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Understanding Reading Intervention from a Child's Perspective:
Interviews with Adolescents, Parents, and Teachers

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Curriculum and Instruction

by

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May 2010

for Chad

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perceptions and experiences of the middle school students who participated in learning center support as elementary students in independent schools. There were 16 participants from three sites included in the study: six students, seven parents, and three learning specialists. The research questions guiding this study included: (1) What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development? (2) How does the child's discernment of how he or she is perceived academically by his or her reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read? (3) How does a child's sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience? (4) What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers? (5) How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction? (6) How does a child's perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists? (7) What do students think about the activities they participate during learning center time?

Literature reviewed for the study included the existence of the reading problem in the United States, models of reading intervention, strategies shown to accelerate reading growth, teacher knowledge, and student perspectives. Data was collected in the form of interviews and observations, and was reviewed in consideration of narrative inquiry, typological analysis, and polyvocal analysis. All participant responses were considered across cases with specific attention given to the guiding research questions.

The six students interviewed believed that their participation in the learning center helped them in some way. Some of them were able to verbalize what was helpful, while others

provided few details. Nonetheless, the student participants offered specific recommendations on how to improve the learning center structure. Parent interviews shored up varying perspectives and recommendations for ways that the structure of the learning center should remain the same and also how it should change. Finally, learning specialists shared their views and experiences and added a richer understanding to the study in general.

Three major themes emerged from the data. First, that students and parents attach a stigma to resource support. Second, that students and parents feel like they had to give something up because of their participation in the learning center. And third, methodological issues on the structure of the interviews were raised.

Findings and current research were connected, and considerations for future research were made.

KEYWORDS: Learning Centers, Struggling Readers, Resource Rooms, Pull-out Programs, Reading Intervention, Independent Schools

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study investigated the experiences of struggling readers who have received learning center support during their elementary school years. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) estimated that two out of every five children were placed because of reading difficulties, and more than 90 percent of students identified prior to fifth grade as learning disabled are so identified primarily because of difficulties in reading (Kavale & Reese, 1992; Lerner, 1989). This study, therefore, sought to understand what has been persistently lacking in reading research. That is, it was designed to tell multiple stories, each from a child's perspective, of the experiences of reading intervention through participation in learning center support. This study was an exploration into the following:

- (1) the lived experiences of the students who participate in learning center support,
- (2) consideration of the model in which the intervention was provided,
- (3) the child's perception of the effectiveness of the teacher providing the instruction,
- (4) the perceptions of teachers,
- (5) and the perceptions of parents.

This chapter organizes the study and begins with the background for the problem, the problem statement itself, the justification for the importance of the problem, as well as the significance of the study. Understanding the experiences of the struggling reader is located within the larger context of reading instruction and curriculum. Likewise, the main research question and subquestions are introduced, the general methodological approach and theoretical

framework are described, and limitations and delimitations are addressed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the manuscript and its organization.

Background of the Study

In the past three decades, research from several fields—including cognitive psychology, linguistics, and education—has greatly expanded our understanding of how children learn to read and why some youngsters experience reading difficulties (Spear-Swerling, 2007). It comes as no surprise, then, that learning to read and write proficiently is the cornerstone of academic achievement and the foundation for success across the curriculum (Wilson & Trainin, 2007). Accordingly, Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, & Mallette (2004) add that the success of elementary schools is largely measured by the literacy levels of its students. Teaching students how to read in the elementary years is an obvious high priority. Yet, despite the fact that instruction in core reading programs embrace evidenced-based practices, some children fail to acquire basic reading skills and are likely to be considered at risk for reading failure (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; O'Connor, 2000, Torgeson, 2000). For this reason in part, special education laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) were created with an emphasis on the identification process, and more recently, a shift in providing educational support and intervention to struggling readers early. This is also reflected in the Reading First provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, which calls for proven methods of instruction provided by highly qualified teachers to reduce the incidence of reading difficulties.

Although some reading professionals and teachers agree on the need for proven methods of early intervention (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohann, 2006), the model through which support is provided is widely debated. While small group instruction provides an

environment in which students have more opportunities to practice skills and receive increased feedback from teachers (Helf, Cooke, & Flowers, 2008), organization of such in the general classroom is met with challenge (Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000), and criticism of the pull-out method dates back to the original Title I funding initiated through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Nonetheless, researchers have thoroughly investigated the effects of in-class support and resource room services (Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000; Helf, Cooke, Flowers, 2008; Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, & Mallette, 2004), the role of one-on-one individual instruction in reading (Clay, 1993; 2002; 2006; Frey, 2006; Gapp, Zalud, Pietrzak, 2009), and more recently the attention given to Torgeson's (2000) Response to Intervention Model (RTI) which was developed to identify and support learners who may be struggling in reading. In spite of the well-developed knowledge base supporting the value of interventions that have been demonstrated to have positive outcomes, these interventions are not widely employed in typical classroom instruction, and models of service delivery for students with reading and learning disabilities implemented in schools are often ineffective (Denton, Vaughn & Fletcher, 2003). Moreover, there is still the issue of matching the learner to the interventions that have been shown to accelerate reading growth, as well as the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performance of the teacher providing the intervention.

In addition to the unsuccessful implementation of assorted models and the one-size-fits-all mentality of policy makers, teacher knowledge is major piece to consider when thinking about effective reading intervention. Darling-Hammond (2009) recalls a 25-country study noting that three things matter most in the world's best performing school systems: (1) getting the right people to become teachers, (2) developing them into effective instructors, and (3) ensuring that the system can deliver the best possible instruction to every child. Darling-Hammond (2009)

asserts that the United States has not yet tackled the policy changes that would provide such high quality instruction. Teachers, reading specialists, reading interventionists, reading tutors (adults from within the school or outside the school), cross-age tutors (older children), peer tutors, paraprofessional assistants, special educators (who may or may not have much additional literacy knowledge/training), mentors (various ages), and reading coaches are all the network of individuals who may play a role in delivering such instruction. Fitzharris, Jones, and Crawford (2008) posit that knowing what teachers know and how they practice is necessary to ensure that there are professionals in every classroom meeting the diverse needs of students. Guskey (2000) agrees, and adds that teacher knowledge and procedures are tied to student outcomes. Consequently, one of the most important findings in the research on teaching is that highly trained teachers make a significant difference in student achievement (Ferguson, 1991; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996). Agreeably, in its position statement on excellent reading teachers, the International Reading Association (2000) asserts that every child deserves excellent reading teachers because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation.

In the face of what we know regarding the value of excellent teachers, the realization of teacher effectiveness and knowledge continues to be a challenge. In her review of literature, Spear-Swerling (2007) cites several studies (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004; Moats, 1994; Moats & Foorman, 2003) that raise concern about many teachers' knowledge of early reading development and English word structure. Frey and Fisher (2004) also suggest that resistance to differentiation of instruction may also be a product of a lack of teacher knowledge. Part of this problem begins with the organization of teacher preparation programs.

Correspondingly, Spear-Swerling (2007) discusses the challenging task schools face given the considerable knowledge base required by teachers of reading. The extensive disciplinary knowledge required to teach beginning reading well to children with diverse needs has often been underestimated (Moats, 1994; Nation Academy of Education, 2005). Spear-Swerling (2007) argues that a few hours of class time does not sufficiently prepare prospective teachers to acquire certain kinds of knowledge. She adds, that because of the practical constraints of a 4- or even 5- year degree, teacher preparation programs must set priorities for pre-service teachers' learning, and some content may receive far less emphasis than is ideal.

Denten, Vaugh, and Fletcher (2003) suggest that there are two obvious sources of professional development if teachers are to be adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities: (1) pre-service education must more comprehensively and effectively prepare teachers, and (2) ongoing in-service programs must be designed to better meet the needs of practicing teachers. The situation as it is, places novice teachers in the difficult position of being expected to meet the needs of both beginning and struggling students by teaching reading well.

In short, teaching reading and learning to read are complex endeavors. A child's experience with any given model of intervention is significant to reading success. In addition to external factors such as reading intervention models, learner assessment procedures, and effective teachers, motivation and perception are central to student achievement (Wilson & Trainin, 2007; Ruddell & Speaker, 1985). In particular, teachers have strong effects on children's motivation to read (Ruddell, 1995; Skinner 1993). Consequently, there is overwhelming agreement among teachers and administrators that success in reading is critical, and the need for early intervention is not worthy of debate. But the answer is not quite that

simple. Controversy over models and disagreement among professionals is alive and well, and we still face the challenge of teachers who have not been fully prepared or equipped to provide the intricate detailed type of instruction needed to teach reading well.

Research has considered all of these components, and in fact, still debates them. What is persistently lacking is knowledge of the student perspective of those who participate in the models and interventions we design. If teachers and researchers knew more about student experiences, then perhaps we could improve reading instruction, intervention, and proficiency by directly addressing the individual needs of the learners. The idea that there is a “best approach” should be rejected. What seems to be missing from the policy discussions is the idea that there are many different approaches that need consideration, and there are new assessment processes to identify which approach should be matched to the learner.

Statement of the Problem

There are various literacy support services for reading intervention programs in independent elementary schools. These elementary schools have different conditions for students to be eligible to receive additional support in literacy through their learning centers; some limit candidacy to students with identified needs, while others are designed to assist any student who is experiencing difficulty. Considering the specific needs of individual learners and students with learning disabilities, these literacy support services may be ineffective across diverse conditions including the learning styles and preferences of the students, as well as age and developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices on behalf of the teachers (Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000). Weaknesses in the application of reading intervention could also be caused by a lack of teacher understanding (Fitzharris, Jones, & Crawford, 2008).

An important hypothesis was that literacy support services could be enhanced and improved if student perception is explored, and the elementary school experiences of the students who actually participate in the support services are known.

Significance of the Study

The call for excellent reading instruction is loud. The reality that readers still struggle is apparent, and the fact that our methods and models for reading instruction and intervention are imperfect is clear. If we learned more from the struggling reader, we could improve our efforts, our instruction, and ultimately the experiences and literacy gains of the child. Children need different types of instruction and various models of reading intervention during different phases of their education. One size does not fit all in this case. Instead, learning from the lived experiences of the struggling reader will help us understand more deeply what really works, what does not, and perhaps what we never would have thought about otherwise.

For this purpose, the lens through which this investigation was viewed was an advocacy and participatory worldview. Cresswell (2009), states that research of this nature contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. As a reading specialist, and a person who experiences reading intervention very closely every day, wanting to understand the student viewpoint and perspective was a major goal. Working to improve reading intervention based on how students perceive it, and based on the experiences they have, was another priority. Learning to read is a very personal journey, and the idea of one best place, or one best way, contradicts our very commitment to individualization. Understanding experience is important to understanding teaching. In order for education to accomplish its goals for both the individual and society,

according to Dewey (1938), education must be based on experience--which is always the actual life-experience of some individual.

Implications for Policy and Practice

My phenomenological investigation into understanding the experiences of struggling readers during the elementary years who participate in reading intervention contributes new knowledge to reading professionals and to the field of reading, in general. Researchers and teachers already know a great deal about researched-based reading instruction, pedagogy, and the components of the models to deliver such instruction. We also seem to agree on the need for early reading intervention and the existence of the readers who continue to struggle despite our efforts. Historically, blame has been pointed in every direction. The “reading wars” of the 1980s received an enormous amount of attention. Various instructional models such as whole group, small group, one-on-one, and pull-out have also been investigated by both proponents and critics. Lack of teacher knowledge and the state of teacher preparation have been considered part of the problem as well. The fact that some students still experience difficulty when learning to read may be inescapable, but perhaps what we can do is channel our efforts into improving the reading intervention experiences of the struggling reader.

As it stands, the extant literature is indifferent on which method is most effective, and that has been the case for quite some time. Anderson and Evertson (1979) explain that it is not easy to define effective teaching practices, and the process is far from complete. They add, “The teaching-learning process is complex, and most current research recognizes this fact” (Anderson & Evertson, 1979, p.193). Instead of placing the method under a repeated lens, perhaps we can take into careful consideration the experiences of the students who participate in the models.

Understanding their viewpoints could likely change our thinking, our planning, and our beliefs about effective reading instruction and intervention.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate phenomenologically the experiences of students who participate in literacy support services. Through a lens of advocacy, the focus was on learning from the experiences of students. Methods of inquiry included interviews, observations, and phenomenological reflection (Creswell, 2009).

The omnibus question was this: What are the experiences of students (more specifically, struggling readers) who participated in reading intervention through learning centers in independent schools?

A. Questions related to student experience:

- a What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development?
- b How does the child's discernment of how he/she is perceived academically by his/her reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read?
- c How does a child's sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience?
- d What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers?

B. Questions related to teaching/models:

- e How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction?

- f How does a child's perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists?
- g What do students think about the activities they participate in during learning center time?

These questions are profound and interesting. They were explored through careful interviewing and intentional listening.

General Methodological Approach

Introduction to Narrative Inquiry and Rationale

Listening to and sharing stories can be effective ways to teach and learn. According to Hatch, (2002) narrative studies seek to capture storied knowledge. In their chapter, Bedford and Landry (in press) state that, "Inquirers interested in the study of lived experience have turned with increasing frequency to the collection of stories in order to understand the lived experiences of individuals." Despite the increase in researchers utilizing narrative inquiry as a methodology, there is a gap in the literature with regard to studies using narrative methodologies to investigate learning difficulties, and even more so in relation to young people as participants (Reid & Button, 1995; McNulty, 2003). From a phenomenological point of view, as Van Manen (1990) sees it, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. In the case of this investigation, the query at hand was to understand the way students with learning disabilities experience the world of learning centers. Therefore, this study supported the view that narrative inquiry is a useful methodology to employ in investigating the perspectives of young people (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Participant Criteria

Participants for this study have received learning center support during their elementary school years at one of the identified independent schools in Louisiana. Independent schools were selected for the present study because these institutions actually have access to the funds that may be needed in order to make changes. Moreover, students who have learning disabilities and attend independent schools seem to be working at a greater disadvantage than their higher performing peers compared to those students in typical education settings. Participants for this study were also presently in middle school. One male and one female student informant were recruited from each site. In addition, parent and teacher informants were sought because they played major roles in the journeys of the students who participated in learning center support.

Data Collection: Interviewing and Observing

Interviewing was selected as the primary source for data collection. Glesne's (1999) chapter in *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*, on interviewing techniques and questioning was used as a guide for developing the interview protocol. Glesne (1999) writes that good researchers ask questions in the context of purposes. Sometimes people stick to their original questions, but in qualitative research, questions may be added, eliminated, or replaced. With this advice in mind, open-ended questions were drafted and submitted to two graduate professors for approval.

Although we can learn a great deal about what someone thinks from interviewing them, Bernard (1994) points out, "When you want to know what people actually *do*, however, there is no substitute for watching them or studying the traces their behavior leaves behind" (Bernard, 1994, p.310, original emphasis). This can be accomplished through observation. For this study,

observations served as a frame of reference in regard to the learning center model each school employs. Teachers and students were not necessarily observed in this case.

Data Analysis

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) have pointed out that the flexible nature of narrative methodology has tended to preclude the development of prescriptive methods and procedures. Figuring out how to analyze the data for this investigation was quite a challenge. The process is described in chapter three.

Theoretical Framework

Identification of Stance

Walford (2001) asserts, “All research is researching yourself.” We cannot even begin to think about and organize our research without self-examination. But unpacking assumptions is no simple matter. The very nature of assumptions is that they are unexamined, which makes them intellectually tricky from the start (Hatch, 2002). Decisions about research always involve individual choices, which Walford (2001) believes often evolve from previous personal experiences and commitments.

It is necessary for researchers to examine their own “grand theories” and consider the way in which they believe the world works, and how that will influence the design and interpretation of a study. In consideration of research paradigms, this study was viewed from a constructivist standpoint through a lens of advocacy (Creswell, 2009). According to Hatch (2002), ontologically, constructivists assume a world in which universal, absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or constructions of reality. As

a constructivist, the belief is that multiple realities exist that are inherently unique to the individuals who experience the world through their own points of view. Lincoln and Guba (1994) add that realities are apprehendable in the form of abstract mental construction that are experientially based, local, and specific.

Operating under this constructivist paradigm, Hatch (2002) writes that researchers and the participants in their studies are joined together in the process of co-construction. That is, epistemologies are both individually and socially constructed. It is through mutual engagement that researchers and respondents construct the subjective reality that is under investigation (Mishler, 1986). Likewise, it is undesirable for constructivist researchers to be objective and distant.

Limitations and Delimitations

Site and Respondent Selection

Glesne (1999) maintains, “Part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study” (Glesne, 1999, p.152). For this study, only three independent schools were included due to the limited availability of local independent schools that offer learning center support. Furthermore, the respondents were selected by the lower school heads and the learning specialists each at site, risking elite bias in which the perspectives of the larger group may be under represented by a few higher performing or more satisfied students (Hatch, 2002). As such, these three independent schools may not represent the population of students who participate in learning centers across the country.

Interviews and Data Collection

Only one interview per informant was conducted. That is, students, parents, and teachers participated in one interview each, in consideration of and respect for schedules and time. This is the truth of the matter because of time constraints and the willingness of the respondents. Shyness was an issue with the student participants, and scheduling was difficult with both the teacher and parent informants. There was also the concern of students at this age and their ability to reflect.

Observations

Observations took place at two of the participating schools, but one model was impossible to observe because it no longer exists. To be more specific, the model in which two of the middle school students participated in during their elementary tenure has been modified dramatically. This school has changed the model of intervention from an on-sight learning center model to a case manager model in which the learning specialists coordinate the hired tutors and do not provide the intervention themselves. The good news; however, is that the learning specialist who did provide the intervention to these middle school students under the “old model” was available to be interviewed.

Bias Monitoring

The researcher’s role in narrative inquiry is a comprehensive one in which the researcher works to understand experience, listen to the stories of her participants, and retell those stories. In consideration of lived experiences, the researcher also must explicate her assumptions and pre-understandings. Of this challenge, Van Manen (1990) writes, “The problem with phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon that we

wish to investigate, but that we know too much.” Van Manen (1990) continues by explaining how our common sense pre-understandings predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. Glesne (1999) adds that continual alertness of our own biases will assist in producing more trustworthy interpretations.

Bias seems inescapable; it is insistently inherent in all aspects of life. My best efforts to monitor researcher biases include a written autobiographical disclosure, a self interview, journal entries, and interview guides that were written very carefully to be open-ended in such a way that invites the respondents to be honest without my influence.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness for the study is discussed at length in the chapter three, but for now, Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1988), Miles and Huberman (1994), Litchman (2006), and Glesne (1999) all influenced the design of the study in meeting trustworthiness criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Specifically, the credibility of my work was supported by activities increasing the probability that credible findings were produced including: a self-interview, triangulation, peer debriefing, referential adequacy, member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp.301-315), and an autobiographical disclosure (Merriam, 1988).

Definitions of Terms

For this study, the following terms are defined as they relate to the investigation:

Comprehension: Reading comprehension is the act of understanding and interpreting the information within a text (NRP, 2000).

Differentiated instruction: DI involves providing students with different avenues to acquiring content; to processing, constructing, or making sense of ideas; and to developing teaching products so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability (Tomlinson, 2001).

Fluency: Oral reading fluency is the ability to read text aloud with accuracy, speed, and proper expression (NRP, 2000).

Inclusion: Inclusion, in the context of education, is the practice in which students with special educational needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students (Smith, 2007).

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA): The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities

(20 .S.C. § 1412(a)(21)(B)(i).

International Reading Association: Since 1956, IRA has been a nonprofit, global network of individuals and institutions committed to worldwide literacy. More than 85,000 members strong, the Association supports literacy professionals through a wide range of resources, advocacy efforts, volunteerism, and professional activities. Members promote high levels of literacy for all by: improving the quality of reading instruction, disseminating research and information about reading, and encouraging the lifetime reading habit (IRA, retrieved Nov.11, 2009 from www.reading.org)

Learning Center: In independent schools, learning centers resemble resource rooms in which children spend portions of their school day receiving specialized instruction in a specific area of need. In most cases, this instruction happens either in small groups or one-on-one, and is provided by a specialized professional.

Learning Specialist: In independent schools, this term is used as a title for teachers who provide the support services to the students who attend the learning center. Learning specialists in some cases are reading specialists, but in all cases must hold master's degrees.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): According to Public Law 107 - 110 – “An act to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind.”

Perspective: In this case, perspective is the state of one's ideas, the facts known to one, etc., in having a meaningful interrelationship (Dictionary.com, definition retrieved November 17, 2009 from www.dictionary.com)

Phonemic Awareness: Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and the individual manipulate sounds within words. The sounds within words are called phonemes, so awareness of these sounds is called phonemic awareness (NRP, 2000).

Phonics: Phonics instruction teaches students to use the relationship between letters and sounds to translate printed text into pronunciation (NRP, 2000).

Pull-out: A pull-out program specific to independent schools is one in which students with identified needs are taken out of their regular classroom for an allocated amount of time to receive specialized instruction.

Reading intervention: Reading intervention is specialized instruction provided to struggling readers based specifically on areas of weaknesses in reading.

Reading Specialist: A reading specialist is a person who has met state standards and holds at least a master's degree in reading.

Resource room: A resource room is the physical location where students who receive support services gather. In this study, the "learning center" is the label used in independent schools in place of the resource room.

Small group instruction: Instruction to students in groups no larger than five.

Struggling reader: For this study, a struggling reader is a student who has been identified as needing extra support in the processes of learning to read. The criterion for this determination differs somewhat for each participating site, but all schools require some sort of reading assessment, whether formal or informal, to be used in the decision.

Vocabulary instruction: Vocabulary here refers to word meanings and vocabulary instruction is about the learning of word meanings (NRP, 2000).

