by which teachers are supported during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

What you will do in the study: You will participate in an interview over Zoom. You will be asked questions about the professional learning support provided to teachers during the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction and to share your individual experience with each professional learning experience. You will be recorded with video and audio using Zoom. You can ask to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You can also ask to stop the interview at any time.

Time required: The interview will require approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks resulting from your participation in this interview.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help school leaders understand how to best assist teachers during the implementation of a new curriculum.

Confidentiality: Because of the nature of the data, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential and it may be possible that others will know what you have reported. Your name will not be used in any report, however, due to the small sample size, it may be that you can be identified by the description of your role within the school. The recording will be deleted following completion of transcription.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your employment status.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you participate in the interview and choose to withdraw from the study, the recording will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. If you wish to withdraw from the study following the interview, you should contact the lead researcher, Molly Bostic. There is no penalty for withdrawing; withdrawing will not affect your employment status.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: This data will not be used outside this study. The data will be retained in a secure manner by the researcher for 5 years and then destroyed.

Please contact the researchers on the study team listed below to:
- Obtain more information or ask a question about the study.
- Report an illness, injury, or other problem.
- Leave the study before it is finished.

Molly Bostic
School of Education and Human Development
417 Emmet St. S
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: (919) 274-3468
mkb6hr@virginia.edu

Jennifer Pease, Ph.D.
School of Education and Human Development
417 Emmet Street S
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: (434) 982-2638
jcs3m@virginia.edu

You may also report a concern about a study or ask questions about your rights as a research subject by contacting the Institutional Review Board listed below.

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 400
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
UVA IRB-SBS # 7202

You may request a copy of this study information sheet for your records.

Interview Protocol for Teachers

Please state your name, position, and number of years as a teacher.

1. How did you learn how to teach reading?

2. When did you first hear about Science of Reading research and what was your initial reaction to the research?

3. How did you initially view the idea of switching to evidence-based literacy instruction? How do you view it now?

4. How would you describe the process of evidence-based literacy implementation at St. David's School?

5. What professional learning opportunities do you perceive as the most impactful for teachers? Why?

6. What professional learning opportunities do you perceive as the least impactful for teachers? Why?

7. *If not described above, have you received any sustained support for implementing evidence-based literacy instruction in your classroom?*

8. How have students in your class responded to the evidence-based literacy instruction?

9. Do you view the implementation of evidence-based literacy as a success? Why or why not?

10. How do you think other teachers view evidence-based literacy instruction now? How do you know?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share about the transition to evidence-based literacy instruction?

Appendix E: Codebook

a priori codes: descriptions of professional learning experiences			
Codes	**Definition**	**Inclusionary criteria**	**Exclusionary criteria**
Active participation	When teachers are involved in the practice of using new methods of instruction	Teachers are directly engaged in trying out strategies that they will use in the classroom	Learning is passive for teachers; may be in the form of a lecture; learning is not directly connected to the teacher's context
Challenge	An activity or situation that poses difficulty for the teacher	A problem that requires growth and action from a teacher; it is not easily accomplished	A problem that is quickly or easily accomplished.
Clarity	When an instruction or feedback is easily understood	Feedback or directions provided for which the teacher easily understands	Feedback or directions provided for which the teacher does not quickly understand
Coaching	The sharing of expertise from one individual to another in the form of observations and feedback for the purpose of improving practices	Content-based suggestions provided to a teacher based on their specific context	Feedback that is not targeted for growth for the teacher; feedback directed at a large group or through listserv emails
Collaboration	Teachers share ideas with one another and serve as a resource for others when implementing new classroom strategies	Two or more teachers are working together to practice, provide feedback, or elicit help for implementing a new strategy in the classroom	Teachers are not working together; teachers receive feedback, but the conversation does not allow for discussion
Collective	When every member of a group participates in a professional learning experience	All members of the group are included	Not all members of the group are included