Chapter Summary

Research on reading over the last three decades has experienced one of the most dramatic increases in knowledge and understanding in the history of education (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). Although we have learned a great deal about how children learn to read, and what instruction has been proven to be effective, some children still struggle. Moreover, despite the fact that reading is a top priority in most U.S. schools, and additional support services such as learning centers are designed to achieve the goal of literacy for its students, many students still

struggle and some children still do not learn to read. McGill-Franzen and Allington (1991) point out that although billions of federal and state tax dollars have been targeted for educational services, and these literacy services have been in place for over a quarter of a century, all U.S. children still do not learn to read (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991).

The number of children who struggle when learning to read is staggering. Many teachers and administrators agree that early intervention is critical and effective when properly administered. However, reading professionals continue to debate the best approach to intervention, and teachers are not adequately trained to teach reading well. The existing literature has considered all of this.

What we still do not know are the perspectives of the children who actually participate in the models we design. If we took more seriously their experiences, then we could improve our instruction, the way we look at reading intervention, and ultimately the journey of becoming literate for the struggling reader.

Overview of the Manuscript

There are five chapters in this dissertation that discuss the student experience of participating in learning centers. Chapter one begins with an overview and introduction of my intentions. This is followed by the background for the study and the statement of the problem. Next, the significance of the study is described as well as the lens through which the study is viewed. Implications for policy and practice lead to the purpose statement and the main research question and subquestions guiding the investigation. Finally, the general methodological approach is explained, the theoretical framework is described, delimitations and limitations are

discussed, and terms specific to the inquiry are defined. A chapter summary concludes the section.

Chapter two presents a summary, evaluation, and critical review of the existing literature related to four major concepts: reading intervention models, strategies that have been shown to accelerate reading growth, teacher effectiveness and knowledge, and student experience (performance and perception) in reading development. Each section begins with an overview and ends with a summary connective to the larger study. The review of literature serves as a springboard for presenting my conceptual and theoretical framework, and addresses each of the key concepts in my mental model.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the study. It begins with the identification of my constructivist stance which addresses the rationale and implications of the stance, as well as theoretical concerns for a constructivist stance. This is followed by an autobiographical disclosure. Next, chapter three provides a detailed description of procedures for conducting the study. It also addresses selection of the participants, detailed data collection procedures, and full descriptions of analytical techniques used, as well as justification for those techniques. Once the measures taken to establish trustworthiness are described, the narrative concluding the chapter shows how my study approach addresses my research questions and my conceptual framework.

Chapters four through six present the stories of the student and parent participants. These three chapters begin with the interview structure and context. Student and parent narratives follow, as well as a polyvocal analysis for each student. A contrast and comparison is also provided prior to the chapter summary for each site.

Chapter seven includes a cross-case analysis in consideration of the guiding research questions. Discussion and charts demonstrate the findings and emergent themes.

Finally, chapter eight includes discussion and conclusions. The findings are analyzed and related to existing knowledge. Conclusions are drawn with respect to each research question. Likewise, implications for both research and practice are discussed, and finally, recommendations for future research finalize the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature addresses four major concepts related to the experiences of students who participate in learning centers which include: an overview of service delivery models related to reading intervention, a description of strategies that have been shown to accelerate reading growth, a discussion of teacher knowledge and its implications, and finally a synthesis of what is known about students' perspectives of literacy intervention.

The literature review begins with a discussion of the profundity of the issue of struggling readers in the United States. The reality is that despite all efforts, children still experience difficulty when learning to read, especially students with learning disabilities. What follows is a discussion of the models that may be employed when providing reading intervention to struggling readers. In this section, the debate over the physical location of where specialized instruction takes place is addressed and is considered from the vantage point of the students who actually participate in the service models. Thoughtful of more than just the location of reading instruction, time is spent describing research-based characteristics of instructional strategies that have been shown to accelerate reading growth. What is acknowledged on top of that, is the role of teacher knowledge in implementing the strategies that have been shown to be effective. Lastly, a discussion of the research that has been conducted on students' perspectives is synthesized and gaps in the literature are demonstrated and given consideration for this study.

The Problem Still Exists:

Many Children Still Cannot Read

Every child has a right to literacy. McGill-Franzen and Allington pointedly ask, “Why is it that after countless millions, nay billions, of federal and state dollars targeted for extra educational service, and a quarter century of trying, all U.S. children still don’t learn to read?” (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991, p.86). It is not that professionals do not want children to learn to read. Of course they do. In their article, “*Becoming an Engaged Reader,*” Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) make two promises to every child: “We will teach you to read, and we will help you become a *reader*—a literate person who experiences the power and joy of comprehending” (Scharer et al., 2005, p.24). This promise is nothing new. Over twenty years ago, Secretary of Education, William Bennett (1986), wrote that the “Elementary school must assume as its sublime and most solemn responsibility the task of teaching every child in it to read” (Bennett, 1986, p.21). Back then, and even now, professionals certainly want to teach children to read, and now know much more about doing so effectively, but what is persistently lacking is knowledge of how students actually perceive and experience their literacy journey. Little is known about the experiences of students through their eyes. Similar to the promise of literacy for all children, the same goal lies in the design of learning centers and reading intervention.

Models of Reading Intervention

To begin, it is important to understand the most commonly used models for reading instruction and/or intervention in independent schools which can include: whole class, small group, one-on-one, “pull-out,” “push-in/inclusion,” or tutoring. Having an idea of how a

particular model operates as well as its philosophical underpinnings, will contribute to a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences as they describe them.

In ideal cases, reading intervention happens in smaller groups, but the thought of whether that intervention should take place in the context of the general classroom setting or in a resource room has been up for debate for quite some time. Over the last two decades, parents, professionals, and policymakers alike, have raised concern about the appropriateness of settings separate from the general education classroom (Vaughn & Klingler, 1998). Although many professionals in education prefer providing support services in their general classrooms instead of providing assistance in resource rooms, the move toward full-time inclusion has not been without controversy (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Roberts & Mather, 1995). On the one hand, proponents of fulltime inclusion have argued that no separate knowledge base exists in resource room settings, and further, pull-out programs have failed to bring about desired benefits (Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1994/1995). Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, and Moody (1999) also found many problems associated with pull-out programs such as the undifferentiated groups which are associated with poor outcomes in reading for students, group sizes that are too large and provide insufficient intensity, and the practice of instructional approaches that may impede the effectiveness of resource room reading programs. Additionally, Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, and Mallette (2004) noted that at-risk students missed important instructional time in the general classroom because of their participation in a pull-out program. These researchers further testify that teachers were hesitant to introduce new skills during this time because they knew re-teaching would be necessary. Still, teachers have these feelings even though their classroom instruction might not be suited for particular students because they are targeting more general populations. Further, this instruction may be detrimental because it increases a possibility of

various failure syndromes like learned helplessness. Finding out more from the learner's perspective is essential.

Miles, et al. (2004) also reported that parents felt that there was a stigma attached to many pull-out programs. All of these concerns are valid, but it is noteworthy that all of these concerns are the concerns of adults, not the students who actually participate in the service models. Only a limited number of studies examining the perspectives of children who participate in the programs could be located (Vaughn & Bos, 1987; Jenkins, Heinan, 1989; Bear, Juvonen, McNery, 1993; Whinner, 1995; Padeliadu, Zigmond, 1996; Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998).

Nonetheless, many professionals express worry about the idea of inclusion for all students and its appropriateness as the only service delivery option (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). According to Public Law 94-142, individualized instruction must be available to students with disabilities, but that may not always occur in the context of the general classroom setting. In fact, the history of instruction for students with learning disabilities in the general education classrooms has been bleak (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). Many teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach students with learning disabilities (Spear-Swerling, 2007; Moats, 1994, and Vaughn, 2006). Teachers also face the challenge of addressing the needs of all the students in their classrooms, emotionally, physically, academically, and intellectually. While proponents of full-time inclusion believe that self-esteem and friendships will increase, studies have shown (Bryan & Bryan, 1978; Gresham, 1984; Vaughn, Elbaum, & Schumm, 2000) that students with learning disabilities are frequently the least popular and most rejected students in the classroom. Research has also indicated that many students actually prefer the pull-out model (Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998). What is known about student preference is that

when given a choice, the majority of students would prefer to be in the resource room. Where the intervention actually takes place is an important component in understanding the lived experiences of students. How students feel about that setting is even more important.

While reading instruction can happen in either the context of the general classroom setting, or in the resource room, at those locations it can take different shapes in terms of size and design. Next, small group reading intervention is discussed, as well as one-on-one tutoring.

Many struggling readers in independent schools receive reading instruction in either a small group, or in some cases, one-on-one. The idea of small group reading intervention almost seems to be an obvious choice. There is substantial evidence that suggests very small groups can be quite effective (Allington, 2002; Pinnell, Lyons, Deford, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000; Helf, Cooke, & Flowers, 2009). In this case, children receive instruction in small groups of two to four students, whether it is in the classroom or in a resource room. Helf, Coke, and Flowers (2009) have found that small-group instruction provides an environment in which students have more opportunities to practice skills and receive increased feedback from the teacher. In addition to intensive intervention, small group reading instruction as well as RTI have been shown in many studies to effectively reduce the number of struggling readers (O’Conner, 2000; Simmons, Kame’enui, Stoolmiller, Coyne, & Harne, 2003; Torgeson, Rashotte, Alexander, Alexander, & MacPhee, 2003). Further, in an interview with Sharon Vaughn (2006), she discusses special education in terms of small groups and heralds, “I think what has happened for students most at risk, students with disabilities in particular, is that we have provided them not what is necessary but what is available” (Vaughn, 2006, p.170). She continues by describing the lack of resources and other administrative decisions that have increased class sizes and the responsibilities of the special education teacher over time. She

concludes her statement with her view, as well as the research that she is aware of, that suggests students at risk benefit from more intense and specific instructional time rather than more time in large groups where special education is virtually either very difficult or impossible to provide (Vaugh, 2006). In agreement, Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, and Mallette (2004) report that their “Anna Plan” reaffirms the value of small-group instruction in that it is an effective way to meet the individual literacy needs of students by targeting their strengths. This sort of small group intervention seems to work well when the participants have similar instructional needs (Allington, 2006). Insight into the benefits of providing reading instruction to small groups of students is central to the larger theme of designing purposeful learning centers for effective reading intervention.

Yet another, more intensive approach is the use of one-to-one instruction. In thinking about one-to-one instruction from a historical standpoint, it began with its prominence in institutional settings. Students with specific types of disabilities were sent to institutionalized schools where issues of safety and comfort were a priority and education was a secondary goal. Instruction was often performed individually (Winzer, 1993). In terms of effective reading intervention, the research available demonstrates that one-to-one expert tutoring is simply the most powerful approach. Many schools use Reading Recovery as a first grade early intervention for children who are most at-risk for reading failure (Gapp, Zalud, Pietrzak, 2009). Reading Recovery was designed to be a supplementary pull-out intervention to provide special individualized reading and writing instruction in an effort to accelerate students’ learning so that they may profit from classroom instruction (Clay, 2006). Numerous studies have documented the initial success and sustained gains of Reading Recovery (Askew, Fountas, Lyons, Pinnell, & Schmidt, 1998; Briggs & Young, 2003; Brown, Denton, Kelly, & Neal, 1999; Forbes &

Szymczuk 2003; Lyons, Pinnell & DeFord, 1993; Lukas, 2001; Ruhe & Moore, 2005; Schmitt & Gregory, 2005). These researchers have found that students who successfully complete their series of Reading Recovery lessons and discontinue the need for intervention tend to remain within average performance of their peer groups in years to follow.

Camilli, Vargas, and Yurecko (2003) also found that one-to-one tutoring had a significant impact. Likewise, Frey (2006) makes a case for the use of 1:1 instruction that is often delivered in the general education classroom as a model for providing students with disabilities with access to specialized assistance. Of this approach, Frey (2006) identified three advantages to using 1:1 instruction: (1) 1:1 instruction provides students with the opportunity to preview activities, (2) 1:1 instruction means that students can review concepts first introduced in the content area subjects, and (3) 1:1 instruction allows students to receive instruction on concepts not being taught in general education settings (Frey, 2006, p.207).

All children can indeed benefit from one-to-one instruction, but organizing it is nothing short of a challenge. Moody, Vaughn, and Schumm (1997) have reported that many teachers state that they rarely have time to work with students in a one-to-one capacity, despite the fact that the practice of a knowledgeable adult offering reading instruction to an individual student has been a valued approach in American education for quite some time. Regardless of the challenge, Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, and Moody (2000) found in their meta-analysis of 31 studies that “Well-designed, reliably implemented, one-to-one interventions can make significant contributions to improved reading outcomes for many students whose poor reading skills place them at risk for academic failure” (p.617).

In terms of small groups compared to one-on-one intervention, Helf, Cooke, and Flowers (2009) found that the comparable outcomes across grouping conditions demonstrated that 1:3

(small group) instruction is more efficient than is the 1:1 grouping instruction in consideration of time and resources, as well as overall reading gains. Other evidence also supports the idea that very small groups can be just as effective (Allington, 2002; Pinnell, Lyons, Deford, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000), noting that one-to-one instruction is not always a realistic possibility.

Small group reading instruction is the best-case scenario for many students, but what actually happens during those small groups is of greater importance. The only real way to authentically begin to understand what happens during small group reading instruction is to bring in the perspective of the learners involved.

Strategies Shown to Accelerate Reading Growth

Poor readers form a very diverse group of students who differ in many ways, including how they respond to instruction (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; Kamps & Greenwood, 2005). Such an assortment of students makes it difficult to achieve common reading goals for all students in a classroom (Allington, 1991, Vaughn & Schumm, 1995), and the details of the instruction will vary for every struggling reader (Allington 2006). Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, and Moody (1999) suggest that the model of instructional delivery is not where the answer lies for successful instruction in reading, but rather the implementation of high-quality effective remedial interventions provides a larger piece of the answer. In consideration of what is known about research-based design principles, several reading interventions that *have* been shown to accelerate reading growth are discussed.

Allington (in press) identifies eight characteristics of “good” reading intervention:

- (1) very small groups or tutoring
- (2) majority of time engaged in reading,
- (3) match between reader and text level,
- (4) use of texts interesting to the student
- (5) coordination with core classroom
- (6) expands daily reading activity
- (7) meaning and meta-cognitive focus
- (8) expert teacher delivers intervention

These characteristics are described in detail and expanded upon based on what Allington and several other reading researchers have found to be effective.

First on the list is the idea of providing instruction in very small groups or one-on-one. In terms of effective instruction, the research available demonstrates that one-to-one tutoring is simply the most powerful approach (Camilli, Vargas, & Yurecko, 2006; Frey, 2006).

Next is the idea that students should spend the majority of time engaged in reading. Allington (2006) asserts, “If we intend to accelerate reading development of struggling readers, intend to help them “catch up” with their classmates who are developing typically as readers and writers, then we will necessarily have to endure that the intervention design provides expanded opportunities to engage in successful reading practice” (Allington, 2006, p.130). That is, reading practice that actually involves reading! What is unfortunate is that much of reading instructional time is spent on unrelated skills. Hiebert (1983) found that the reading instruction for students in low groups focuses on isolated skills rather than on reading purposeful, connected texts.

Struggling readers need time to practice reading. Vaughn (2006) identifies time spent reading as a critical principle. In her interview, she comments, “They [at-risk readers] need lots of opportunities to read texts that they can read and that they want to read” (Chamberlain, 2006, p.172). Vaughn also discusses how it is very hard to make progress at anything if you do not spend a considerable amount of time practicing it. In most cases, people spend more time participating in activities that they are good at and enjoy. This is not coincidental. Guthrie (2004) pointed out that really good readers spend approximately 500% more time engaged in reading than do struggling readers. Drawing from his conclusions, teachers should attempt to increase the time the least proficient readers spend engaged with reading by 200%-500% (Guthrie, 2004, p.1). In other words, if the typical fourth grader reads for 20 minutes a day, Guthrie would argue for an increase of 100 minutes per day. Stanovich (2000) also agrees that extensive reading is a critical component of the development of reading proficiency. Allington (2006) identifies reading volume as widely neglected in the design of reading intervention for struggling readers.

Another principle element of reading instruction that has been shown to accelerate reading growth is matching the reader and the text level (Allington, 2006). According to Allington (2002), “It seems so obvious—students need textbooks that they can actually read” (Allington, 2006, p.16). Evidence on the value of matching readers and books dates all the back to the 1940s with Bett’s (1949) study which also included fluency and comprehension. Matching students to appropriate texts might be bold for some in consideration of the move to reject district plans for all children to be required to read the same books, and in some cases, be on the same page, on the same day. Such a practice seems highly unrealistic, as well as developmentally inappropriate. As the IRA sees it, effective reading instruction must provide

differentiated instruction (2003). Further, O'Connor's (2000) research provides another demonstration that students fail to benefit much from reading instruction and texts that are not on their level. Providing students with texts that frustrate them does not support an effective approach to literacy intervention. Supplying texts that are appropriate can be especially challenging in content area subjects, but it is definitely possible, and indeed needed if students are to experience success.

As an extension to matching readers to texts, students should also be interested in what they read. Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) ask, "If we teach students through stories that do not make sense to them, what are they learning about the act of reading?" (Scharer, et al, 2005, p.24). They suppose that the joy of reading diminishes without interesting and engaging texts, and further suggest that texts captivate students even at the beginning levels. Spaker and Spaker (1991) agree and call it an important goal of a literacy program to develop readers who actually enjoy the things they read.

Setting up a classroom or learning center that has a rich supply of interesting texts involves a thoughtful process. In Scharer et al.'s (2005) description of important texts to provide a rich base for reading comprehension, they include: books to read aloud, leveled books, and classroom library books. An awareness of the roles of a variety of books is useful in matching readers to texts. Dzaldov and Peterson (2005) add the following two suggestions for ensuring interesting texts: (1) teachers should have students respond to self-interest and background surveys to gain information about their personal interests, and (2) teachers should seek out and augment their book collections accordingly to support groups of students or individuals in relating to text during instruction or when reading independently (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005, p.227).

Interesting texts imply that meaning is made. Good reading programs support students in making meaningful connections, as one of the goals of reading is indeed to understand what has been read. A major criticism of pull-out programs is that children are removed from the instruction of the general classroom to be taught skills in isolation that they have later have difficulty applying in context. Allington (2006) calls for “coherence and balance” with classroom teachers and interventionists. Johnston, Allington, and Afflerbach (1985) interviewed classroom teachers and interventionists and found that no teacher could consistently discuss or describe what their students did during intervention lessons. Further, McGill-Franzen and Allington (1990) found that teachers were using incompatible instructional reading materials that would probably confuse the struggling readers. Though these findings are dated, this reality still exists in many schools today.

“Coherence and balance” also calls for classroom reading plans that emphasize the important components of reading instruction which include: phonemics awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000). A plan that overemphasizes one critical element, and fails to give attention to another, such as oral reading over silent reading and comprehension does not provide the balance needed in effective intervention plans (Allington, 2006).

Furthermore, good reading instruction expands the daily reading activity. That is, extensive reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency (Krashen, 2001; Stanovich, 2000). Students need to practice the skills that have been introduced during the reading lesson throughout the course of the day in other content areas to work towards proficiency. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Schumm, Moody, and Vaughn (2000) found that students who were pulled-out for reading groups were more likely to be working on

unrelated alternate activities, such as homework, math problems, or art projects. Meaningful connections must be made during reading instruction time and throughout the day. When students are given choice, Turner (1995) has documented greater student ownership of the work and greater engagement with the work. Organizing reading across the content areas and choice in the general classroom calls for creativity, and this has been accomplished by the exemplary teachers described by Allington (2006). He observed that students in these environments read whole books, successfully completed individual and small group research projects, and worked on tasks that integrate reading, writing, and social studies.

Taking into account the way in which students think about their own thinking is another important piece. Building meta-cognition, and making connections and meaning during reading instruction are critical elements (Allington, in press). This can be accomplished by use of think-alouds, modeling, and explicit teaching. Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) discuss teaching in a way that gives students clear insight into what effective readers do when they read. As such, they recommend modeling how effective readers *think within the text*, how effective readers think *beyond the text*, and how effective readers think *about the text* (original emphasis). Using explicit modeling and thinking aloud with struggling readers demystifies the strategies that proficient readers employ.

Another powerful tool for building both comprehension and meta-cognition is through the use of connections. Strong readers make connections with the text which include text-to-text connections, text-to-self connections, and text-to-world connections. Discussing individual connections will help students think more critically about the text in a personal way, thus making it more meaningful. When reading, students should be thinking about their own thinking, as implied in the term “meta-cognition.”

In addition to the reading strategies discussed above which include: very small groups or tutoring, majority of time engaged in reading, match between reader and text level, use of texts interesting to student, coordination with core classroom, expanding daily reading activity, and meaning and meta-cognitive focus, the National Reading Panel (2000) identifies five key elements to effective reading instruction in general. In its report, the NRP (2000) calls for instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. All of these skills can be addressed through use of the reading strategies discussed above that are shown to accelerate reading growth. In short, Allington (in press) summarizes what he has learned about effective reading instruction from a decade of studying exemplary elementary classroom teachers. After hundreds of days of classroom observations and hundreds of interviews with teachers and students, Allington (in press) sketches six common features—the 6 Ts of effective literacy instruction which include: time, texts, teach, talk, tasks, and test. As a conclusion to the discussion on effective literacy instruction, examples or explanations of each follow.

- (1) Time—Teachers plan a large percentage of time for just reading. Allington (in press) terms this as the “reading and writing vs. stuff” ratio.
- (2) Texts—Children need an enormous supply of books that they can successfully read in order to become proficient.
- (3) Teach—Allington (in press) describes good teaching with a focus on the notion of active instruction, and “the modeling and demonstration of the useful strategies that good readers employ.”
- (4) Talk—Teachers foster much more student talk by encouraging, modeling, and supporting lots of purposeful talk throughout the day.

- (5) Tasks—Teachers plan for meaningful tasks by greater use of longer assignments and reduced emphasis on filling the day with many shorter tasks.
- (6) Test—Teacher assessment is authentic. It is based more on an emphasis on improvement and effort as opposed to achievement status.

All of these traits are important to this study because students made mention of them when they shared their experiences. These traits, as well as the characteristics described, have been identified by reading experts as essential components of effective literacy instruction. Of particular interest is the view from the student of what role these practices played in their journeys.

Teacher Knowledge

Having an expert teacher deliver instruction is another key contributor that has been shown to accelerate reading growth (Allington, 2006). Kamps, Abbott, Greenwood, Wills, Veerkamp, and Kaufman (2008) explain that in order for reading problems to be solved, teachers must first be able to identify the problem, know how to implement possible solutions, as well as have the available resources to do so. Although these steps are seemingly obvious, actually having the means to implement them proves to be a challenge. Simmons and Kame'enui's (1998) findings suggest that one explanation for so many students lagging in reading is that general education teachers may lack sufficient knowledge or the school's support to help the large number of students failing in whole class instruction. Several researchers (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Chard & Kame'enui, 2000; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bishop, 1992; and O'Connor, 2000) have shown that general education teachers are hesitant and struggle to make adaptations to meet the needs of individual students in their instruction. Similarly, Fisher and Frey (2004)

suggest that this resistance to differentiation may be a product of a lack of teacher knowledge. On top of that, Miles, Stegle, Hubs, Henk, and Mallette (2004) found that teachers are diverse in their philosophies and delivery methods, and these differences tended to be based on teachers' education and experience.

In short, the broad range of knowledge required to teach beginning reading well to children with diverse needs has repeatedly been underestimated (Moats, 1994; National Academy of Education, 2005). Of this knowledge, Spear-Swerling (2007) advises that teachers have information about, "the structure of English; the abilities involved in early reading, including not only phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency, but also listening comprehension and vocabulary; and the individual differences that impact learning to read" (Spear-Swerling, 2007, p. 306). In order to gain this in-depth understanding of literacy instruction, teacher preparation programs must do a sufficient job of preparing teachers by designing programs that set priorities for reading, given the considerable knowledge base required. Spear-Swerling (2007) discusses this challenge in consideration of the practical constraints of a 4- or even 5- year degree in which some content may very well receive far less emphasis than is ideal.

Basically the reality is this: the time spent in elementary education programs on teaching reading is not sufficient for teachers to acquire the specific knowledge needed to teach reading well (Moats, 1994; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003, 2004).

The National Reading Panel's (2000) consensus document described the need for more effective professional development of teachers. Schumm, Moody, and Vaughn (2000) agree and propose that more professional development in reading education is needed at both the pre-

service and in-service levels. They recommend that pre-service and in-service teacher education must provide teachers with a better understanding of literacy methods and procedures which necessitates knowledge of, “classroom management, collaboration skills for working with volunteers and other professionals, formal assessment of reading competency, ongoing informal assessment of reading progress, and appropriate instructional practices for various grouping sizes” (Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000, p.487). Similarly, Denton, Vaughn, and Fletcher (2003) identify two obvious sources of professional development that require adjustment if teachers are to be adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with reading and learning disabilities: “(1) pre-service education must more comprehensively and effectively prepare teachers, and (2) ongoing in-service programs must be designed to better meet the needs of practicing teachers” (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003, p.205). Denton et al. (2003) go on to explain that if models of service delivery for students with learning disabilities are to undergo reform, then so must the preparation of teachers. One challenge they identify is that college professors are not encouraged or supported to make changes because the typical university promotion and tenure system does not reward professors who spend a great deal of time supervising their students in field experiences. And in some cases, these professors are penalized when their productivity is assessed because they have had little time to engage in research (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003).

In order to effect change, support would need to be given to professors of reading. Denton et al. (2003) also suggest that adjustments be made in state certification requirements. They propose that documentation of prospective teachers’ knowledge and skills relating to research-based principles of reading instruction be part of the certification requirements. Teacher preparation seems to be the number one way to improve the effectiveness of teachers,

and Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, and Mallette (2004) found that diversity in philosophy and delivery methods tended to be based on teachers' education and experiences. As Denton, Vaughn, and Fletcher (2003) see it, "Teachers are likely to use what they learn in college and to adopt the beliefs of those who prepared them, implying that pre-service preparation has the potential to directly influence outcomes for students who are having difficulty learning to read" (Denton, Vaughn, and Fletcher, 2004, p.206).

Although the profession continues to advocate for better teaching practices to meet the needs of individual learners (Frey, 2006), requirements at the state and federal levels do not consistently require advanced expertise in reading for positions as a reading specialist, reading teacher, or reading coach. Allington (2006) calls this, "a question of credentials" (p.16). He explains that despite the mandates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that all teachers must demonstrate that they are highly qualified, reading specialists, reading teachers, and reading coaches must only demonstrate the same reading qualifications as elementary classroom teachers in most states. Allington (2006) goes on to clarify that it is not that classroom teachers should not be highly qualified to teach reading, it is just that one would expect that the qualifications for reading specialists and reading coaches would substantially exceed those for that classroom teachers must meet. Allington's (2006) argument is summed up in that any attempt to improve the quality of reading instruction would call for the focus of policymakers on ensuring that all schools employ credentialed reading specialists and coaches.

All of this matters because evidence shows that when expert teachers deliver reading intervention, reading growth is accelerated (Allington, in press). Allington (2006) states, "Struggling readers need personalized and explicit instruction" (p.132). This instruction is most effective when delivered by an expert teacher. In other words, the research indicates that

struggling readers needs expert teachers providing the intervention (Allington, 2006). Expert teaching can only happen if the proper steps are taken to ensure the development of the knowledge required to teach reading well.

Student Perspectives

So the model of delivery matters, as does the knowledge and effectiveness of the teacher who provides the instruction. But one the most neglected components of effective literacy instruction seems to be the attention (or lack thereof) given to the perspectives and experiences of the students who actually participate in the intervention service models. Every educator would agree that they wish for their students to know how to read well, and to some extent, possibly even enjoy the act reading. Mathes, Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, Francis, and Schatchneider (2005) suggest that perhaps the most important responsibility of elementary teachers is to ensure the reading competency of all students. In order to do so, conversation should happen with children about their experiences when they are learning to read. Specific curiosity involves the experiences and perspectives of those students who struggle when learning to read. Poor readers are a diverse group of individuals. These children differ in background knowledge, language ability, their responses to instruction, and subsequent levels of achievement (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; Kamps & Greenwood, 2005). Achieving common goals for all students with such diverse backgrounds is difficult (Allington, 1991; Baker, Simmons, Kame'enui, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Perhaps the best way to tailor instruction to meet their needs would be to ask them about their experiences. This would call for a rejection of the “one size fits all” mentality and an embracement in matching the instruction and assessment to the learner.

Horner and Shwery (2002) describe students' personal beliefs or self-efficacy, task value, and motivation and how these beliefs influence their self-regulated reading. To start, understanding a student's self-efficacy about reading is important. Elbaum and Vaughn (2003) note that students with learning disabilities are generally viewed as being at risk for low self-concept because they often experience difficulty in school with academic performance and peer acceptance. Horner and Shwery (2002) found that children's beliefs about their decoding ability and comprehension will influence their motivation to read, as well as the strategies they select, how they monitor their reading progress, and their reading effectiveness. They found that differences in self-efficacy and in motivation can have far-reaching implications for young children (Horner & Shwery, 2002). Like Allington (2006), Horner and Shwery (2002) agree that practicing reading helps make the process automatic, but struggling readers tend to practice less often. Research suggests that academic competence is often very low in students with learning disabilities (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). Using the term *Matthew Effect* which was coined by Stanovich (1986) to describe this phenomenon in reading, the strong readers get stronger, and the weak readers get weaker.

Task value is another element that affects reading (Horner & Shwery, 2002). Horner and Shwery (2002) explain that the more a student values a task in reading, the more likely the students will be motivated to self-regulate and become engaged in the reading process. What this means for teachers is that skills taught in isolation with little regard to making meaningful connections to the students and to the task at hand, allow students to develop their own ideas about reasons for doing activities. These reasons could possibly be the wrong ones. For example, a student may associate learning about parts of speech so that they can find the verbs on a worksheet, or they may associate learning about quotation marks so that they can circle

them on a test. Horner and Shwery (2002) warn that when the purpose of reading assignments is not stated explicitly, students may not relate it to the act of reading and writing.

Finally, Horner and Shwery (2002) point to motivation. They put forward that, “Motivation to read and learn is indispensable for developing engaged, self-regulated readers” (Horner & Shwery, 2002, p.103). Morgan and Fuchs (2005) also documented the relationship between motivation and reading success in the early elementary grades. The problem is that children who have a difficult time engaging in the task of reading, often choose other things to do instead of read. Juel (1988) asked fourth grade students if they would rather read or clean their room. Not surprisingly, he reported that 40% of struggling readers chose cleaning, while only 5% of good readers also chose to clean. Horner and Shwery (2002) look to Dweck (2000) for an explanation of students with different motivational goals. The first type, students with learning-oriented goals are motivated to learn or master the task, while the second type, performance-oriented students are motivated to look good and perform well (Dweck, 2000). This is important because struggling readers tend to have performance-oriented goals, and if the risk of failure is too high, they may behave in a self-handicapping manner and in turn set themselves up to fail (Horner & Shwery, 2002).

To summarize, teachers should nurture a strong self-efficacy for reading in students so that they will value reading tasks, and have learner-oriented goals. This in turn will support students in becoming self-regulated readers. Insight into self-efficacy, task value, and motivation is influential in understanding the experiences of students.

In addition to improved self-esteem and positive self-concept, also influencing a student’s perspective are the many benefits of experiencing success in reading such as appropriate social

skills and overall social competence (Adams, 1990; Lyon, 1997). Research indicates that students who struggle in reading also experience difficulties related to social competence and social functioning (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2001; Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, Hughes, 1998). Kavale and Forness (1996) found in their meta-analysis of social skill deficits that an estimated 75% of students with learning difficulties had lower ratings of social skills than their peers without learning difficulties. This data is significant in terms of reading intervention, but few empirical studies have been conducted that look at reading interventions on social outcomes which include peer acceptance and self-concept. This is another area where concerns of pull-out programs are raised. The assumption is that students pay a high cost socially if they are pulled out of class for instruction (Vaughn & Klingler, 1998). The reality of this according to Vaughn and Klingler's (1998) analysis of several studies is that, "Overall, students in inclusive classrooms do not demonstrate gains or losses in self-concept and are still overall not as well liked as average- to high-achieving students; however, they do seem more successful at making mutual friends" (Vaughn & Klingler, 1998, p.80). Wanzek and Vaughn (2006) examine the effects of reading interventions on social functioning in an effort to substantiate that the two areas can be impacted concurrently. They concluded that while some evidence exists that social outcomes are positively associated with reading interventions, more research is needed in this area. This study expands, to some degree, what is known about social outcomes.

The final piece of reading intervention that is consistently lacking in research is an understanding of students' perceptions of and experiences with inclusion and pull-out service delivery models. The oldest study located that related to the issue was published in 1987 by Vaughn and Bos (1987). Since that time several researchers (Jenkins, Heinan, 1989; Bear, Juvonen, McNery, 1993; Whinner, 1995; Padelia, Zignond, 1996; Klingler, Vaughn, Schumm,

Cohen, & Forgan, 1998;) have shown an interest in students' perceptions of their educational settings, but have failed to ask students about their experiences. As discussed previously, adults debate back and forth about reasons for and against both models. Asking the students about their experiences, in addition to their preferences, will likely lead to a richer understanding of the phenomenon of reading intervention. What *is* known about student preferences is that students do not unanimously prefer one model over another (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). Researchers (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998) found that students have marked ideas about which model they prefer and why, and all students do not agree on what the educational model should be. While many students with learning disabilities prefer to receive instruction outside of the general classroom for some part of the day, there are other students who feel that full-time inclusion is necessary for meeting their educational and social needs (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998).

In a similar study, Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan (1998) set out to find whether students preferred inclusion or pull-out. They believed that students' perceptions needed to be studied because they directly (and indirectly) influence educators' decisions about placement, curriculum, and teachers' role (Klinger et al., 1998). These researchers found that students in their study considered the pull-out model to be preferable to inclusion, although the students with learning disabilities were closer to an even split on the issue than the non-LD students. Klinger et al (1998) noted their surprise by how few students seemed to be emotionally engaged by this topic that has so charged professionals. What is important is this, "No one educational model will meet the needs of all students with learning disabilities; thus there is an advantage to providing a range of educational models" (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998, p.86).

Understanding students' experiences in addition to their preferences of delivery models will support a more authentic appreciation on the part of the professionals involved in designing,

planning, researching, and implementing reading interventions. Learning to read is personal. It calls for a distinct approach. The idea of one “best” place or one “best” way contradicts the very commitment to individualization.

Chapter Summary

Understanding the lived experiences of students who participate in reading intervention by way of learning centers will add new knowledge to the field of reading. What is known is that students still struggle to read, and despite all efforts, many students never learn to read. Volumes of research have been published that discuss strategies for supporting struggling readers. What still needs to be explored is the perspective of the learners involved. This study asked students very pointedly about their experiences.

As such, this literature review focused on four major concepts that are essential to understanding effective reading instruction: models, strategies, teacher knowledge, and student perspective. The disagreement among adults over the physical location and models of reading instruction has been addressed. This controversy could be tempered if students’ ideas about which location and model works best for them becomes part of the conversation.

Several strategies that have been shown to accelerate reading growth have been described. Asking students to describe the sort of reading activities in which they participate, as well as how they feel and what they think about those activities, will add a new layer of knowledge to reading pedagogy.

The current state of teacher preparation and how it impacts teacher knowledge has been explained. It is critical to have highly effective teachers providing the instruction to struggling readers (Allington, 2006). Asking teachers to talk about their philosophies, instructional delivery

methods, education, and experience through informal interviews will promote self-awareness and reflection based on the powerful impact teachers have on children.

Finally, what is known about student perspective has been synthesized, and the fact remains that students' perspectives are still one of the most neglected components of both effective literacy instruction and research. This study was designed to explore and work to understand students' perspectives through conversation in interviews and purposeful listening.

Conclusively, this literature review illustrates that more research is needed to explore ways in which students' experiences can be better incorporated into planning and decision making, as well as how students' perceptions can be used to improve reading intervention models.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate phenomenologically the experiences of students who participate in literacy support services. Through a lens of advocacy, the focus was on learning from the experiences of students. Narrative inquiry was selected as the methodology. This study included interviews with middle school students who participated in learning center support as elementary students, as well as interviews with teachers and parents, and observations.

This chapter begins with the major research questions. Next, is an explanation of the researcher stance, addressing the identification of a constructivist stance, as well as the rationale and implications of that stance. After that, theoretical concerns are explicated and an autobiographical disclosure is included. Following is a discussion of the phenomenon to be observed, and details of the procedures for conducting the study, which include data collection and data analysis. A section on trustworthiness concludes the chapter.

Guiding Questions

The omnibus question was this: What are the experiences of students (more specifically, struggling readers) who participated in reading intervention through learning centers in independent schools?

- 1) Questions related to student experience:
 - a) What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development?

- b) How does the child's discernment of how he/she is perceived academically by his/her reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read?
 - c) How does a child's sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience?
 - d) What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers?
- 2) Questions related to teaching/models:
- a) How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction?
 - b) How does a child's perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists?
 - c) What do students think about the activities they participate during learning center time?

These questions are profound and interesting. They were explored through careful interviewing and intentional listening.

Researcher Stance

Rationale and Implications of a Constructivist Stance

Differentiating between substantive theory and methodological theory is important during the early phases of the research. As Hatch (2002) puts it, calling the work “constructivist” identifies the paradigmatic framework but not the research methodology. Co-constructions of reality are implied in the constructivist stance. When discussing constructivism, Crotty (2003) identified three assumptions: (1) meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting, (2) humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives—we are all born into a world of

meaning bestowed upon us by our culture, and (3) the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. Crotty (2003) therefore points out that the process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field. Further, phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990) or realities from our vantage points. Narrative analysis fits nicely under the constructivist paradigm. It takes as its object of investigation the story itself, and the story metaphor emphasizes that we create order by constructing texts in particular contexts (Riessman, 1993). In other words, as Van Manen (1990) sees it, phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe internal meaning structures of lived experiences. Open-ended interviewing takes its place under this methodological framework. Phenomenological narrative inquiry was selected because it is aligned with my metaphysical assumptions, as well as the substantive theory behind this research.

Theoretical Concerns for a Constructivist Stance

A constructivist framework, in this case, sought to understand the phenomenon of student experiences with learning centers, and narrative inquiry and analysis were used as the primary source for data collection. While narratives provide rich, detailed stories of how individuals recount their histories, Van Manen (1990) points out what human science cannot do. He writes,

- (1) Phenomenology is not an empirical analytic science.
- (2) Phenomenology is not mere speculative inquiry in the sense of unworldly reflection.
- (3) Phenomenology is neither mere particularity, nor sheer universality.
- (4) Phenomenology does not problem solve.

In light of the fact that this investigation cannot be answered through the use of human science, phenomenological narrative inquiry positioned itself as the best methodology for researching in order to uncover and re-tell the lived experiences of my participants. Of this approach, Riessman (1993) warns that many qualitative researchers often seek to depict others' experiences but act as if representation is not a problem. She cautions, "We cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret" (Riessman, 1993, p.8). Interpretations and representational decisions cannot be avoided in narrative inquiry.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also discuss persistent concerns in narrative inquiry. Instead of providing definitive answers, they raise concerns that narrative researchers need to be mindful of throughout narrative inquiry. They begin with ethics, and suggest that ethical matters need to be dealt with over the entire process. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that obtaining ethical approval places the narrative inquirer in a "catch-22" position. That is, approaching participants before obtaining ethical approval breaks institutional requirements, while if they wait to approach participants with ethical approval, then some aspects of the inquiry are no longer able to be negotiated. They later suggest thinking about ethics in terms of relational matters. For this study, student participants were selected by the lower schools heads and the learning specialist at each respective site.

Taking measures to ensure confidentiality also needs some treatment. In the case of this investigation, confidentiality and protecting the informants from risks, especially risks that the publication of their voices might incur, was the issue. Thus the question of ownership came into play. Ownership and relational responsibilities are a concern Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss. They ask, "How much do the utterers/informants own the story that they tell?"

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.176). This question appears again during the writing of field texts.

To summarize, “Ownership concerns blur into concerns of ethics and negotiated relationships in the field.” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 176). In research of this kind, the story is co-created by the researcher and the informants, not by just one. Furthermore, the selection and analysis of the researcher builds the story and its importance as a voice with multiple layers and tells those polyvocal stories of the phenomenon under analysis.

Theoretical concerns for a constructivist stance were given thoughtful attention to throughout the investigation. Likewise, because this investigation was viewed through a lens of advocacy, researcher subjectivity and biases were explicated, and carefully monitored by adhering to strategies for establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Autobiographical Disclosure

Specific to my constructivist position and lens of advocacy, I believe as Walford (2001) does, that decisions about the choice of topic, and how a researcher proceeds, always involves individual choices that often evolve from previous personal experiences and commitments. Walford (2001) later adds that current research interests are always the result of complex interactions between various prior interests and accidents of personal histories. For me, the work presented in this dissertation is no exception. As a small child, learning to read was very difficult for me. I was never diagnosed formally with a learning disability, but nonetheless the process was not easy. Like many young girls, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up, but it was not until the end of my undergraduate degree that I realized a special interest in the process and nuances of becoming literate. I thought, “There must be an easier way for children

to learn to read.” At that point, I began my graduate studies in the field of reading. The terminology associated with reading instruction as well as the science behind it, was challenging, yet stimulating. It all sort of started to make sense to me, and the blur became somewhat focused somewhere near the end of graduate school. I learned that there were indeed many ways to make learning to read easier, and even for those children who despite good instruction, still experienced difficulty, there were strategies and techniques to make the journey to literacy attainable. At that point, I began my career as a second grade teacher, and soon after moved into the position of a “learning specialist.” A given title coined by the school where I worked. Despite the label, I was functioning as a reading specialist, providing reading intervention to elementary students who struggled. At the start of it, I had a lot of ideas from graduate school about how to provide the “best” intervention and instruction possible. But now I find myself in an unfamiliar place where my metaphysical assumptions are challenged, and my beliefs are pretty much limited to my own personal experiences. At this juncture, what I have come to accept is that perhaps there is no “best approach”—and if there is, maybe it is constructed individually by the student who experiences it, or better yet, co-constructed by the students and the teachers together. A teacher’s point of view is much different from a struggling reader’s. Teachers are the ones providing the instruction, but not the ones who are receiving it, experiencing it. My current research agenda is to learn from those who do, through observing, and listening, and reflecting. In other words, this phenomenological search is my systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990).

The Phenomenon Observed

This investigation was designed to learn about the experiences of students who have participated in learning centers during their elementary tenure through the use of observations and interviews. An added layer of interest included learning more about various models of reading intervention from a student's perspective.

The Context of the Phenomena

Van Manen (1990) addresses the significance of the context in a research project. He explains that the context needs to be articulated since the context places certain limitations on the general applicability and acceptability of methodological procedures. For this study, the context of learning centers exists in a variety of shapes in independent schools. The label "Learning Center" is sometimes specific to the individual school, but the phenomena being observed is the experience of the student who participates in the reading intervention, which usually occurs in the context of a learning center, a physical setting. Also, a somewhat unique feature of independent schools is that struggling readers in this context are generally surrounded by a large population of high achieving peers, thereby causing them to work at a greater disadvantage.

In all schools of interest, the model of intervention is designed so that struggling readers are pulled out of class for reading instruction and intervention; however, varying contexts have provided assorted experiences, adding to the richness of my overall understanding.