Feedback	Teachers receive insight from another person as a reflection on their instruction; they are provided input on the practices they have specifically utilized in their classroom	Written and oral feedback can be provided to teachers in the form of an observation form, email, or in-person conversation.	General instruction delivered to a large group, listserv emails and direction that is not specific to a teacher's practices.
Modeling	Teachers are provided a clear vision of what the proposed teaching practices look like in their specific context through sample lessons presented for them.	An example of how to use a new strategy is provided; teachers can see what the strategy would look like in their specific context.	Oral or written feedback on an observed lesson; lesson examples that are not situated within the teacher's specific context.
Observation	Watching a teacher practice new teaching strategies	May be administrator or peer observations; teacher observer notes aspects of the lesson that are strengths and opportunities for improvement; teacher observer may note new things to try in their own classroom	Example lessons that are completed for the purpose of modeling
Passive	When teachers sit and listen to instruction	A lecture or presentation where teachers sit and listen; not active	Teachers are actively involved in the learning process
Repetitive	Something that has been said before; it is not new	When instruction is provided that is not perceived as new information; it's been shared before	Information that is being introduced to teachers for the first time
Resources	Materials that can be used by teachers to provide instructions to students	Books, textbooks, workbooks, etc. that are meant to be used by teachers in their classrooms.	Examples, videos of sample lessons

Support	Encourages teachers to improve their practice; feedback is provided that leads to a teacher wanting to improve	Comments that are encouraging, empowering, and may increase the likelihood of success for the teacher	Comments that do not clearly encourage or empower teachers to continue to improve their practice
Time	The amount of time a teacher uses to complete a certain task	Time provided or needed to complete a task	Timing of programs within the school year or school day
Timing	When lessons, feedback, or activities are scheduled within the school day or school year	When professional learning occurs within the school day or school year	Time provided or needed to complete a task
Training	Instruction provided from one experienced adult to another	Workshops, online training, experiences led by experts in the field	Small group collaboration, email conversations
Unclear	When an instruction or feedback is not quickly understood	Feedback or directions provided for which a teacher does not understand	Something that is easily understood by the recipient
Emergent Codes: Professional Learning Classification			
Letterland	A curriculum used to teach phonics	Specifically referring to Letterland resources or Letterland training for using the Letterland resources	Anything that is not Letterland's phonics resources or training
OG Training	A training in the Orton-Gillingham methodology of literacy instruction; consisted of training by an official OG trainer	Specifically referring to Orton-Gillingham training that took place in the summer of 2023 or the 2023-24 school year	Anything that is not referring to the OG training
Sound Wall training	A training taught by the C&I coach and offered in-house	Using the sound wall example to model how to use the sound wall and how to set up a sound wall in the room; training that describes a sound wall	Anything that is not referring to the sound wall training

Literacy presentations	Presentations shared at Lower School gatherings to further explain Science of Reading literacy practices	Any presentation shared with LS faculty on literacy practices during the 2023-24 or 2024-25 school years	Anything that was presented as part of another training
Heggerty	A curriculum used to teach phonemic awareness	Anything referring to the group of literacy materials published and provided by Heggerty	Anything that is not provided by Heggerty
Core Knowledge/EL	A group of multi-disciplinary lessons that integrate literacy instruction with knowledge building lessons	Any unit provided by the Core Knowledge or EL curriculum providers	Any unit or resource that is not provided by Core Knowledge or EL
In house resources	Any literacy resource developed by faculty and staff at St. David's for the use by St. David's faculty and staff	Curriculum guide, pacing guides, spelling lists, resource binders, etc. that were developed by St. David's teachers or staff for use in house	Materials that are curated or written by other writers that do not work at St. David's School
Studies Weekly	A resource that provides Social Studies lessons that develop vocabulary through literacy instruction	Anything referring to the resources by Studies Weekly	Anything that is not provided by Studies Weekly
Podcasts	A digital audio recording providing insight on a topic	Any podcast that provides information on literacy instruction	Any podcast that provides information that is not literacy instruction
Emergent Codes: Change			
Lots of change	New expectations or new materials happened in a short amount of time	Comment that describes the abundance of change that has happened over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years	Any reference to change that is not related to literacy practices
Change is slow	The teacher or administrator describes how it takes some time for things to change	Comment that describes how making a change to instructional practice takes time	Comment about change that moves slow, but is unrelated to literacy
Emergent codes: PL Models			
Small group of teachers	When several teachers work together	Comment that describes several teachers working together for a common purpose	Comment about groups of teachers that does not involve literacy instruction discussions
Previous experience	Experience with previous professional learning opportunities for literacy	Comment that describes previous professional	Comment that describes previous experience, but