Plans for Access

Three independent elementary schools that have learning centers were recruited for the study. Glesne (1999) calls access a "process." She explains, "It refers to your acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and

read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes” (Glesne, 1999, p.39). Access to schools is becoming increasingly difficult. Changes in government and the organization of schools have led them to become more reluctant to allow researchers to conduct studies at their sites. Mindful of this challenge, I clearly described the purposes and benefits of participating in my research to gatekeepers. Walford (2001) uses the metaphor of selling yourself and your research in order to obtain access to research sites.

To begin, I contacted the department heads of the learning centers for the schools I wished to recruit participants. I described my investigation and purpose as an introduction on the telephone, and then asked to schedule a brief meeting to go over logistics if they agreed to participate. This meeting happened preliminary to the meeting that I scheduled with the heads of the divisions. I chose this order because I wanted the learning specialists to support my study and vouch for access if needed. Access to the school was needed in order to observe the setting. Interviews with students did not take place at the school, because of the preferences of the informants. Walford (2001) suggests that the aim is for researchers to build trusting relationships with teachers and students to the point where they are open and honest about their perceptions and beliefs.

Description of Types of Informants that were Sought

Informants for this investigation must be in middle school, and have participated in learning center support as an elementary school student. An equal ratio of males to females were recruited initially, but the possibility of including more or less based on the reality of the circumstances was certainly understood. That is, the hope was that at least one boy and one girl

from each participating site would be interviewed, but more would be considered should they have volunteered. At the heart of the study was student perspective; however, in order to understand more deeply the experiences of these students, teachers and parents were also asked to participate in separate interviews.

Independent schools were selected for the present study because these institutions actually have access to the funds that may be needed in order to make changes. Moreover, students who have learning disabilities and attend independent schools seem to be working at a greater disadvantage alongside their higher performing peers than those students who are in typical education settings.

The population of independent schools usually consists of high achieving students with a wealth of world knowledge and privileged experiences. Many students' parents have advanced degrees and are practicing professionals. Parents often hire private tutors and specialists to work with their children if a need is indicated. Likewise, parents will have formal educational evaluations of their child's learning profile prepared on their own, or schedule one if recommended by the school. Children who struggle when learning to read in these situations usually have the best resources to overcome their difficulties. However, it should also be noted, that some of the children who experience difficulties when learning to read in these situations, stem from a difficult home life in which there may be stress, anger, perhaps divorce, and other psychological troubles. Financial resources cannot fix everything.

Sampling Method

Qualitative researchers tend to select each of their cases *purposefully* (Patton, 1990). Patton explains, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich*

cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research...” (Patton, 1990, p.169). The sampling method for this study was purpose *or judgment* homogenous sampling (Bernard, 1994) in which similar cases were selected in order to describe the subgroup of learning center participants. Specifically, in judgment sampling, the researcher decides the purpose she wants an informant to serve and goes out to find one (Bernard, 1994). For this investigation a priori selection criteria included, middle school boys and girls who may have a wide range of learning difficulties, and who also participated in learning center support in an independent school when they were in elementary school. Only students from independent schools were included in the study. These informants represent the interest of the guiding research questions, and therefore, were recruited for participation.

Procedures for Conducting the Study

Van Manen (1990) describes the methodical structure of human science research as a dynamic interplay among six research activities:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (Van Manen, 1990, p.30)

The inception of this study began with my interest in the process of teaching children to learn to read, and has lead me to an investigation of learning center models for struggling readers. The process for this study started with contacting learning center department chairs and division heads to schedule a meeting to explain the purpose of the study and how the school may benefit from participating. During this meeting, I needed to be prepared to negotiate my access. As Glesne (1999) points out, “This involves presenting your lay summary, listening and responding to concerns and demands, and clarifying overarching issues” (Glesne, 1999, p.40). Once permission was granted, the school principals and the learning specialists worked to recruit participants, first by contacting parents, and then by asking students. After that, I started by contacting parents to explain the study and answer any questions. Procedures and guidelines for parental consent and child assent were followed as directed by the IRB, as well as all necessary ethical precautions. Separate access forms and consent processes for teachers and parents were provided. The study was designed in a way that protected research participants from harm, as suggested by Hatch (2002).

In consideration of the pressure of time, three principals from three separate independent schools were contacted in advance to that they could work to generate a list of potential candidates. Staying in close communication with these principals, I contacted parents as soon as the names were provided to schedule interviews. Glesne (1999) explains, “The opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry” (Glesne, 1999, p.69). My interviews (time and location) were planned around the convenience of the informants. After interviewing, I spent time observing at the sites. I needed to schedule these observations at the schools to experience each school’s learning center model. Field notes were be taken and analyzed after

each visit. For this, Creswell (2009) suggests developing and using an observational protocol. In addition to demographics, my protocol had a section for descriptive notes and one for reflective notes.

Following observations and interviews, audiotapes were be transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Tesch (1990, pp. 142-145) provides a useful analysis of the analytic coding process in eight steps:

1. Get a sense of the whole by reading all of the transcripts carefully.
2. Pick one document at a time and write marginal notes.
3. After completing the tasks for several participants, make a list of topics and cluster similar topics together into graphic organizers such a columns.
4. Use this list to go back to the data. Use abbreviations as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. New categories and codes may emerge.
5. Locate the most descriptive wording for topics and turn them into categories. Look for relationships among categories and work to reduce the total list by grouping topics that relate to each other.
6. Make final decisions on abbreviations and alphabetize the list.
7. Assemble the data for each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8. Recode date if necessary.

Polyvocal and typological analysis were utilized in understanding the phenomena. Additional information about data analysis procedures is discussed in detail in sections later in

the chapter.

Log of Planned Activities

October/November 2009: Meet with gatekeepers (division heads, learning center chairs, and parents) in order to gain access to the site and to the informants.

December 2009: Begin observations, and start interviewing (self interview, student interviews, parent interviews, teacher interviews).

January 2010: Continue observations and interviews. Continue on-going data analysis.

February 2010: Continue and complete observations and interviews. Continue and complete data analysis. Work on drafts and submit for review.

March/Early April 2010: Revisions and final draft

Data Collection

Guiding Questions

The omnibus question was this: What are the experiences of students (more specifically, struggling readers) who participated in reading intervention through learning centers in independent schools?

A. Questions related to student experience:

(1) What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development?

(2) How does the child's discernment of how he/she is perceived academically by his/her reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read?

(3) How does a child's sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience?

(4) What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers?

B. Questions related to teaching/models:

(1) How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction?

(2) How does a child's perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists?

(3) What do students think about the activities they participate during learning center time?

These questions are profound and interesting. It was my hope that through careful observing, listening, and purposeful questioning, they could be answered during interviews when participants shared their experiences and when stories emerged. Merriam (1998) observes, "The key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions" (Merriam, 1998, p.75). Though this statement is seemingly obvious, even to the novice researcher, Merriam's discussion on asking good questions, and questions to avoid, was quite helpful in writing interview protocols.

Interviewing

Hatch writes, "You cannot stop collecting data until you can answer the research questions around which the study is organized" (Hatch, 2002, p.89). Naturalistic qualitative research methods are the data collection and analytic tools of the constructivist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Observations and interviewing were selected as the primary sources for data collection.

Glesne's (1999) chapter in *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*, on interviewing techniques and questioning was used as a guide for developing the interview protocol. Glesne (1999) writes that good researchers ask questions in the context of purposes. Sometimes people stick to their original questions, but in qualitative research, questions may be added, eliminated, or replaced. Creswell (2009) suggests using an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview. With this advice in mind, open-ended questions were drafted and submitted to two graduate professors for approval during the pre-dissertation phase. The interview protocols have been revised for the study.

Observational Techniques

We can learn a great deal about what someone thinks from interviewing them, but as Bernard points out, "When you want to know what people actually *do*, however, there is no substitute for watching them or studying the traces their behavior leaves behind" (1994, p.310, original emphasis). This can be accomplished through observation. Hatch (2002) describes the goal of observation as a researcher working to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives of the participants. For a constructivist, observations are carefully conducted and the data obtained is seen as co-constructed with the participants (Hatch, 2002). Merriam (1998, pp.97-8) includes the following six elements likely to be present during an observation: the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and your own behavior. As such, Paton (1990, pp.202-05) identifies several strengths of observational data for qualitative program evaluation that have been adapted for general qualitative research. They include:

- (1) Direct observation of social phenomenon enables better understanding of the context within which the program operates.

- (2) Firsthand experience allows an evaluator to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive in approach.
- (3) The evaluator has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape conscious awareness among participants and staff.
- (4) The evaluator can learn about things participants or staff may be unwilling to talk about in an interview.
- (5) Observations permit the evaluator to move beyond the selective perspectives of others.
- (6) Finally, getting close to a phenomenon through firsthand experience permits the evaluator to access personal knowledge and direct experience as resources to aid in understanding and interpretation.

Observational Notes

Observational notes generally take the form of raw field notes. For this study, field notes include as many details as possible about the contexts, actions, and conversations that happened before me. Hatch (2002) discusses the conversion of raw field notes into research protocols through a process of “filling in” the original notes. His suggestion is that this is done as soon as possible after the observation has been conducted. The protocols were prepared and organized in preparation for analysis.

Data Analysis

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) have pointed out that the flexible nature of narrative methodology has tended to preclude the development of prescriptive methods and

procedures. Figuring out and deciding how to analyze the data for this investigation was quite a challenge. The process is described in the following sections.

Developing a Method

Analysis began in its purest form in the transcription of the interview tape. As suggested by Glesne (1999) and Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996), I transcribed the tapes myself. Next, Hatch's (2002) suggestion for typological analysis which was originally coined in the 1984 edition of Goetz and LeCompte's *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research* served as a model for analysis. According to Hatch, (2002) specific steps for typological analysis include the following:

- (1) Identify typologies to be analyzed
- (2) Read the data, marking the entries related to your typologies
- (3) Read the typology, recording the main ideas in the entries on a summary sheet
- (4) Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies
- (5) Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which elements of your patterns
- (6) Decide if your patterns are supported by the data, and search the data for non-examples of your patterns
- (7) Look for relationships among the patterns identified
- (8) Write your patterns as one-sentence generalizations
- (9) Select data excerpts that support your generalizations

Typological analysis began with the very first interview transcription and these nine steps were repeated in a recursive process as needed.

In addition to typological analysis, the transcript was also reviewed for polyvocal analysis. As a result of reading Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, a new found-interest of voice in research was employed for this study. As Hatch (2002) describes it, the polyvocal analysis takes into account the notion that multiple truths exist and that these are always partial, local and historical. He outlines the process as follows:

- (1) Read the data for a sense of the whole
- (2) Identify all of the voices contributing to the data, including your own
- (3) Read the data, marking places where particular voices are heard
- (4) Study the data related to each voice, decide which voices will be included in your report, and write a narrative telling the story of each selected voice
- (5) Read the entire data set, searching for data that refine or alter your stories
- (6) Wherever possible, take the stories back to those who contributed them so that they can clarify, refine, or change their stories
- (7) Write revised stories that represent each voice to be included

This arduous process began with the first interview transcription. Obviously, many voices were recorded, (student, teacher, and parent), but I suspected that multiple voices would come from single interviews. That is, students may represent the feelings of other students, and parents may vocalize what they believe to be the truth for their children. As such, teachers may also represent the voices of both the children and their parents.

In addition to typological and polyvocal analysis, the transcripts were also considered across cases. Although Guba and Lincoln (1983) would argue against the appropriateness of generalizability in qualitative research, Miles and Huberman (1994) explain, "One aim of studying multiple cases is to increase generalizability, reassuring yourself that the events and

processes in one well-described setting are not wholly idiosyncratic” (p.173). They follow with several reasons that support cross-case analysis which include: the relevance or applicability of findings to other similar settings, the deepening of understanding and explanation, and the possibility of finding negative cases to strengthen a theory built through examination of similarities and differences across cases.

Analytical Tool

In consideration of the above suggestions, I have developed two tools to analyze my data. Particular to typological analysis, I constructed a story map to deconstruct the participants’ stories. In order to understand any story, the reader must be able to identify certain story elements such as the main idea, or in the case of a narrative, theme or moral. Analysis for this story structure would also call for the characters, the setting, and the plot, which includes the problem, climax, dénouement, and conclusion. Thusly, the table below was used to organize these important elements as a step that followed the coding of the data. Each participant’s narrative took its shape graphically into the table below, as well as into individual stories with interviewer questions and comments removed.

Table 1: Story Map of Participant’s Narrative

Main Idea	
Theme/Moral	
Characters	
Setting	
Plot	
Problem/Climax/Conclusion	

Next, I wanted to understand the participants’ lived experiences at a deeper level in terms of voice. I wondered whose voices were represented by these young participants. I also wondered how I could capture and represent the messages in an authentic way. For this, I turned to polyvocal analysis. The table below illustrates my efforts.

Table 2: Voice

Voice	Message	Example
Self		
Other (teacher, mother, father, friend, other student, sibling)		

This table was used as an organization tool following the polyvocal coding and analysis of the data. Transcriptions were reviewed for representation of voices other than self, and in those instances, the transcriptions were marked so that they could be analyzed and arranged into the table above. This table stands in as a graphic organizer for the multiple layers of voice one participant represented.

Narrative Analysis

Listening to and sharing stories can be effective ways to teach and learn. According to Hatch, (2002) narrative studies seek to capture storied knowledge. In their chapter, Bedford and Landry (in press) state that, “Inquirers interested in the study of lived experience have turned with increasing frequency to the collection of stories in order to understand the lived experiences of individuals.” Despite the increase in researchers utilizing narrative inquiry as a methodology, there is a gap in the literature with regard to studies using narrative methodologies to investigate

learning difficulties, and even more so in relation to young people as participants (Reid & Button, 1995; McNulty, 2003). From a phenomenological point of view, as Van Manen (1990) sees it, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. In the case of this investigation, the query at hand was to understand the way students who struggle when learning to read experience the world of learning centers. Therefore, this study supported the view that narrative inquiry is a useful methodology to employ in investigating the perspectives of young people (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

This study opens a whole realm of possible future studies, including i) examining learners' gaze during instruction, ii) examining the stories they tell about their peers, teachers, and parents; iii) examining their stories about classrooms, teachers and peers in an educational setting; iv) investigating cases from learners with various learning problems; v) examining more of the reasons for why children like some teachers, books, activities and not others.

The researcher's role in narrative inquiry is a comprehensive one in which the researcher works to understand experience, listen to the stories of her participants, and retell those stories. In consideration of lived experiences, the researcher also must explicate her assumptions and pre-understandings. Of this challenge, Van Manen (1990) writes, "The problem with phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon that we wish to investigate, but that we know too much." Van Manen (1990) goes on to explain how our common sense pre-understandings predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. For me, being a participant in the students' experiences is both a challenge and a privilege. Though I

am a reading specialist by profession, all of the students for the study, have never received reading instruction from me.

Trustworthiness

For the following discussion on trustworthiness, class notes written by Bedford (Bedford, personal communication, July 2009) were used as a “roadmap” and guided my thinking. Using her notes, I have referenced the original works of Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1988), and Miles and Huberman (1994), in addition to Lichtman (2006) and Glesne (1999) as discussed in the next sections.

First, Lincoln and Guba (1985), ask, “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290). In an effort to provide an answer to these questions, Lincoln and Guba (1985) look to terms like “internal validity,” “external validity,” “reliability,” and “objectivity” (p.290). All terms which are not typically used with qualitative research. They ask, “How can the naturalist meet these trustworthiness criteria?” and propose the following to do so: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp.301-31).

In consideration of credibility, Miles and Huberman (1994) ask, “Do the findings in the study make sense?” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.278). Agreeably, Lichtman (2006) writes that the findings should be evaluated from the participant’s point of view, but adds that the research should also be set in a larger context so that the interpretation of the term credibility can be expanded. For me, the credibility of my work is enhanced by its design which includes: activities increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced such as triangulation

or convergence of data streams, peer debriefing, referential adequacy, member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp.301-15), and an autobiographical disclosure (Merriam, 1988) which has already been included in the previous sections of this chapter.

Triangulation

To begin, the primary sources of data for my study came from observations and interviews, and credibility is enhanced through triangulation. Mathison (1998) puts forward that, “Good research practice obligates the researcher to triangulate, that is, to use multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings” (p. 13). When asked about triangulation, Lichtman (2006) responded, “Triangulation is based on the idea that something (e.g. a submarine, a cell phone) can be located by measuring the radial distance or direction from three different points” (p.85). Though Lichtman (2006) believes that the concept is more appropriate to positivist paradigms and should not be used in the newer forms of qualitative research, I disagree and find its role fitting in my qualitative design. Miles and Huberman (1994) claim that triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, do not contradict it. They write, “If you self-consciously set sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into data collection as you go. In effect, triangulation is a way to get to the finding in the first place—by seeing or hearing multiple *instances* of it from different *sources* by using different *methods* and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be square with” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.267, original emphasis). As Patton (1980) sees it, “There is no magic triangulation. The evaluator using different methods to investigate the same program should not expect that the findings generated by those different methods will automatically come together to produce some nicely integrated whole” (p. 330). Patton instead suggests that the point of triangulation ... “is to

study and understand when and why there are differences” (p.331). For this study, there are layers of informants: children, parents, teachers who are providing data in interviews and observations. Triangulation was employed by the use of tables that organize these layers in consideration of data sources, methods, and types to see how well they are supported or contradicted.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing added another layer of credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suppose that peer debriefing is an effective way of shoring up credibility, providing methodological guidance, and serving as a cathartic outlet (p.243). They describe peer debriefing as, “...a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit with the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.308). I used peer debriefing in my own study. I contacted a colleague who agreed to support me in this phase of my research. I had regular communication via email in addition to conversations that we had about the developments in my research. I also read in Bedford’s notes (Bedford, personal communication, July 2009) that she had one of her peer reviewers interview her about her study once her research questions were definitely selected. She later transcribed the tape, as it became another source of data for the study. I realized how this would add credibility and richness to a study, and I did the same in mine.

Referential Adequacy

In my on-going effort to enhance credibility, the notion of referential adequacy was “adjusted,” in a sense, to fit my study. Originally proposed by Eisner (1975), Lincoln and Guba

(1985) later describe the process as the researcher setting aside some of her raw data for the archives reserving them for tests of adequacy, and not using those materials to further the purposes of the inquiry. While I agree that referential adequacy certainly can be used as a powerful tool to test the validity of the researcher's conclusions, I did not utilize referential adequacy following the original formula. Instead, I have set aside and organized clean copies of data during each phase of the analytic process, as suggested by Bedford (Bedford, personal communication, July 2009). In her notes, she describes, keeping a clean copy of each transcript, a coded copy of each transcript, and all the cut-up bits and pieces of data that were organized by theme.

Member Checking

Member checking serves as the fourth component of credibility for my study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) observe, "The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314). My plan for making use of member checking was to ask my participants to read and verify my interpretations of their stories. In my pre-dissertation, I have had practice translating interviews into narratives by removing interview questions, and so on. Once I drafted the narrative from the interview transcriptions, I emailed those stories to the informants for confirmation.

Transferability

Next, Lincoln and Guba (1985) call for qualitative research to have transferability. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that we need to know whether the conclusions of a study have any

larger import (p.278). Accordingly, transferability calls for the researcher to provide thick description. Descriptions of phenomena should be explanatory and analytic. Merriam (1998) observes that qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding, and the product of a qualitative study should therefore be richly descriptive. As such, Glesne (1999) advises, “Make sure that your notes will enable you, a year later, to visualize the moment, the person, the setting, the day” (Glesne, 1999, p. 50). Long, rich descriptions were written in order for that sort of recall. In regard to thick description, Lichtman (2006) writes, “I believe that the strength of what you write is revealed in your ability to convince the reader that your interpretations are reasonable and supported by the data” (Lichtman, 2006, p.178).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability are other important components for trustworthiness. In consideration of dependability, Miles and Huberman suggest, “The underlying issue here is whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.278). Further, in regard to confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1981) ask, do the conclusions depend on “the subjects and conditions of the inquiry,” rather than on the inquirer. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend audit trails for establishing both confirmability and dependability. Halpern (1983) includes the following six audit trail categories: raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information. In short, all documents related to the study should be kept. While employing an external auditor would certainly strengthen the study, realistically that was very difficult for me to organize. Instead, I created documents and organized them in such a manner that would make an audit trail possible in case anyone asks to conduct one, as suggested by

Bedford (Bedford, personal communication, July 2009) in her notes. I also have these archives available for member checking and for my peer reviewer.

Summary

To summarize, the purpose of this study was to phenomenologically investigate the experiences of middle school students who participated in learning center support in independent schools during their elementary tenure. My researcher stance was that of a constructivist, and I viewed the investigation through a lens of advocacy. The primary sources of data collection included observations and interviews. Data was coded for typological and polyvocal analysis. Findings were reported in narrative form as well as in charts. Trustworthiness has been established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STORIES TOLD FROM DIXON

Introduction

In the next three chapters, I present the findings and analysis of the data organized by each of the three schools. A separate chapter is given to each site, and is devoted to telling the stories of the two participants from that particular site. The organization begins with the research context, which includes a description of the school structure as well as the interview context and structure. What follows is the story of each of the two participants, polyvocal analyses, and a comparison of their experiences. A summary concludes each chapter.

The Research Context

School Structure, Dixon Elementary and Middle School

The stories of the first two participants presented come from Dixon Elementary School which is a co-educational day school located in New Orleans, Louisiana. This independent school serves a broad spectrum of students from pre-school through eighth grade, and is well known for its services to students with learning differences. All faculty members have bachelor's degrees, and about one-third also hold master's degrees. Dixon's tuition exceeds \$14,000 by first grade, and additional fees are imposed for resource services offered during the school day. The population of Dixon is less than 500.

Drawing from my observations of the program and my interview with the learning specialist at Dixon, I found that the specialists were highly trained and devoted to working with children who have special learning needs. I observed two learning center sessions in which the

children were excited, the teachers were knowledgeable, and the activities were meaningful and productive. Bobbie, the woman whom I interviewed, is the director of the learning center at Dixon, and she has been teaching there and working in the resource center for more than twenty years. She is obviously committed and still energetic about working with children who have challenges. Bobbie said, “I am still fascinated with the process of learning to read and with helping those who struggle find ways to overcome their difficulties.”

Participant I: Jonathan

Interview Structure and Context

This interview took place in the uptown home of the Furly family. The participants included Jonathan, his father TJ, and his mother MaryAnn. Arriving about ten minutes early, I was greeted by TJ tapping on my car window as I reviewed my notes for the interview one final time. His disposition was kind, and his personality was warm. He invited me into his home right away to start the discussion.

As I was led to the living room in the back of the house, I caught a glimpse of a hand-cut Christmas tree obviously decorated by the family of three. TJ must have noticed my gaze because he commented that they had gone to their blueberry farm in Poplarville to get the tree. TJ is a blueberry farmer, and his wife, MaryAnn, is a stay at home mother.

Jonathan and MaryAnn were in the living room together. Jonathan was on the sofa, and MaryAnn was rocking in her chair. TJ introduced me and asked whom I would like to interview first. Before I could answer, Jonathan said he would prefer to start. So after establishing rapport casually, taking care of the needed paperwork, and testing the tape recorder, the interview began with all four of us in the room. TJ and MaryAnn sat quietly and listened to their son without

interrupting. Following my talk with Jonathan, I thanked him and told him how impressed I was with his ability to articulate such thoughtful responses. It appeared that Jonathan took his role in the study very seriously.

Next it was time to interview TJ and MaryAnn. Although I gently suggested doing this alone, Jonathan was present for the interview and even interjected some of his own comments and clarifications from earlier responses. Jonathan's story follows.

Jonathan's Story

“The thing about me is that I take a really long time to do my papers, or anything. Like, so I need extra time. If I didn't have the extra time, I would be doing terribly. I wouldn't be able to finish anything, so...that's very important because I'm a slow reader.”

According to Jonathan, he found out in first grade that he had dyslexia. Language Arts is his most difficult subject, while his best subjects are science and history. In addition, Jonathan volunteered that he has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and takes medication to help manage his attention. Jonathan said that he has no recollection of anything prior to fifth grade because that is when he started taking his pill. He shared, “I can't remember anything before fifth grade because that's when I got my pill and I can't remember anything.”

Jonathan has received extra support through the learning center at his school since he was in first grade. He described the program as “very supportive.” He said, “It's [resource] support and it gives you back up so that you have the time you need and you can get stuff done. It gives you a lot of support.” He added, “I think that they support, support you, and that's one of the main things. You need someone on your side that you know there's someone you can go to when you have problems.”

Although Jonathan applauded the “support and back-up” the resource center supplied, he said that it has not been very effective in helping him improve his reading. Jonathan identified areas of the program that were lacking. He feels like the support he gets in school just is not enough. He said, “We’ll read a passage like every week, like once, and I go like twice a week, and we’ll go over different things. Like we’ll go over words and stuff, but it’s not really steady. If it were steady it would work better.” He suggested more time and consistency in the program would be helpful. Jonathan said, “It’s not enough to actually make a really big difference, I think. If we did that more I think it would help because we’re going over other kinds of skills and stuff, but they need more of the support for reading...” He also put forward that his resource teachers should have a plan for the day, a specific plan for learning, not just a plan to teach kids how to get organized. He explained, “Okay, sometimes they ought to have a plan for the day...or it’s just like teaching you how to like, like keeping organized and stuff, but they don’t really like have a plan for learning. Well, they do, but it’s not like very good.”

Further, Jonathan talked a lot about the impact his teachers had on him. He said that it was difficult to have new resource teachers year after year because it was not “connected” and he felt like he had to “restart every year.” Again, he emphasized that there just does not seem to be a plan, and having new teachers every year just interrupts the learning. He said, “The thing is that there are some teachers that will interrupt that good line of teachers that can do something and get how you work...but when you are with that one teacher and she doesn’t think you’re good enough...it really destroys the whole—everything. You just lose all hope if someone tells you that you can’t do it.”

As it stands, Jonathan is now thirteen years old and is completing his eighth grade year at Dixon. He continues to take the medication for his attention disorder that he started as a lower

school student. Since sixth grade, Jonathan has earned all A-s on his report card. His best subjects are science and history because they make the most sense to him. Jonathan described language arts as the most difficult because it is so abstract in his mind. Jonathan still relies on extra time to get things done, and is very aware that it takes him a long time to finish anything. Jonathan credits the resource center as giving him the support he needs to complete his assignments. Jonathan also believes that resource support helps him manage his dyslexia. When asked about such, he replied, “Yes, I think it does because it gives you the support...they support you on the way to get there.”

Jonathan is very attuned to his own learning, and his father even talked about how the way Jonathan see things and views himself is very important to him as an individual. Jonathan is still working to get his reading level up and continues to receive resource support at Dixon. He said, “Um, lower school wasn’t as hard, of course, so you didn’t really need it [resource] as much, but when you go up into middle school, it’s a lot harder so you really need that support.” Jonathan believes that the resource teachers should provide students with the support they need. He said, “I think that they should still provide a bunch of support, and they shouldn’t just let the kid do it on their own.”

Polyvocal Analysis of Jonathan’s Narrative

The following table illustrates an analysis of the multiple voices that were represented by Jonathan in his narrative. This table organizes voices of self, as well as, voices of other students with learning disabilities by providing excerpts from Jonathan’s interview.

Table 3: Polyvocal Analysis of Jonathan’s Narrative

Voice	Message	Example
Self	I can’t remember anything.	“I can’t remember anything before fifth grade because that’s when I got my pill, and I can’t remember anything.”
	I like subjects I am good at.	“My best subjects are science and history. I think that’s because they just make sense to me.”
	I have advice for students and teachers.	<p>To students: “Keep trying and just figure out how you learn and what you need. Figure out exactly the best way you learn so that you can use it to your advantage.”</p> <p>To teachers: “Keep a schedule for every week and follow that every day that your kids have resource so that you work on the same things and so that you can get there more steadily.”</p>
	My resource teachers need to have a plan.	<p>“It [resource at school] hasn’t been very effective.”</p> <p>“Okay, sometimes they ought to have a plan for the day...or it’s just like teaching you how to like, like keeping organized and stuff, but they don’t really like have a plan for learning. Well, they do, but it’s not like very good.”</p>
	I know what I need.	<p>“The thing about me is that I take a really long time to do my papers, or anything. Like so, I need extra time. If I didn’t have the extra time I would be doing terrible. I wouldn’t be able to finish anything because I’m a very slow reader.”</p> <p>“It gives you back up so that you have the time you need and you can get stuff done. It gives you a lot of support.”</p> <p>“You need someone on your side so that you know there’s someone you can go to when you have problems.”</p> <p>“Yes, I think it does because it gives you the</p>

table continued

		<p>support...the support, and when you finally figure out what your learning strategy is they'll help you with that, once you figure it out. They support you on the way to get there, and once you're there it comes and lot easier, and you can just figure out."</p> <p>"It's helpful. If I didn't have the support, I wouldn't be able to get good grades at all."</p>
	I am affected by the way my teacher views me.	<p>"It really destroys the whole...everything. You just lose all hope. If someone tells you that you can't do it."</p>
Other: Other students with learning disabilities	Resource students need support.	<p>"I think that they should uh...I think they should still uh...provide a bunch of support, and they shouldn't just let the kid do it on their own."</p>

This polyvocal matrix demonstrates messages that are important to Jonathan about his experience which include: (1) *My medication affects my memory*, (2) *I like subjects I am good at*, (3) *I have some advice to offer to teachers and to students*, (4) *Teachers should have a plan for learning*, (5) *I know what I need*, (6) *I am affected by the way my teacher perceives me*, and (7) *Students with disabilities need support*.

What follows next is a continuation of Jonathan's story through the voices of his parents, TJ and MaryAnn. Their interpretation of Jonathan's experience was shared after Jonathan told his own story, in his own words, as his parents sat across from him and listened without interrupting.

In his Parents' Eyes

Jonathan's parents felt very early on that something just "wasn't right" for Jonathan's learning when he was just three years old. His mother, MaryAnn, described Jonathan's behavior as "erratic" but having no comparison because he was an only child, Jonathan's parents just were not sure what the problem could be. MaryAnn recalled Jonathan's difficulty in learning colors, numbers, and nursery rhymes. In fact, she remembers the exact day when he learned his ABCs. Jonathan was five years old.

After nursery school, Jonathan's parents enrolled him in Dixon Elementary and Middle School. When Jonathan was just in first grade, the school learning specialist recommended a full psycho-educational evaluation. The report from the psychologist indicated that Jonathan had both dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. Though not surprised by the diagnosis of dyslexia, his parents were "shocked" about the ADHD and very concerned about the kind of struggle Jonathan would have in terms of learning. TJ and MaryAnn committed early on to supply Jonathan with all of his needs, and the learning center at Dixon seemed like a good choice to support their mission.

So Jonathan's journey at Dixon began with a suggestion from the learning specialist to have a formal evaluation conducted and to start attending the resource center immediately. Except for the interruption of Hurricane Katrina, when the family spent a year in Pittsburg with a private tutor in addition to private schooling, Jonathan has been at Dixon receiving the extra support of the resource center since he started as a kindergarten student.

When asked about Jonathan's experiences with the learning center, his parents expressed somewhat different views. While MaryAnn talked mostly about its positive influence, TJ constantly wondered whether he got "a fair shake for his dollar."

Mindful of their comments, MaryAnn referred to the learning center as “a good experience” and she liked Jonathan going to resource at school. The fact that Jonathan could get whatever special services he needed during the school day was a real plus. She also liked the special accommodations. Because of Jonathan’s slower processing speed, still today, he relies on extra time to complete tests and assignments, and special prompts from his teachers before he is asked questions. MaryAnn described Jonathan’s resource teachers as “extremely committed,” and she liked the activities they were doing and the small class sizes. She especially liked the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and the structure Jonathan’s teachers would set up for the family over the summer. MaryAnn’s foremost objection was that Jonathan was pulled out of fun classes like art and PE in order to receive resource services.

Like many children, Jonathan was not a fan of homework, but MaryAnn does not recall Jonathan ever complaining about going to resource at school. In fifth grade, Jonathan started using the computer as an assistive tool. He became very proficient in a program called *Kurzweil* which is text-to-speech software that reads print.

TJ, on the other hand, did not articulate such glowing feelings about Jonathan’s experiences with the resource center. Without delay, TJ talked about the struggles a parent faces when they have a child with a learning disability. When discussing the expenses involved, TJ said, “This is a real kind of struggle...I think that parent has is, is from a dollar and cents standpoint...wondering what we are getting for what we are paying, okay.” TJ also expressed concern over the structure of the program and the children being pulled out to receive the extra support. He said that other parents went through the same struggles. Initially, TJ said that he and MaryAnn were very satisfied with the fact that they stayed the course, but he emphasized several times again that it was a real struggle. TJ’s emotions swayed back and forth as he

expressed both satisfaction and frustration with the resource program at Dixon. At one point he said, “We were shorted, I believe...in the program, but overall, I think the types of things they did helped him learn. I think they were important.” Frustrated, he also said, “I think the thing of having three kids and one teacher twice a week is bullshit, okay. I think those kids are getting the short end of the stick. I don’t think the way that it’s working...that it’s worked.” Still later he added, “Everybody’s not perfect, you know. The whole system, you know, you don’t throw it out because parts of it don’t work.”

TJ talked about how as Jonathan got older, he became more attuned to what was happening in the classes, and as a result, TJ felt that there were “shortcomings” in the program. Confusion for TJ increased in Pittsburg during the family’s Katrina stay. Jonathan’s teachers there felt like all he needed was a quiet space and extra time and he would be fine. This caused TJ to wonder again about the worth of the resource center at Dixon. MaryAnn described the Katrina year as “totally disruptive” and she felt like they had lost a whole year of learning.

TJ also grew increasingly discouraged with some of Jonathan’s teachers. He shared a story about a parent/teacher conference in which two or three teachers told him that Jonathan would not do well on any of this standardized tests, when the fact was really that he had done very well on the comprehension section. Annoyed, TJ said, “It drove me up a frecking wall! I was literally ready to scream at these people.”

All three family members agreed that the Family Literacy Network proved to be more efficient and successful in supporting Jonathan’s reading development than the resource center at Dixon. The Family Literacy Network is based in Houston, Texas, and is a skill driven program that is designed to support struggling readers. Students read passages repetitively, work to

increase their vocabulary, and practice sounds in isolation by making associations and generating their own words lists. Jonathan traveled with his mother and father over the Thanksgiving holiday during his seventh grade year to participate in the training for the at-home program.

During their stay, the family collaborated with a doctor for five days to learn how the program works and how to carry it out at home. TJ described the doctor as a “linguistic guy” and someone who knew where all the words came from and how all the words worked in the English language. He recalled Jonathan saying that he had been asking his teachers questions about words for a long time, but no one (prior to this doctor) could provide the explanation that he needed.

The program that the Family Literacy Network offered seemed to be just the fix the Furlys had been searching for. Committed and hopeful, they worked on lessons everyday at home, and reserved Sundays for testing. TJ reported that Jonathan’s words per minute had soared from 65 to about 105 per minute. TJ stayed in weekly communication with the doctor from the FLN. After four short months with the program, the doctor reported to TJ that Jonathan was just about to make the needed “jump.” Near about this time, Jonathan developed a cough and for some reason his WPM would not go beyond 100-105. TJ then consulted with Jonathan’s local psychologist who suggested that Jonathan was trying to tell his parents something, and that it was up to them what they were going to do about it. TJ and MaryAnn decided that they did not want to push too hard, so they “slacked back” on the program and Jonathan’s words per minute went back down to around 85 and has stayed in that range since. TJ identified fluency as the problem they always “went up against.”

At the end of our discussion, TJ expressed worry over Jonathan next year in a new environment, and whether what he has learned and the accommodations will transfer. He said, “My only fear is that this isn’t going to work the next step.” Despite this anxiety, Jonathan has been accepted to a public high school for the academically gifted in New Orleans and his parents are hopeful and enthusiastic about a bright future for their son.

Participant II: Jenna

Interview Structure and Context

This next interview took place one evening after school. When I arrived home, I had a message on my answering machine from Jenna’s mother, Brenda, which said that they would be available at 6:00 p.m. that evening if I would like to come over for the interviews. Prior interviews had been rescheduled because the family had too many conflicting commitments over the winter holiday season. So of course, I immediately returned Brenda’s phone call, packed my materials, and headed to the family’s home which was nearby.

At approximately 5:50 p.m., I arrived at a very large home in a gated subdivision. I rang the doorbell a few times before Brenda, a stay at home mom, finally answered the door. She was busy in the kitchen preparing stir fry for her five children. Her husband, who owns a seemingly successful construction and restoration company, had not made it home from work, yet.

Brenda apologized for the delay, and invited me in as she suggested that I start with Jenna first so that she could finish up dinner. Still in the foyer, I saw a little girl, who appeared to be about five years old, standing on a stool stirring the food in a wok with an apron wrapped around her waist, while Brenda raised her voice just enough to call Jenna downstairs for the interview. Brenda introduced us, and suggested that we do the interview in the sitting area of her

bedroom because that would be the only quiet place. I think she was right because two small boys ran right past me chasing each other while the oldest daughter went over her evening plans with her mom as she walked out the front door with the car keys in hand.

Brenda escorted Jenna and me to the sitting area of her bedroom, and we took care of the forms before Brenda returned back to the kitchen. I left the door open despite the noise and chatted a little with Jenna to break the ice. I also reviewed the purpose of my interview and told her what I was hoping to accomplish as a result of my study. I could tell that she was not really listening. I do not think she was very interested in what I was saying. Nonetheless, I asked her if we could practice with the tape recorded before we started. She giggled a bit as we passed it back and forth. I reviewed the interview questions with her before we started just make sure if she needed clarification, she felt comfortable asking for it. After that, we jumped right into the interview which lasted about 25 minutes. When we were finished, Jenna went and got her mother to tell her that it was her turn. Brenda sat in the seat across from me, just as Jenna did, and her interview lasted more like 40 minutes. This interview turned out to be more of a conversation than a typical question and answer session. Jenna's story follows.

Jenna's Story

Jenna is a middle school student who likes mathematics, but does not like reading. She explained, "I like math, but I don't like reading much, like in front of people, but I don't mind reading alone. I just don't like it in front of people..." Jenna also said that she does best with her learning when she works one-on-one with her teachers.

Jenna started attending the learning center when she entered Dixon Elementary and Middle School. Reflecting on her early days as a learning center student, Jenna shared, "I didn't

like it [going to resource] when I was in lower school, like I said earlier, but I think it really does help you in the long run because I...I think I was behind the other students.”

Reminiscing about her time as a lower school student, Jenna had some suggestions for ways to improve the resource program at Dixon. She recalled reading boring stories and answering questions about them. She said that though she did not like it very much, it was probably helpful. Her suggestion is to get more interesting material. In particular, she added that when she reads boring things she does not read them well because she has to read more slowly. Jenna explained, “Um, I think the stories are kind of boring, and I think that maybe the stories should get more interesting so that maybe you could...when I read boring things I don’t really read it well because I have to read it more slowly.” Jenna does better with her reading when she is interested in what she is reading, so she thinks that students should get to pick out their own books. She suggested, “I would say that the kids should pick out their own books because those short stories that the teacher gives you to read are boring and kids, I think, I still do this...when you read something boring you slow down and you just don’t focus on it because you’re bored of it, and if you pick out things that you want to read then you’ll go faster and comprehend it more.”

Addressing the stigma attached to going to the resource room, Jenna thinks that even lower school students should be given a schedule, that way going to resource is just like going to the next class. She said, “I think that the teacher should give you a schedule because some students may be embarrassed.” Jenna thinks the transition would be much easier than having the specialist call a student out of class. Jenna is also completely opposed to the idea of having a specialist come into the class to help. She explained, “I honestly wouldn’t like that because I don’t know, it would just be...embarrassing.”

Jenna offered advice specific to other students who attend the learning center. She said that students should not be embarrassed because “it’s not that big a deal.” She also warns students not to complain because “teachers get mad when you complain.”

As a middle school student, Jenna likes going to resource because she is learning study techniques and how to get organized and ready for high school. She explained, “I kind of like the way resource is, like you have three or four, maybe even two people in a group, and you go meet twice a week and you just like learn things, and they teach you study techniques and help you organize.” Specific to reading, Jenna is unsure about the impact resource has had on her development because she does not really see a difference. She said, “And um, the reading, I don’t know if it really helps me or not because I don’t really like see a difference.”

Today, Jenna is in eighth grade and is thirteen years old. She likes mathematics but does not like reading much, especially in front of people. Sometimes she will volunteer to read aloud in class when no one else will, but she still does not like it. Jenna does not mind reading alone, but she only reads what is required by her teachers, and she does not read any books for pleasure. Jenna says that she does best with her learning when she is able to type something and look at it. She also likes to work one-on-one with her teachers. Jenna continues to participate in learning center support as a middle school student, and does not receive any private tutoring outside of school. Although she did not like learning center in lower school, she said, “I think it really does help you in the long run...resource really helped me to catch up and learn what I needed to learn.”

Polyvocal Analysis of Jenna's Narrative

The following table illustrates an analysis of the multiple voices that were represented by Jenna in her narrative. This table organizes voices of self, as well as, voices of other students with learning disabilities by providing excerpts from Jenna's interview.

Table 4: Polyvocal Analysis of Jenna's Narrative

Voice	Message	Example
Self	I don't like reading in front of people.	<p>"I like math, but I don't like reading much, like in front of people, but I don't mind reading alone. I just don't like it in front of people..."</p> <p>"Um...sometimes like in history class we have to read like textbooks and stuff, but I sometimes read but I don't really like to..."</p> <p>"I mainly just read what my homework calls for."</p> <p><i>I was more comfortable reading in the resource room because "it was only in front of two or three people."</i></p>
	Those stories are boring.	<p>"Um...I honestly didn't like it when I was younger, and to this day I still have to do that. And I still don't really like it because mainly because the stories are boring."</p> <p>"I think that helps you, but I don't think students like it very much."</p> <p>"I don't really like the reading things, when they like grade you on your reading and comprehension, but I do like the way resource is."</p> <p>"Um, I think the stories are kind of boring, and I think that maybe the stories should get more interesting so that maybe you could...when I read boring things, I don't</p>

table continued

		really read it well because I have to read it more slowly. When I read interesting stuff, I read it better because I'm more interested in it."
	Schedules work well.	<p>"I went twice a week and I thought that was enough time. I don't need any more or any less, and the teacher gives us a schedule at the beginning of the year and we just go whenever we have it scheduled."</p> <p>"I think that the teacher should give you a schedule because some students may be embarrassed. I'm not, really."</p>
	Resource teachers should not come into the classroom to help.	"I honestly wouldn't like that because I don't know it would just be...embarrassing."
	Don't be embarrassed.	"Um, I would tell them not to be embarrassed or anything because it's not that big a deal...because you may need help on particular things, but the other students may also need help on other particular things. So you don't have to be embarrassed..."
	Don't complain.	"You shouldn't complain about it because the teachers get mad when you complain."
	You have to miss classes.	<p>"Seriously...and I realize that you miss art and PE, but you'll have to kind of just get used to it because that's when it happens."</p> <p>"They do that on purpose so that you don't miss the important subjects like math and language arts and history and science and subjects like that."</p> <p>"Um, you're either going to miss like, switch up between art and music and 8th grade photography, but you're either going to miss those...I do it doing writing lab which I like because I don't really like writing lab. So you miss it one time a week and I miss PE one time a week."</p> <p>"I didn't really have the resource with my friends, and I was missing the funnest</p>

table continued

		classes of the day, so..."
	Resource really does help.	"I didn't like it when I was in lower school, like I said earlier, but I think it really does help you in the long run because I...I think I was behind the other students. Some of them were even lower than me, but I was behind also. And...resource really helped to catch up on that and learn what I needed to learn. And, in middle school, I like it because I can organize and I can learn new study techniques to get ready for high school...and um, the reading, I don't know if it really helps me or not because I don't really like see a difference, but I also practice on spelling which I need to practice on also."
Other: Other resource students	Let students pick out their own books.	"I would say that the kids should pick out their own books because those short stories that the teacher give you to read are boring and kids, I think, I still do this...when you read something boring you slow down and you just don't focus on it because you're bored of it, and if you pick out things that you want to read than you'll go faster and comprehend it more. And teachers should ask them everything that they remember."