		learning experiences with literacy	not with professional learning or literacy
Depth	A discussion in a professional learning opportunity that does more than just present the "what", but also discusses the rationale for how and why.	Comment that describes professional learning as going into the how or why of learning	Comment that discusses only learning a little about a new skill; the how or why is not discussed
Application	Professional learning that encourages and allows teachers to practice skills	Comment that describes the opportunity to practice new literacy skills; comment that describes PL that explains how to use a skill or resource in the classroom	Comment that describes a passive experience
Emergent codes: Evaluative Terms for professional learning opportunities			
Viewed negatively	teacher describes the professional learning experience negatively	Comments include: negative, bad, grueling, hard, poor, exhausting	Comments that are neutral or positive in nature
Viewed positively	teacher describes the professional learning experience positively	comments include: good, great, insightful, useful	Comments that are neutral or negative in nature
Emergent codes: In the classroom			
Consistency	When things are done the same on a regular basis	When an activity is done on a regular basis.	When actions are the same.
Instructional Time	The amount of time alloted to instruction	Comment describing the amount of class time available for instruction	Time is described, but not in reference to time allotted for instruction
Growth	When students improve in understanding	Positive growth for students is mentioned	Growth in reference to anything other than understanding or knowledge
Misalignment	when the curriculum is not aligned with the learning needs of the students	comment that describes a difference between the expecations for students and what they are capable of doing within their Zone of Proximal Development	Curriculum is not aligned vertically or horizontally
Stunted growth	When students are not improving in understanding	References to a lack of growth of students or slow improvement	Stunted growth in reference to anything other than understanding or knowledge

References for codebook: Darling-Hammond et al. (2017); Guskey (1985); Vygotsky (1978)

Appendix F: Science of Reading Commitments

<u>As a school we are committed to:</u>

-Teaching phonics in a structured, sequential, systematic way aligned with Letterland

-Using decodable texts to help students crack the code of reading

-Using multisensory strategies to teach reading

-Explicitly teaching phonemic awareness

-Collaborating, sharing ideas, and learning from each other

Source: Document Review, January 31, 2025

Appendix G: Timeline for Capstone Project

Phase I: Administrator Insight

- 1/22: Request for documents sent to two Oak City Lower School administrators
- 1/23-1/29: Review documents and revise interview protocol for administrators
- 1/31-2/3: Administrator interviews // write reflective memos
- 2/4-2/9: Review interview data and revise survey // write reflective memo
- 2/10: Submit revisions to survey to the IRB

Phase II: Teacher Feedback

- 2/13: Send pre-notification email to teachers
- 2/13-2/15: Pilot testing and survey revisions
- 2/17: Send survey to teachers
- 2/25: Close survey
- 2/25-2/28: Review survey data and revise interview protocol for teachers // write reflective memos
- 2/19-3/20: Teacher interviews // write reflective memos
- 2/19-3/25: Analyze interview data and begin work on Chapter 4 // triangulate data // write reflective memos

Capstone Report Writing

- 4/4: Complete draft of Chapter 4 – submit to capstone chair
- 4/11: Complete draft of Chapter 5 – submit to capstone chair
- 4/11-4/17: Revisions to Chapters 4 & 5
- 4/18: Submit final product to capstone committee
- 5/2: Capstone Defense