This polyvocal matrix demonstrates messages that are important to Jenna about her experience which include: (1) *I don't like reading in front of people*, (2) *Those stories are boring*, (3) *Schedules work well*, (4) *Resource teachers should not come into the classroom to help*, (5) *Don't be embarrassed*, (6) *Don't complain*, (7) *You have to miss fun classes to go to resource*, (8) *Resource really does help*, and (9) *Let students pick their own books*.

What follows next is a continuation of Jenna's story through the voice of her mother, Brenda. Her interpretation of Jenna's experience was shared after Jenna told her own story, in

her own words, in the privacy of the sitting area of her mother's bedroom as the two of us sat across from one another.

In her Mother's Eyes

According to Jenna's mother, Brenda, Jenna was far behind the other students in her development. Brenda learned very early in Jenna's life that school was going to be difficult for her. Despite paying for outside support, Brenda found out at the end of Jenna's kindergarten year that it would be necessary for her to switch schools. Brenda described Jenna as being "extremely dyslexic" and unable to hold a pen. Brenda said that she was ready to do whatever it took at that point for her child to be successful. So the family ended up enrolling Jenna into Dixon based on its reputation of supporting students with learning disabilities. Brenda expressed relief with the switch and said that it allowed them to stop "running around for all the extra stuff" because everything was right there at school. She said, "Going to Dixon sort of saved our lives a little bit."

At the start of it, Jenna began attending learning center five times a week, and she received occupational therapy three times weekly. The OT was at an additional fee to the family because the school did not employ an occupational therapist on site.

Thinking back to Jenna's early elementary years, Brenda said that Jenna would always start out strong, but by the end of the school year she would be completely worn out. She also said that Jenna felt like there was a stigma attached to going to the learning center. She remembers Jenna feeling badly about it and being sad about the pairings because the learning center kids were put in twos or threes and Jenna would do a lot of crying about who would be her partner. Similarly, Jenna mentioned in her interview that she did not like going to learning

center when she was younger because she was not with her friends and she was missing the best classes of the day. Jenna's response to why she did not like going was, "Um, probably just the fact that I didn't really have the resource with my friends, and I was missing the funnest classes of the day, so..."

Nonetheless, Brenda feels like her daughter has done "unbelievably well" considering where she started and the severity of her learning disability. Brenda said that as Jenna has gotten older, she has realized that she really needs the help, and in turn has gotten much more mature about it. She said, "She's [Jenna] realized how much, and how far she's come, and she's all positive about it now...It's been a wonderful experience for her."

With regard to the resource program at Dixon, Brenda feels like they have a great program in place. She said that there are many things she would not want to change. She likes the fact that they work either one-on-one or in a small group with a teacher. She also said that in addition to the learning specialists, the faculty at Dixon is also highly trained in helping students with learning disabilities. She said, "I feel like I love those teachers." In addition, Brenda added that she prefers to have the same teacher for as long as possible. She said otherwise it is like starting over every year. She recalled the disruption of Hurricane Katrina and the change of teachers.

Some of the challenges Brenda sees with the program is the lack of communication with parents. She suggests that instead of having two yearly meetings, parents should be brought in on a monthly basis to be taught methods to use with their children at home. Brenda felt as though sometimes she was not included and would have liked to have been educated more on how she could help Jenna. Brenda also talked about how expensive it is to raise a child with

dyslexia. Three of her five children are dyslexic and the only reason all three of them are not at Dixon is because “it’s just so expensive.”

Conclusively, Brenda offered some advice. She had some recommendations for other parents who have the same struggles. She suggests that parents get help as soon as they possibly can, and to get the most help they can possibly afford. As for learning specialists, she said, “I think the best thing you can do is work as hard as you can and find their [resource students] weak spots and try to make them their strongest.”

Contrast and Comparison of Jonathan and Jenna’s Experiences

Jonathan and Jenna are in the same program at the same school. They both began attending Dixon Elementary and Middle School very early. Jonathan was a kindergarten student and Jenna was a first grade student at entry. They are both in eighth grade now and they both like history. Jonathan and his mother shared that Jonathan is dyslexic and has ADHD. Jenna’s mother also volunteered that Jenna has dyslexia, too. Jonathan and Jenna’s experiences and viewpoints are alike and different on a variety of issues.

Here is a difference. When reflecting about their experiences as lower school students in resource, Jonathan repeatedly made mention of the support that it offered. He said, “It’s [resource] support and it gives you back up so that you have the time you need and you can get stuff done.” He later added, “It gives you a lot of support.” And again, “I think that they support, support you, and that’s one of the main things.” When asked about whether resource helps him manage his dyslexia, he said, “Yes, I think it does because it gives you the support...they support you on the way to get there.” He talked about how he would not change the support that the resource teachers offer. He said, “I think that they should still provide a

bunch of support, and they shouldn't just let the kid do it on their own." On the other hand, Jenna did not use the word "support" one time in her interview.

A second difference is that Jenna talked about how she did not like going to learning center when she was in lower school. She said, "I didn't like it when I was in lower school." Jonathan's recall of lower school was very limited because he cannot remember anything before he started taking his medication to help manage his attention. He said, "I can't remember anything before fifth grade because that's when I got my pill and I can't remember anything before that." His only mention of lower school was that it was not as hard. He said, "Um, lower school wasn't as hard, of course, so you didn't really need it [resource] as much, but when you go up into middle school, it's a lot harder so you really need that support."

Now in middle school, Jenna likes the way resource is set up and she feels like going twice a week is enough. Jenna said, "I kind of like the way resource is...you go and meet twice a week and you just like learn things, and they teach you study techniques and they help you organize." In disagreement, Jonathan feels like meeting twice a week is insufficient and the program is unproductive. He said, "It's not enough to actually make a really big difference, I think...they just don't do it enough." He added, "Okay, sometimes they ought to have a plan for the day...or it's just like teaching you to like, like keeping organized and stuff, but they don't really like have a plan for learning. Well, they do, but it's not like very good."

Then again, Jenna and Jonathan had some similar comments regarding their experiences. In consideration of the activities they participated in during resource time, they both felt like improvement was warranted. Jenna mainly talked about how the reading material was boring and students do not like reading short stories and answering questions. In agreement, Jonathan

felt like there needed to more consistency with the activities. He said, “We’ll read a passage like every week, like once, and I go like twice a week, and we’ll go over different things. Like we’ll go over words and stuff, but it’s not really steady. If it were steady it would work better.”

Another important similarity is that neither student expressed embarrassment about needing the extra support. Jonathan said absolutely nothing at all about it, and Jenna’s only idea was that it would be embarrassing if a specialist came into the classroom to help her. She also added later in her advice to other students with disabilities not to be embarrassed. She said, “Um, I would tell them not to be embarrassed or anything because it’s not that big a deal...because you may need help on particular things, but other students may also need help on other particular things. So you don’t have to be embarrassed...”

Next, Jonathan and Jenna are the same in that they both seem to be in touch with what they need as learners. Jenna talked about how she reads better when she is reading something that is interesting to her. She said, “When I read interesting stuff, I read it better because I’m more interested in it.” Likewise, Jonathan knows that science and history are his best subjects because they are concrete and they make the most sense to him. Language Arts is difficult because he thinks it is abstract and it takes him a really long time to finish. Jonathan knows that he needs extra time to get his assignments done. He said, “If I didn’t have the extra time, I would be doing terribly.” He also suggested to other students with learning disabilities, “Keep trying and just figure out how you learn and what you need. Figure out exactly the best way you learn so that you can use it to your advantage.”

A final similarity is that both Jonathan and Jenna are doing well now and they agree that receiving learning center support has helped them in some way. Jonathan has been accepted to

the high school of his choice, and he has been earning all A-s since sixth grade. He said, “It’s [learning center] helpful. If I didn’t have the support, I wouldn’t be able to get good grades at all.” Like Jonathan, Jenna felt like she benefitted from attending learning center, as well. She said, “I didn’t like it when I was in lower school, but I think it really does help you in the long run.”

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, Jonathan and Jenna stories are rich and descriptive. Their experiences are different in that Jonathan talked a lot about the support learning center offers while Jenna did not. Jenna talked about how she did not like attending learning center as a lower school student, and Jonathan made no mention of it. Jenna likes how resource is set up now and thinks that two meetings a week are enough, while Jonathan feels like more is necessary.

Jonathan and Jenna’s experiences are related in that they both suggest improvement for the activities in learning center. They also both have a handle of what they need as learners, agree that learning center has been helpful in some way, and are both doing well now as middle school students.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STORIES TOLD FROM TALL OAKS

The Research Context

School Structure, Tall Oaks

The next stories come from two students who attend Tall Oaks which is coeducational independent school located in a suburb of New Orleans, Louisiana that was founded over sixty years ago. Tall Oaks provides students from twelve months through twelfth grade a challenging and nurturing education that focuses on the development of the whole person. Beginning in first grade, Tall Oaks charges \$16,000 for tuition and does not impose additional fees for learning center support. Tall Oaks has a student population near 650.

Tall Oaks has one learning specialist for the entire lower school. Her name is Tammy. Tammy covers mathematics, language arts, and study skills in addition to several other responsibilities. In the learning center, Tammy works to give students supportive strategies. She said, "I am giving the students strategies to help them become better learners." Most of the students Tammy works with start in kindergarten and continue to receive support through fifth grade. Tammy works with students twice a week. If the resource support at school does not seem sufficient, a recommendation for outside tutoring is made. Tammy feels the students in kindergarten, first, and second grade are always excited to come to learning center, but as they reach fourth and fifth grade, they start to feel self-conscious about their weaknesses.

Participant I: Aaron

Interview Structure and Context

This interview took place one winter morning in December during the work week. I was out of school for the holidays, and set up the meeting with Aaron's mother, Jamie, who is an attorney. Jamie suggested that I meet her at her office because she could have someone bring Aaron to her office, and they could have lunch together afterwards.

Since I was unfamiliar with the location, I left home early that morning. Parking in downtown New Orleans was difficult. There was construction everywhere, and after about 15 minutes of circling, I found a spot several blocks away. When I arrived at the building, I pressed number 25 on the elevator dial. Right down the hallway was the office that I was in search of. It had Jamie's name printed right there in silver letters next to her other law partners. A secretary greeted me. I told her I was there for a meeting with Jamie. She picked up the phone, alerted Jamie that her "ten o'clock" was here, and then escorted me to the conference room. The conference room had a large cherry wood table with nearly twenty swivel chairs. One wall was completely glass, and the view overlooked the Mississippi River. The secretary seated me and told me that Jamie would be in shortly. She placed a bottle of water in front of me.

I began to organize my materials and double check the tape recorder. Very soon after, Jamie walked in and introduced me to her son, Aaron. She said that she would be working in her office, and that Aaron would come and get her once I was ready. I presented them with the forms before Jamie excused herself.

I talked to Aaron a little about my study and how he was really helping me. We practiced with the tape recorder and previewed the questions. Our interview lasted about 25 minutes and

then Aaron left to get his mother. The interview with Jamie lasted a bit longer, about 35 minutes. Both Aaron and his mother were easy to talk to despite the unfamiliar feeling of being in a huge conference room. Aaron story follows next.

Aaron's Story

Aaron began his story by talking about his classes at school. He said, "Well, uh...my favorite subject is by far history. I kind of like languages, but I definitely hate the ones that they offer at school. And uh, I've always hated reading since I was like in first grade. Uh, I used to like it, but then I really started hating it. Math is definitely not a fun subject for me...and, English is getting better."

Aaron went on to describe the negative feelings he associates with reading. Aaron said that he liked to read for fun when he was younger, even though he was not very good at it. He remembers reading *Harry Potter* on the couch with his mom. Aaron explained that once he started getting reading assignments, he would have to stop reading whatever books he was working on so that he could meet the deadlines at school. He said that he is not a very fast reader so he could not read all those books at once. The imposed deadlines and not having a choice about what he read really caused Aaron to hate reading. He explained, "Well, when I was like a lot younger, I used to read a lot for fun. I wasn't very good. I wasn't very fast, but me and my mom, we used to always sit on the couch and she would read her book and I would read *Harry Potter*, and then we started getting reading assignments. So I would like have to stop whatever books I was reading, and I wasn't a very...I'm still not a very fast reader, so I hate that because I now...I have a deadline and don't get to pick the books that I'm reading and ever since then I really hated reading."

Thinking back to his days as a lower school student, Aaron remembered working on his reading in the resource room and having two or three “extra help” teachers. He recalled using leveled books and doing exercises with vocabulary and sentence writing. He also remembered working on some math. He said that he did not like those activities, but admits that they probably helped him. He said, “Well, I think I had like two or three extra help teachers...I think that’s what we call it. Um, and uh, well we did a lot on reading, and they had like this set of leveled books in the back and um, uh, I’d usually go. When I was like in 2nd grade, I went with like two people. It was me and another girl. We went and uh, we did a lot of vocab with our vocab books, and sentence writing and stuff. Definitions...all that vocab stuff.” Aaron described some other activities and later added, “I didn’t like it [the resource activities], but it probably helped me. I didn’t like it.”

Aaron also said that he did not like how it was so noticeable that he needed the extra help. Pointedly, he said, “I didn’t like how it was so obvious that I went to it.” He recalled catching on right at the end of the year and always being the last one to finish everything. Aaron said, “I always like pretty much caught on like right at the end of the year. And uh, I remember at the beginning of first grade...I remember in first grade, I was always like the last one to finish everything.”

Aaron also said that he *really* did not like going to the learning center during recess or free play. He said, “Um, I only really had like one or two friends in there with me and like all the rest of my friends were outside playing basketball and football and soccer and stuff like that...that kind of like really was not fun.”

Aaron also talked about how he hated the extra homework he had to do. He shared a story about how he had homework over the Christmas holiday once. He said, “We had to do like a whole big book for Christmas, so I had to sit down on Christmas day and do homework while everyone else was playing with their toys. That wasn’t fun.”

In consideration of his own experience, Aaron had some advice to offer. To other students who attend learning center he suggested, “Don’t fight it as much as I did because I like fought it a lot.” To the organizers of the learning center, Aaron recommended finding another time other than recess for kids to get extra help. He said, “I mean, I don’t know if there would be another time that we could have gone, but I know that definitely was not fun at all because I couldn’t really do anything with my friends and that really sucked.” Aaron also thinks it is important for students to get to pick out their own books. He said, “I would say to get them to catch on to reading, let them read their own books.” In addition, Aaron cautions teachers about their ideas for reinforcement, and specifically references *Accelerated Reader*, a program in which students earn points based on the number of books they read. Aaron said that all that really does is draw more attention to the students who cannot read. He said, “That wasn’t fun...it kind of like made you feel left out and stuff, especially for people who couldn’t read that well...it made the rest of us feel like we were the dumb kids.”

Aaron is now thirteen years old and in 8th grade. He still attends Tall Oaks and has not indicated any plan to leave for high school. Aaron’s favorite subject is history and he “kind of likes languages.” He does not like math, and English is getting a little better for him. Aaron said that he likes to “mess around” in class because “it’s more fun to be a rebel than to just go along with it.” Aaron feels like going to the learning center probably helped him, but says that he cannot really tell how he would be if he did not go. Aaron did not like learning center. He said,

“Like, I can’t really tell how I’d be if I didn’t go. Uh, so yeah, I guess how I liked how it somewhat helped me.”

Polyvocal Analysis of Aaron’s Narrative

The following table illustrates an analysis of the multiple voices that were represented by Aaron in his narrative. This table organizes voices of self, as well as, voices of other students with learning disabilities by providing excerpts from Aaron’s interview.

5: Polyvocal Analysis of Aaron’s Narrative

Voice	Message	Example
Self	I hate reading.	<p>“I kind of like languages, but I definitely hate the ones that they offer at school. And uh, I’ve always hated reading since I was like in first grade. Uh, I used to like it, but then I really started hating it.”</p> <p>“Well, when I was like a lot younger, I used to read a lot for fun. I wasn’t very good. I wasn’t very fast, but me and my mom we used to always sit on the couch and she would read her book and I would read Harry Potter, and then started I getting reading assignments. So I would like have to stop whatever books I was reading, and I wasn’t a very...I’m still not a very fast reader, so I hate that because I now... I have a deadline and don’t get to pick the books that I’m reading and ever since then I really hated reading.”</p>
	Let me pick my own books.	“I have a deadline and don’t get to pick the books that I’m reading and ever since then I really hated reading.”
	I didn’t like learning center, but it probably helped me...probably.	<p>“I didn’t like it, but it probably helped me. I didn’t like it.”</p> <p>“I think it was, it was...pretty good what we did in there, I guess. I can’t remember exactly what it was, but I probably helped me”.</p> <p>“Uh, I didn’t want to do anything that was given to me,</p>

table continued

		<p>and stuff, but I know now that it pretty much helped me. Even though it might have helped a little bit more in different ways...”</p> <p>“Well, it probably helped me...probably. Like, I can't really tell how I'd be if I didn't go. Uh, so yeah, I guess I liked how it somewhat helped me.”</p>
	<p>Teachers should rethink the scheduling and dismissal.</p>	<p>“Uh, well one thing I know I really didn't like was we had to go during like free play or recess. And um, and I only really had like one or two friends in there with me and like all the rest of my friends were outside playing basketball and football and soccer and stuff like that. So I couldn't really uh, I didn't really get to do everything that I liked to do. And uh, that kind of like really was not fun. I mean, I don't know if there would be another time that we could have gone, but I know that definitely was not fun at all because I couldn't really do anything with my friends and that really sucked.”</p> <p>“But, I probably fought it because I couldn't hang out with my friends and stuff. When they were like in recess and I was inside, and all that put together, you know having to do extra work and not getting what I want to do...I remember in fourth grade, they took the movie we were going to watch and we were, like ten people in the class, we were all at extra help, and so luckily I didn't have to go to school and watch a really bad movie. And so, stuff like that since we weren't in class, we missed out on stuff.”</p> <p>“I didn't like how it was so obvious that I went to it. It was like, Oh Aaron, and you and you and you, go right now. You know, you go. And that was never fun. That was definitely never fun.”</p>
	<p>I don't like extra work.</p>	<p>“I think sometimes we had like extra homework which I really hated. I remember one year we had Christmas homework. We had to do to like a whole big book for Christmas, so I had to sit down on Christmas Day and do homework while everyone else was playing with their toys. That wasn't fun.”</p>

table continued

	I need extra time.	“I was always like pretty much catching on like right at the end of the year. And uh, I remember at the beginning of first grade...I remember in first grade I was always like the last one to finish everything.”
	Some reading stuff can be fun.	“But they did do some cool stuff. Like when I was in third or fourth grade, we did a play. What our extra help teacher did, was like, she put together, she had us put together a script like so that we would be writing, and she made us do it in complete sentences and proper grammar, and stuff. So um, like that was fun. I guess now I realize that she was helping us and at the same time making it fun. So it was a lot of fun. We got to put together a whole play and we got to like show the whole grade. It was fun.”
Other Resource students	Kids want to pick their own books.	“I would say to get them to catch on to reading, let them read their own books. Maybe if we could have for reading, you get to pick, like not just a certain couple of books they lay out, but lots of books that they really want to read.”
	Reward systems can be hurtful.	<p>“And also “AR”...accelerated reader, accelerating reading, or something like that. That wasn’t fun because they had like two or three kids in the class who were like really, really smart and they were like always getting all kinds of medals and stuff, so it kind of like made you feel left out and stuff, especially for people who couldn’t read that well.”</p> <p>“They were like, here good job, and they would put up stars and stuff, and I guess that made them feel better, but it made the rest of us feel like we were the dumb kids. So, it wasn’t fun. We felt kind of excluded because they’re were like five or so kids who could really read, so they would get stuff like about them put up around the library, and that was like not fun.”</p>

This polyvocal matrix demonstrates messages that are important to Aaron about his experience which include: (1) *I hate reading*, (2) *Let me pick my own books*, (3) *I didn’t like going to the learning center, but it probably helped me*, (4) *Teachers should rethink the scheduling and dismissal set-up*, (5) *I don’t like extra work*, (6) *I need extra time*, (7) *Some*

reading activities can be fun, (8) Kids want to pick their own books, and (9) Reward systems can be hurtful.

What follows next is a continuation of Aaron's story through the voice of his mother, Jamie. Her interpretation of Aaron's experience was shared after Aaron told his own story, in his own words, with just the two of us present. Aaron's mother was interviewed after Aaron, and he was not present for her discussion.

In his Mother's Eyes

According to Jamie, reading was always difficult for Aaron. Jamie was disappointed to find out that Aaron was going to need some extra support when he was in pre-school. Jamie remembered being on a cruise with Aaron and him being unable to keep track of the days of the week. She said he had trouble with sequencing and those sorts of concepts. She was also worried because she did not understand the issues, and Aaron seemed very bright to her.

According to Jamie, the idea that Aaron was having difficulty was based on some testing that recommended that Aaron should start to get some extra help. At that point, Jamie hired a private tutor, Charlotte, to start working with Aaron two days a week. Jamie does not remember exactly what grade Aaron started attending the learning center, but is pretty sure it was either kindergarten or first grade. She recalled two learning specialists who mainly worked on reading activities.

Jamie said that Aaron never complained about going to "extra help"...he just went. She also said that Aaron did not seem embarrassed by it, but remembers him being very frustrated in school and having a lot of trouble. Jamie recalled Aaron having a difficult time in second and

fourth grades because of his learning issues. Jamie sees Aaron as a good reader despite his dyslexia. She said, “But, really, honestly, he’s a pretty good reader. Really, I think he’s fine.”

Jamie and Aaron both talked about how they read together when Aaron was a child. Jamie said they did a lot of reading in the evenings, and the way they got through *Harry Potter* was that she would read a page, he would read half a page, she would read two pages, etc. Jamie enjoyed this time with Aaron, but reading books for pleasure was interrupted in an effort to keep up with deadlines.

In lieu of the extra homework that Aaron complained about, Jamie was very pleased with the learning center program in lower school, and she felt like Aaron was getting what he needed between the support at school and the extra help from Charlotte. She remembers when Aaron got to participate in writing a play with the other students who went to the resource center, and was able to perform it in front of his classmates. She talked about how that was such a positive experience for him and how much he really enjoyed it. Aaron also talked about how much he enjoyed participating in that play. He said, “I guess I realize that she [the learning specialist] was helping us and at the same time making it fun.” Jamie added, “They felt special being in extra help because they got to do this play and other people didn’t.” Overall, Jamie was really happy with the learning center through fifth grade.

In consideration of ways to improve the program, Jamie recommended giving it an actual name. She said, “I just think it would be useful to call it something like the learning center.” She thought it would be neat to give it an official title. Jamie also warned that though the support is there in lower school, it just does not exist in middle school. She said that there is only one teacher who helps out and there is not a learning center. Frustrated, she added,

“There’s only one person who seems to be providing learning assistance, and she’s just incapable...whether she’s just incapable or not willing to assist kids...” Jamie feels like they do a “dismal job” of providing learning support in middle school.

Jamie also made some suggestions to other parents who have children with a learning disability. She encourages parents to take full advantage of the support because it is very useful. She also warns parents who intend to continue at Tall Oaks in middle school, to set up their own plan for support because there is no support in middle school. She said, “I think one thing, though, especially if you’re staying is to figure out what you’re going to do when you move out of that lower school into middle school because it was really misleading in a way.”

Participant II: Andie

Interview Structure and Context

My interview with Andie was scheduled to follow the interview I had just finished with Aaron and his mom. So once I made it back to my car, I jotted down some reflective notes in my journal, turned on the GPS, and headed towards a suburb outside of New Orleans, Louisiana. When initially setting up the interview with Andie’s mother, Caroline, she went over very clear directions and landmarks to make sure that I did not have any trouble finding their home. Her directions were perfect, but I arrived at their home too soon. I was nearly 30 minutes early. There was a nearby drug store with a large parking lot, so I just stayed there in my car and reviewed notes until closer to time. I arrived at their home 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time.

I rang the doorbell to the modest home and immediately heard dogs start barking and running wild. A little old lady answered the door quietly and just looked at me. For a moment, I

thought I had the wrong house. I introduced myself and she invited me in. I heard a familiar voice from the hallway, "I'll be just a minute, Lori." It was Caroline. I found a seat on the sofa in the living room and the little woman just looked at me and did not say a word. She just looked, and looked, and smiled. Later, I found out that this woman was a close friend of Caroline's.

A few short minutes later Caroline, a tiny middle-aged woman with damp hair and a black robe, came from the hallway. She hugged me and said that she was so happy to meet me and she was so glad that I was working so hard for children like her daughter. She called Andie from her bedroom and introduced us. Although it was the afternoon, Andie was still in her pajamas. She had on animal print pajama pants and a hot pink tank top. Her black hair was all bundled in a ponytail right on top of her head. We found seats on the sofa and began by taking care of the needed forms. Andie wanted to be interviewed first. Everyone stayed in the room for her interview. In fact, Andie sat next to the little woman and they held hands while Andie talked. Andie did not appear afraid. Rather, my observation was that this woman held Andie's hand because she was so proud of Andie as she articulated her responses to my questions.

As I had done with the other student participants, I read the questions to Andie before we started to see if she needed any clarification. After that, she said that she was all set. When it was Caroline's turn, she asked me to review the questions with her, too. Andie went back to her bedroom when I interviewed her mother, so it was just Caroline, the little lady, and me. Andie's story follows.

Andie's Story

“I’m just trying to get through. My dyslexia really affects me in school. It’s like, sometimes difficult for tests and all the hard words and everything during the test, and so it’s...sometimes difficult.”

Andie shared certain difficult experiences she had with her classmates as a result of needing to get extra help for her learning disability. Andie talked about how she was very embarrassed. She even said that when she was in lower school she hated going to resource. She said, “I was always embarrassed because I was the only girl in the whole grade who got to go to the room where they helped you, and it was very embarrassing, and I remember being called stupid by another student. I remember that to this day, and it was very hurtful and I just remember that.” She added, “I hated being called out the room to go do that. I was very embarrassed. Some of the kids, they would like laugh at me.” She talked about how all the kids knew where she was going and the fact that she had dyslexia, and she was very embarrassed by all of it.

Regardless of the hurt, Andie appreciated the extra support and she thought it was really beneficial. She said, “The extra help I got in reading, it was really helpful. Um, my teachers really, they really wanted me to do well in school.” She said her teachers very patient with her and they wanted her to get the answers right, but sometimes they got frustrated with her and she did not like that. Andie also recalled the read aloud and spelling activities that she did in learning center as useful because they helped her improve her spelling, pronunciation, and reading. However, Andie still had difficulty reading aloud in the small group. She said,

“Sometimes it was difficult for me and I was embarrassed sometimes because I couldn’t read the words sometimes.”

Considerate of her own experience, Andie offered advice to other resource students. She said to other students with learning disabilities, “Keep doing it. It’s...keep doing it. It’s like, you probably don’t like it right now, but once you get older and like go to middle school and go to high school, it’s gonna be like very easier for you. You could be the best reader in the class because you got that extra help.”

Today Andie is thirteen years old and she is in the seventh grade at Tall Oaks. Going to learning center has gotten much easier because now Andie is a better reader and she feels like she has the support she needs from her friends. Neither Andie nor her mother made any mention of switching schools for high school. Andie says that she is just trying to get through school and her dyslexia really affects her. Andie’s least favorite subject is science because “the material is sometimes really hard to read, and like the big words are really hard to read.” Her favorite subject is Louisiana History because she says she has a really good memorization and she likes hearing stories.

At the end of her story, Andie expressed gratitude. She said, “Now that I think about it, if they didn’t pick me up then I wouldn’t be the person I am today. I wouldn’t be a good reader.” She said, “I just want to say to all the reading teachers and specialists, thank you so much for helping people with my disability...for helping with kids who may not be able to read and mix up letters and numbers. Um, just, I’m really grateful that I got that extra help and that I am who I am today.”

Polyvocal Analysis of Andie’s Narrative

The following illustrates an analysis of the multiple voices that were represented by Andie in her narrative. This table organizes voices of self, as well as, voices of other students with learning disabilities by providing excerpts from Andie’s interview.

Table 6: Polyvocal Analysis of Andie’s Narrative

Voice	Message	Example
Self	School is difficult for me because I am dyslexic.	<p>“I’m just trying to get through. My dyslexia really affects me in school. It’s like, sometimes difficult for tests and all the hard words and everything during the test, and so it’s...sometimes difficult.”</p> <p>“My probably least favorite subject is life science because um...like the material is sometimes really hard to read, and like the big words are really hard to read.”</p>
	Resource was helpful to me.	<p>“Well, um...the extra help I got in reading, it was really helpful.”</p> <p>“And it was helpful because as I like graduated on to like, I graduated on to like bigger words and bigger words and it helped me with my spelling and pronouncing words better and it helped me read them better.”</p> <p>“It helped because then I, like, as I was doing the extra help I got better, so then I like felt better in my reading.”</p> <p>“Now that I think about it, if they didn’t pick me up then I wouldn’t be the person that I am today.”</p>
	My teachers were supportive.	<p>“Um, my teachers really, they really wanted me to do well in school.”</p> <p>“They helped me, was that they were very patient with me and they really like wanted me to get the answer right. And when I was working in the workbook or on the blackboard or something and if I</p>

table continued

		got something wrong, they weren't like, "Oh my gosh, you have to do this." They were very helpful."
	My teachers got frustrated.	"But some of the things I didn't like were, when you got something wrong they were patient, but they kind of would have a little, they would be frustrated with you a little, and that kind of, I didn't really like that."
	Getting extra help can be hurtful.	"I remember being called "stupid" by another student and I remember that to this day, and it was very hurtful and I just remember that." "Some of the kids, they would like laugh at me. When I would get back in the room, they would be like, where'd you go, where'd you go."
	Going to resource was embarrassing.	"Sometimes that was difficult for me and I was embarrassed sometimes because I couldn't read the words sometimes." "I was always embarrassed when they came to pick me up. I was always embarrassed because I was the only girl in the whole grade who got to go to the room where they helped you, and it was very embarrassing..." "Well, when I was little it bothered me more...but now that I think about it, if I'd never, I mean, I think it would be more embarrassing if they like came and sat down with you during the class, but the way they picked you up." "Well, when I was little in lower school, I hated it. I hated being called out the room to go do that. I was very embarrassed." "And I would be like embarrassed to tell them that I went to get extra help. But now, lower school, it was very difficult for me. You know I was embarrassed, all the kids knew where I was going and I had dyslexia and I was very embarrassed by it."
	It gets easier.	"But now in middle school it's much better because I know how to do this stuff and I know how to read, how to read these big words that I never knew I could. And it's a lot easier. And all of my friends,

table continued

		they really support me on it. They'll help me."
	I am so grateful.	<p>"I'm really grateful for all my friends that help me. And, it's just so much better now, and I'm really grateful I got the extra help."</p> <p>"I just want to say to all the reading teachers and specialists, thank you so much for helping people with my disability...for helping with kids who may not be able to read and mix up letters and numbers. Um, just, I'm really grateful that I got that extra help and that I am who I am today. And, just, thank you, and um, those kind of teachers really help students a lot. And, I'm just really grateful for them, and just, thank you for helping me."</p>
Other Resource Students	Rethink the dismissal to learning center.	<p>"I think maybe they could have liked called you in...maybe if they teacher was like, "Andie, you can go now." So it'd be more private."</p> <p>"I think that would be much easier for a student."</p>
	Keep at it. It's worth it.	<p>"Keep doing it. It's...keep doing it. It's like, you probably don't like it right now, but once you get older and like go to middle school and go to high school, it's gonna be like very easier for you. You could be the best reader in the class because you got that extra help."</p> <p>"And you're probably embarrassed now and just keep doing it...just keep doing it. You get better at your reading and writing. Maybe when you get older you may be a writer or be a teacher just by that help."</p>

This polyvocal matrix demonstrates messages that are important to Andie about her experience which include: (1) *School is difficult for me because I am dyslexic*, (2) *Resource was helpful to me*, (3) *My teachers were very supportive*, (4) *My teachers got frustrated*, (5) *Getting extra help can be hurtful*, (6) *Going to the resource room was embarrassing*, (7) *It gets easier*, (8) *I am so grateful*, (9) *Rethink the dismissal to learning center*, and (10) *Keep at it. It's worth it*.

What follows next is a continuation of Andie's story through the voice of her mother, Caroline. Her interpretation of Andie's experience was shared after Andie told her own story, in her own words, while she sat on the sofa holding her mother's friend's hand. Caroline and I were sitting across from Andie as she talked, and neither of us interrupted her. Caroline was interviewed after Andie. Andie was not present for the interview.

In her Mother's Eyes

According to Caroline, when Andie was very small, she could not write and there was a real challenge in that her parents could not recognize what was going on. Andie's kindergarten teachers at Tall Oaks shared their observations of Andie's difficulties. They thought that Andie was developing socially, but academically she was having great struggles. Caroline said that she always knew that there was an issue with Andie's reading. At the end of Andie's third grade year, her parents made the decision to have a full psycho-educational evaluation done. Caroline shared that the results of the evaluation indicated that Andie was "extremely dyslexic."

During Andie's interview, Caroline heard her daughter talk about how hurtful and embarrassing the process was for her. Without reservation, Caroline recommended that the specialists come up with a better way for kids to get to resource. She said, "I would just recommend that they protect their little spirits and make...I think that it could be done in a way that they're not pulled out and made to look different." She thinks that maybe resource could just be a "different" class and not make it appear to be a negative thing because these children are "just as special as everybody else." Seemingly very important to Caroline, she restated this point again later. She said, "I would reiterate that to just make those classes...you know, these extra help classes not so odd, for lack of a better word. You know, it's not odd, it's just

something extra or something different. So that, that they don't feel like they're strange. You know, because a dyslexic child has those feelings." Andie also thought the transition needed to be improved, but warns that it would be even worse if the teacher came into the classroom to help. She said, "I think it would be even more embarrassing if they like came and sat down with you during the class."

Despite the embarrassment, Caroline said that Andie never complained about going and Caroline thinks that Andie really appreciated the help. Caroline remembers Andie's teachers being very helpful. She said, "They were incredibly helpful in offering extra help. Sometimes regular teachers would help her out of the kindness of their hearts and I will never, never forget that."

In addition to the support Andie received at school, she also worked with private tutors. Caroline talked about how it is difficult to think about how much help a child really needs, but as a family they were able to do some things outside of school. Caroline said, "At the time, financially, we were able to get her a lot of help and I'm really grateful for that."

Caroline's comments about the learning center at Tall Oaks were glowing. She said, "I was incredibly grateful. They were tremendous in trying to help her." She added, "The wonderful, loving people in that field have been very special, and that's what I have experienced where Andie goes to school." And later, "I was just so incredibly grateful and I wish, I really kind of wish that it would have started a tiny bit earlier..."

Caroline made a few suggestions to other parents who have children with learning disabilities. She said, "Enjoy it. Communicate with the person that's helping your child, you

know, so you can help them...” She also recommended to learning specialists to be very aware of the problem and very sensitive to the problem.

In conclusion, Caroline said that, “It’s been quite a journey.” She described dyslexic children as being bright in so many other ways, and when her child was small Caroline kept thinking, “tomorrow that will come, tomorrow that will change.” Her thought today is that, “They’re all so special and so wonderful and it all works out, and they’re going to be great at whatever. The greatness might be in a different area, like my daughter who seems to think that she can do anything.”

Contrast and Comparison of Aaron and Andie’s Experiences

Andie and Aaron both attend Tall Oaks today, and they both received learning center support as lower school students. They are also both dyslexic. Andie’s mother shared this information and learned of Andie’s dyslexia from formal testing done by a psychologist. Aaron’s mother shared that Aaron is dyslexic, but did not discuss the evaluation process. Their experiences are alike and different on a variety of issues.

One similarity is that Andie and Aaron share the same favorite subject, history. They also both expressed how reading is hard for them. Andie said, “My dyslexia really affects me in school. It’s like sometimes difficult for tests and all the hard words and everything during the test, and so it’s...sometimes difficult.” The really hard material and “big words” make science her least favorite subject. Like Andie, Aaron says that history is his “favorite subject by far” but he does not tell why. Aaron’s indication of history is strange because it heavily depends on reading. He talked about how he has always hated reading and he is not a very fast reader. He

explains that started to really hate reading when he was unable to pick out the books he wanted to read and he had to start meeting deadlines. Aaron also does not like mathematics.

Both Andie and Aaron talked about the problem with the dismissal to learning center. Andie was very embarrassed about her disability and having to be picked up by the specialist to go to the “extra help room.” She suggested that teachers come up with a better plan that is more private like just quietly calling the students out when it is time. Like Andie, Aaron also had issues with the structure. He had a real problem with going to resource during free play and recess. He said, “I mean, I don’t know if there would be another time that we could have gone, but I know that definitely was not fun at all because I couldn’t really do anything with my friends and that really sucked.” Like Andie, Aaron also said that he did not like how it was so obvious that he went to learning center. He made the exact same suggestion that perhaps the classroom teacher could privately let the student know when it was time to go instead of being picked up by the specialist.

Aaron and Andie both shared specific examples of times when they felt badly about themselves and when they were embarrassed because of their learning disabilities. Andie talked about being called “stupid” and how hurtful that was to her. Aaron spent some time talking about the *Accelerated Reader* program and how the reward system made the smart kids feel smarter and it made the rest of the kids feel like they were the “dumb kids.”

On the other hand, Aaron and Andie offered some comments that were individualistic. Aaron talked about how he fought going to learning center. He said he wanted to be with his friends and he did not like all the extra homework, so he fought it. At one point, he described himself as a “rebel.” Andie’s disposition was very different. Though she did talk about how she

hated going, she never said that she fought it. Her mother described her as just “walking the walk.” My impression was that Andie just did what she was told to do.

Andie talked about how helpful her teachers were and how much they believed in her. Aaron did not say anything about supportive teachers. Andie liked the activities she did in learning center and described them as “really helpful,” while Aaron only said that the activities “probably helped,” and that he did not like them.

Finally, Aaron and Andie expressed different feelings about the impact learning center had on each of them. Aaron said that he is not sure how he would be if he had not received the extra support. He said, “Like, I can’t really tell how I’d be if I didn’t go. Uh, so yeah, I guess how I liked how it somewhat helped me.” On the contrary, Andie was very vocal about the positive impact learning center had on her. She talked a lot about how helpful it was and said, “Now that I think about it, if they didn’t pick me up then I wouldn’t be the person that I am today. I wouldn’t be a good reader.”

Chapter Summary

Andie and Aaron’s stories both add insight into the perspectives of the learner involved. Andie endured many struggles as a result of her dyslexia, but has risen to the challenge and now talks very positively about how participating in the learning center has helped her become a better reader and a better student. Aaron’s attitude was different. He talked more about ways the learning center could be improved. He said that he is still not a very fast reader today and from his story, it is conclusive that his behavior has been affected in some way by his learning disability. Aaron and Andie were both embarrassed by the fact that they needed extra help, and they both made suggestions for ways to improve the structure of the learning center at Tall Oaks.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STORIES TOLD FROM JACKSON SCHOOL

The Research Context

School Structure, Jackson School

Jackson School is a co-educational independent school located uptown in New Orleans, Louisiana. Jackson was founded over 100 years ago and offers a challenging, comprehensive, and sequential curriculum from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. The school prides itself on its commitment to the intellectual, ethical, emotional and physical development of each student. Jackson has more than 450 students in lower school, and its tuition is nearly \$17,000 beginning in preschool. There is no additional fee for learning center support.

Today, observations of the learning center at Jackson would not bring much to the study because the structure of the learning has changed this year with new administration. However, the learning specialist from the old system was available to be interviewed, and her name is Charley. Charley worked at Jackson from 1991-2009. She talked about how her decision to leave mainly stemmed from philosophical disagreements with the new administration and their decisions to change the structure of the learning center. Prior to teaching at Jackson, Charley was a learning specialist at Dixon. Charley has twenty plus years of experience and talked very knowledgably about reading and how her beliefs influence the way she teaches. Her approach is systematic and direct. She talked about how after Hurricane Katrina, Jackson lost a learning specialist, so two people had to take on the job of three, and in turn the amount of support Charley could provide was reduced from five days a week, to four days a week, to three days a week.

Participant I: Samantha

Interview Structure and Context

Samantha's interview was rescheduled twice before it finally took place one evening after school in December. Samantha's mother, Becca, emailed me and said that I could come to their home at 5:30 p.m. because they would be back from Samantha's soccer game by that time. She reminded me of their address again and gave suggestions on what would be the best way to get there from the school where I teach.

That afternoon I stayed at school reviewing other interview notes until close to the time for Samantha's interview. I arrived at the family's uptown home without delay. When I pulled up, two boys were playing football in the yard with their dad. They invited me right in. I introduced myself to the man as he led me to the back of the house into the kitchen. He shouted up the kitchen stairs for Becca to come down. She walked down smiling and said that Samantha would be down in just a few minutes. She asked how I wanted to structure the interviews. I suggested that we start with the forms and then we could do the interviews. Samantha came down and said that she wanted to be interviewed first so that she could go and start on her homework. Both interviews were very easy, and each one lasted only about 20 minutes. By the end of my interview with Becca, her husband came in from the backyard and asked her if she wanted to order Chinese take-out because the boys were ready to eat. I knew it was time for me to go.

Samantha's Story

"When I was in lower school, I went to the learning center and I always thought I had a lot of trouble with reading when I was in lower school. So I mostly went, well, we went there

and we read books. Um...um, I always thought, I think I still am not the best reader. It takes me a long time to read and it, uh, normally if I read it in my head, I don't understand it so I have to read it out loud." Samantha began her story by talking about her early days as a learning center student. She also shared the way she feels when she is with her whole class. She said, "When I'm in the whole class, I don't like reading aloud because I'm always scared that I'm going to mess up like on an easy, something easy. In learning center, it wasn't bad. Well, not bad at all. Some people in there had reading problems, too."

Samantha talked about some of the activities she did in the learning center. She remembered working on an immigrant project in 3rd or 4th grade and getting to present it to her classmates. She looked back on the experience positively. She said, "We made an immigrant project when we were in 3rd or 4th grade and we presented it to the 5th graders so that was improvement to be able to present in front of older people." Samantha also remembered reading a book about the Holocaust and described it as "really, really hard." Even today, Samantha skips over words. She said, "And, I've always, even now when I read for the class, I skip over a lot. I mess up on like really easy words."

Samantha said that she really liked learning center, and the positive reinforcement encouraged her. She said, "I really liked how she gave us stickers so it made you want to improve and do better."

One issue Samantha identified as problematic was the fact that was with the same teacher the whole time she was in learning center as a lower school student. She said that she never got to see how someone else would do it and she never saw anything different. Samantha explained,

“I really liked it [learning center], but the whole time I was at the learning center, I was with the same person so I didn’t really see anything different, and how any other person would do it.”

Mindful of her own experience, Samantha offered some words of wisdom to other children who need the extra help from the learning center. She said, “Maybe don’t always put yourself down if you are behind everyone.” She talked about how sometimes people might look at the learning center students funny, but that mainly only happens in the lower grades. By the time middle school comes, she said that “it is not that big of a deal.”

Today, Samantha is in her seventh grade year at Jackson and she is twelve years old. She says that she is still not the best reader and that it takes her a long time to read things. If she reads something in her head and she does not understand it, then she will read it out loud. Samantha especially does not like to read in front of her classmates. She said, “When I’m in the whole class, I don’t like reading aloud because I’m always scared that I’m going to mess up like on an easy, something easy.” Despite this fear, Samantha is on the honor roll at Jackson and continues to do well academically. She says that she liked learning center because it really helped her. Samantha will continue at Jackson for high school.

Polyvocal Analysis of Samantha’s Narrative

The following illustrates the messages that were represented by Samantha in her narrative. Unlike the other participants, only voices of self were identified in the analysis of Samantha’s transcript. Nonetheless, these voices and their messages are displayed by providing excerpts from Samantha’s interview.

Table 7: Polyvocal Analysis of Samantha’s Narrative

Voice	Message	Example
Self	Reading is hard for me.	<p>“When I was in lower school, I went to the learning center and I always thought I had a lot of trouble with reading when I was in lower school.”</p> <p>“Um...um, I always thought, I think I still am not the best reader. It takes me a long time to read and it, uh, normally if I read it in my head I don’t understand it so I have to read it out loud.”</p> <p>“I don’t remember, but it was a really hard book. We read it in 4th or 5th grade. It was about the Holocaust and I thought that book was really, really hard for me. And, I’ve always, even now when I read for the class, I skip over a lot. I mess up on like really easy words.”</p> <p>“When I’m in the whole class, I don’t like reading aloud because I’m always scared that I’m going to mess up like on an easy, something easy.”</p>
	I feel more comfortable in the resource room.	<p>“When I’m in the whole class, I don’t like reading aloud because I’m always scared that I’m going to mess up like on an easy, something easy. In learning center, it wasn’t bad, well not bad at all. Some people in there had reading problems, too.”</p>
	Maybe we should have different learning specialists in lower school.	<p>“I really liked it, but the whole time I was at the learning center, I was with the same person so I didn’t really get to see anything different, and how any other person would do it.”</p>

table continued

		<p>“Um, I like how she didn’t, but if I were with a different teacher, I would know if I wanted to be with a different teacher because I was never with a different one, so I’m not really sure.”</p> <p>“Well, I’m not really sure because I was with the same person through lower school, so I don’t really know any methods besides what she did. Um, I still think it’s good to have the same person most of the time, but maybe like two of the years, maybe someone different. But it doesn’t have to be someone different every year because they might not know where you left off. They might not know where you are, so it might just be like a fresh start and not like...starting were you left off.”</p>
	Don’t put yourself down.	<p>“Um, maybe don’t always put yourself down if you are behind everyone and sometimes people look at you funny if you go there, mostly when you’re younger. When you’re older it’s not that big of a deal, but when you’re like in 3rd or 4th grade it, they sort of...”</p>
	I was embarrassed.	<p>“I was sometimes embarrassed to go because sometimes we weren’t reading the same book in class, and we were always one, maybe one book, behind in the learning center.”</p>
	I don’t like reading in front of the whole class.	<p>“So, I didn’t really like reading with the class because we hadn’t done that before because like in 3rd and 2nd grade, we just went at our own pace, and in like 4th grade and 5th grade we stayed with the classes and we didn’t go as much so it was just like a checkup. In 1st and 2nd grade we went like twice or three times a week</p>

table continued

		because we read in a small group and you never felt like you were left behind because they would always stop and wait for you.” “When I’m in the whole class, I don’t like reading aloud because I’m always scared that I’m going to mess up like on an easy, something easy. In learning center, it wasn’t bad, well not bad at all. Some people in there had reading problems, too.”
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This polyvocal matrix demonstrates messages that are important to Samantha about her experience which include: (1) *Reading is hard for me*, (2) *I feel more comfortable in the resource room*, (3) *Maybe we should have different learning specialists in lower school*, (4) *Don’t put yourself down*, (5) *I was embarrassed*, and (6) *I don’t like reading in front of the whole class*.

What follows next is a continuation of Samantha’s story through the voice of her mother, Becca. Her interpretation of Samantha’s experience was shared after Samantha told her own story, in her own words, with her mother and me sitting next to her at the kitchen table. Samantha’s mother was interviewed after Samantha. It was just Becca and me because Samantha excused herself so that she could begin her homework.

In her Mother’s Eyes

Samantha’s mother, Becca, has four children who have all needed to receive extra support in school. Becca says that she was not surprised by the fact that her children needed extra help because she went through the same process as a child. Samantha received learning

center support at Jackson when she was in lower school. She got the extra help she needed outside of class through the learning center.

According to Becca, Samantha never complained about going to learning center. Her mother said, “Well, the feedback I would get from probably all four of them [her children] is that they enjoyed going.” Becca liked the small group environment and the positive reinforcement. She also talked about how her children loved the reward system and getting to pick out of the treat box. Samantha mentioned the stickers and the treat box in her interview, too. She said, “I really liked how she gave us stickers so it made you want to improve and do better.”

Becca viewed the fact that her children were pulled out of class from a positive perspective. She said, “They [her children] enjoyed being pulled out and they enjoyed the positive reinforcement.” She later talked about how she would not want to see this part of the program changed. She thought that the system as it stands allows specialists to work on specific issues and help children build their confidence.

Becca did have some suggestions for improvement, though. She said that she would like to see more extra help in the context of the classroom so that she could see how her children would function in that environment with just a little extra help. She said, “Um...things that I would like to change, and it may be hard to do, but maybe to see how they interact more in the classroom, um...and maybe have a little extra help there so that they can also function in the big group, too.” In addition, Becca talked about how important communication between all of the adults involved is. She did not like the “disconnect” that can happen between the parent, the teacher, and the learning specialist. She said that she was more laid back in the past, but now she is much more active in the program and in monitoring and evaluating her children’s learning.

Becca also offered some advice to other parents who have children with learning disabilities. She feels like it would be helpful if parents got together and formed support groups so that other parents could talk from their experiences. She said, “But now having four children go through, we are wiser. And it probably would have been beneficial for someone to say, hey, these are the things maybe to look out for, these are the questions maybe to ask, these are the source maybe to use, these are the things maybe to figure out...instead of the alarm bells going off too late.” She said that now at Jackson, parents are talking about their kids’ issues and they are sharing a variety of experiences.

Participant II: Edward

Interview Structure and Context

Edward’s interview was rescheduled once before it happened one December evening. Edward’s mother emailed me during the school day to arrange the new meeting time. I arrived at Edward’s home right on time and was greeted at the front door by his mother, Violet. She invited me into the three story mansion and led me to the dining room that overlooked the garden and the pool. Edward was upstairs and Violet’s other two daughters were in the dining room. Violet called Edward down and the two small girls stayed in the room with us, despite my suggestion for privacy. So there we were, Edward, and Violet, and Edward’s two little sisters, and me.

Although I suggested that we do the interviews separately, Violet sort of just brushed off the idea. Everyone was present for both interviews. We signed all the forms, and I explained the process and reviewed the questions. Edward wanted to be interviewed first so I began with him. His interview lasted about 30 minutes as did his mother’s. Edward’s story follows next.

Edward's Story

When Edward was asked to tell a little about himself as a student and a learner, he replied, "I'm Edward, uh...the learning center was helpful and it helped me learn in a better way even though some of the other kids were learning in a normal way...not really a normal way, just a different way. And, but it still helped me. It just got the job done."

Edward said that he thought the learning center was helpful and that it helped him learn in a better way. Of the activities he did in learning center, Edward recalled sitting in comfortable chairs and "taking all of the stress off from class work." He also remembered getting in a circle to read books aloud with the small group. He said, "It was awkward because we would always, like, if somebody would mess up, then it would be really awkward because the other people would like just want to get it over with." He talked about how it aggravated him to have to wait for the slow readers.

In consideration of his own experience as a resource student, Edward offered some suggestions on how to improve the learning center. The environment and atmosphere seemed to be very important to Edward. He talked about how students in the learning center should always be allowed to sit on those cushion seats, and they should be able to bring in a snack and a drink. He said, "I think that, we...the learning center should sort of like expand on doing homework on a cushion seat, and like we should like just get to do all of our work on a cushion seat." Edward thinks that students should be able to go and sit anywhere they like and just read on their own. He said that he did not like reading together because it did not help him very much. He also thinks that the positive reinforcement should continue. He said, "I think that's helpful because it made you want to go to learning center more to get more stickers so that you could get an item."

In addition to the above recommendations, Edward had some advice for other resource students. He said, “Well, learning center isn’t really a big deal. I mean, it’s just, it’s actually pretty fun, or it was a pretty fun experience. It’s not like a special way. It’s just a different way. There’s nothing wrong with it.” Edward viewed missing class to go to learning center as a good thing.

Edward is now thirteen years old and he is the seventh grade. He says that lower school was much easier for him than middle school is because there was not as much work, and learning center “took all the stress off.” He says now it is hard to pay attention and he has a hard time getting all of his work done. He explained, “But now, since we have so much work, I just...it’s just hard to pay attention and get your homework done.” He also said that his teacher reads out all of the questions to him and that does not help him very much. He would rather do the work on his own and just check in with his teacher when he thinks he is finished. Edward is planning to continue at Jackson throughout high school.

Polyvocal Analysis of Edward’s Narrative

The following illustrates an analysis of the multiple voices that were represented by Edward in his narrative. This table organizes voices of self, as well as, voices of other resource students by providing excerpts from Edward’s interview.

Table 8: Polyvocal Analysis of Edward’s Narrative

Voice	Message	Example
Self	People learn in different ways.	“I’m Edward, uh...the learning center was helpful and it helped me learn in a better way even though some of the other kids were learning in a normal way...not really a normal way, just a different

table continued

		<p>way.”</p> <p>“Well, learning center isn’t really a big deal. I mean, it’s just, it’s actually pretty fun, or it was a pretty fun experience. It’s not like a special way. It’s just like a different way. There’s nothing wrong with it.”</p>
	Missing class isn’t so bad.	<p>“And, you get to miss, well you get to skip class. And the class you would miss is more stressful than the learning center because you’re in a larger group and with the learning center, you’re in a smaller group. So like, there’s not as much stress.”</p>
	It doesn’t help me when my teacher reads questions out loud to me.	<p>“And, it’s harder because my teacher reads out all of the questions, which doesn’t help me very much. “</p>
	I don’t like reading aloud in a small group.	<p>“Well, it was kind of...it is a little awkward sort of, because we would always like, if somebody would mess up, then it would be really awkward because the other people would just like want to get it over with, so...Say like if somebody before you is like a really slow reader, and you’re like a really fast reader, it would kind of like aggravate you to like have to wait for the other person.”</p> <p>“In lower school, when it was time to read and I would be separated from the class, I didn’t like the method that the learning center would use, which was as I said, getting in a small group and reading it in a circle because it just, it just didn’t help me very much.”</p>
	The physical environment and atmosphere of the learning center are important.	<p>“Uh, I liked that [comfy seats] a lot because it’s like, just like, take your mind of everything. Take your mind like off all the school work, and we got to look outside the windows, and see all like the trees and stuff. And, yeah, it was just like relaxing.”</p>

table continued

		<p>“I think that, we...the learning center should sort of like expand on doing homework on a cushion seat, and like we should like just get to do all of our work on a cushion seat. And, like have the learning center more laid back. Maybe you could like bring a snack in if you wanted, maybe a drink. And, but I think you should keep the same...I think you should keep the stickers and keep the stickers the same, so like once you got your chart full you get to get something out of the treasure box. I think that’s helpful because it like made you want to go to the learning center more to get more stickers so that you could get an item.”</p>
<p>Other Other learning center students</p>	<p>Kids need more freedom in their learning.</p>	<p>“I think if you just said, once I finish my test, and I say I am going back to my classroom to turn in the test, if you just said, have you checked over this. And if I say, no. Then you should say, I think you should check over this just to make sure, double check.”</p> <p>“I think that she should just tell us that we can go sit down anywhere in the classroom, even on the floor and read, and when you...or when the time is up for learning center you can go back to your classroom. That’s the method that helped the most for me.”</p> <p>“The method that I think we should use is when the students come into learning center, the teacher should ask the student more, just say, what are you going to do in class today?”</p> <p>“And then, I think it’s important to like let the students sit wherever that want. Like, if they were reading, they could like lay down on the floor, and read on the floor because it helps the students more because it’s more..it’s like more free, or “free-er”.</p>

This polyvocal matrix demonstrates messages that are important to Edward about his experience which include: (1) *People learn in different ways*, (2) *Missing class isn't so bad*, (3) *It doesn't help me when my teachers reads questions out loud to me*, (4) *I don't like reading in a small group*, (5) *The physical environment and atmosphere of the learning center are important*, and (6) *Kids need more freedom in their learning*.

What follows next is a continuation of Edward's story through the voice of his mother, Violet. Her interpretation of Edward's experience was shared after Edward told his own story, in his own words, with his mother and his two little sisters present. Edward's mother was interviewed after Edward, and again, everyone was present for this discussion, too.

In his Mother's Eyes

Edward is the second of four children, two boys and two girls. All of his siblings are participants in the learning center at Jackson. Though the interview was designed to be based on Edward's experiences, Violet could not help but to talk about all of her children. She said that some of her kids started going to learning center in 4th or 5th grade, and others began very early. Violet was hesitant at first and thought that something was wrong, but once she learned that her children did better in a small group environment, she was fine. Violet feels like the children who started sooner benefitted more. Edward started in 2nd grade.

Violet talked about the activities that her children did as learning center students. She would sit in on some sessions and she recalled word work and spelling. Her favorite activity was when her children would get to use the desk as a chalkboard and write their spelling words using shaving cream.

Violet said that she does not remember Edward saying much about how he felt about going to learning center early on. She said that Edward is not a very talkative child to begin with. She recalled that by the time Edward made it to 5th grade, he did not enjoy it as much because the set up was a little different. She said Edward was learning study skills and how to set up a planner and get organized.

Violet is a huge fan of the learning center at Jackson, but has some suggestions for improvement. She feels like the learning center would benefit more children if they implemented a math program in addition to the reading program. She also thinks that teachers need more supplies so that they would not have to spend so much time copying materials.

In addition, Violet talked about how the set up of the learning center has changed this year. She said, “They have a bit of a different format for the learning center, uh...the teacher now doesn’t necessarily pull them out of the classroom. Sometimes she goes into the classroom and teaches a smaller group.” Violet thinks the learning center is effective, but she would just like to see her kids spend more time getting support. She feels like two days a week is fine, but three or four days would allow for much more progress much more quickly. She said, “Maybe adding another day would be beneficial.” Added to that challenge, Violet did not like how her children were pulled out of class during fun activities to go to learning center. She blamed this on scheduling issues, but hoped that it could be improved.

Violet also had some advice for other parents who have children who attend the learning center at Jackson. She said, “I would say to the parent that they should be enthusiastic about their child attending learning center.” She talked about how all children are different and just because a child needs extra help that does not mean anything is wrong with them. “They just see

and do things that are a little different.” She said that she is a strong believer in the small group environment because that is the place where her children have done their best. Violet thinks that reading in the resource center everyday would be a great start for a model of reading support.

Contrast and Comparison of Samantha and Edward’s Experiences

Edward and Samantha have several things in common. They both attend Jackson School and received learning center support as lower school students. Edward and Samantha are both the second of four children, all of whom have received learning center support at Jackson. Oddly enough, there are two boys and two girls in each family, too.

Another similarity is that Edward and Samantha both talked about the importance of the positive reinforcement they received in the learning center. Samantha said, “I really liked how she gave us stickers so it made you want to improve and do better.” Edward added, “I think you should keep the stickers and keep the stickers the same, so like once you got your chart full you get to get something out of the treasure box. I think that’s helpful because it like made you want to go to the learning center more to get more stickers so that you could get an item.”

Edward and Samantha offered similar advice to other learning center students. Edward talked about how it is not really “a big deal” and how it removes a lot of stress. Samantha talked about how when you’re younger it is a little embarrassing, but when you get older it is not that “big of a deal.” Samantha and Edward both agree that learning center was helpful to them.

In contrast, Edward and Samantha did have some opposing points of view. Samantha shared how she was scared to read aloud, even in the small group because she would mess up on the easy words and get embarrassed. Edward also talked about reading in the small group, but he said that he would get annoyed having to wait for the slow readers. He said, “It would kind of

like aggravate you to like have to wait for the other person.” This is a seemingly odd comparison because Samantha found the small group more comforting while Edward found it to be frustrating. Edward and Samantha would have been in this group together as lower school students.

Chapter Summary

Edward and Samantha are both in the seventh grade at Jackson School. They have been there since lower school and started receiving learning center support very early. Edward and Samantha both have three siblings who also needed the extra support of the learning center at Jackson. Edward and Samantha thought that the support they received was helpful, and their parents agree.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REVIEWING THE NARRATIVES ACROSS CASES

Introduction

This chapter considers the six student narratives across cases in light of the guiding research questions and the themes that emerged from the data. Because the study was designed to explore the experiences of students who participated in learning center support, the interview questions were intended to search for a deeper understanding of student experience. During most interviews, the participants were very engaged. Specifically, students were comfortable sharing their experiences, and many of their responses were exploratory allowing me to probe for a deeper, richer understanding. Although parents were the most nervous of all participants, their commitment to their children was obvious. The purpose of the interviews with the learning specialists was to provide a frame of reference of the context of each setting, as the students described their experiences. In addition, these teachers offered interesting comments and insight that contributed to my overall understanding and some of the emergent themes.

A cross-case analysis was conducted as an additional layer of analysis in search of emergent themes and answers to research questions. Hatch (2002) discusses the analysis of qualitative work. He writes, “Interpretation is a defining element of all qualitative work” (p.179). The work presented here is no exception. Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that transcriptions may erase the context along with some crucial nonverbal data. Keeping that in mind, interpretation began with responsive and reflective notes taken during every interview. The transcribing of these interviews shored up even more interpretation in consideration of tone and emphasis. Somewhere near the end of the interviews, I realized that what was before me

was a mountain of data overload. Taking the advice of many qualitative researchers, (Hatch, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Van Manen, 1990; Litchman, 2006) I read each transcription several times to get a sense of the whole. I examined what messages each student represented in their stories. Marginal notes and coding followed and several categories and themes began to emerge. Van Manen (1990) explains, “Phenomenological themes may be understood as the *structures of experience*” (p.79). He adds that when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine the themes and the experiential structures that make up that experience. Hence, the narratives included in this study were reviewed across cases and analysis was specifically driven by the guiding research questions. What follows next is a discussion of answers to research questions accompanied by a cross-case matrix for each question. The chapter concludes with a discussion of three major themes.

Research Questions, Answers, and Themes

The omnibus question was this: What are the experiences of students (more specifically, struggling readers) who participated in reading intervention through learning centers in independent schools?

Questions related to student experience:

What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development?

Being associated with the learning center has a positive impact on some students, and a negative one on others. Students expressed opposing views about how the learning center impacted their reading development. Some were able to discuss pointedly its impact on reading development while others talked more generically about their experiences as participants in the

program instead of specific details related to reading. These six learners give several, sometimes contradictory ways that learning center support has impacted them. All of the students talk about how the support from learning center has affected them positively in some way, though many students also address the negative implications of being associated with the learning center.

Seemingly in touch with his individual needs, Jonathan said the design of his learning center instruction just was not enough to make a really big difference. He talked about how more consistency and better plans for learning by his teachers would impact him positively. Stemming from his dissatisfaction with the program, Jonathan and his parents sought out more help from private tutors and the Family Literacy Network in Houston, Texas. Regardless of their outreach for more assistance, Jonathan talked repeatedly about how the learning center provided him with the “support and backup” he needed to get things done.

On the other hand, Jenna said that even though she did not like going to learning center as a lower school student, she thinks that it really does help students in the long run. Specific to the program’s impact on reading development, Jenna is not sure if it helps her or not because she does not really see a difference. This is unlike her mother’s position about the program’s impact who said that Jenna has done “unbelievably well” considering the severity of her learning disability and how far she has come.

Like Jenna, Aaron did not like going to learning center as a lower school student. He believes the support of the learning center “probably” helped him, but he did not like it. Aaron’s behavior was negatively impacted as a result of going to the resource room during recess and free play. Aaron talked about how he would rather be with his friends playing ball than in the resource room doing extra work. Aaron “fought it” a lot. He did not want to go and said it was more fun being a “rebel.”

Andie was the most vocal about how her participation in the learning center impacted her. She believes that the support was “really helpful,” although she was embarrassed about going. Andie believes that the support in learning center can make a student the best reader in the class. Attending learning center helped Andie feel better about her reading development. As a middle school student now, school has gotten easier for Andie and she believes that she is able to accomplish things that she never thought she could. Andie is very grateful that she participated in the extra help.

Similarly, Samantha really liked being in the learning center. This could be because she was more comfortable reading with her small group in the learning center than being in front of all of her classmates. Samantha also felt like the positive reinforcement offered through the learning center made her want to improve and do better. Samantha was sometimes embarrassed to go to learning center because she was not reading the same books as her classmates, but thinks it was worse when the program changed and she spent more time in the classroom with the same books.

Finally, Edward thought that the learning center was helpful because it helped him learn in a better way. According to Edward, learning center “just got the job done.” Edward talked about how being in the learning center took a lot of stress off of him that he would otherwise be feeling if he were in the regular classroom with all of his classmates. Edward said that learning center was a fun experience that was relaxing and took his mind off of everything.

In summary, the learning center has impacted the participants in this study both negatively and positively. Jonathan was displeased with the instruction he received at school, so he enrolled in additional help through the Family Literacy Network. Jenna believes that the support of the learning center really does help in the long run. Aaron thinks that the learning center “probably” helped him, but he does not know for sure, and did not like going to learning center because he

was embarrassed, just as Andie and Samantha were. Andie believes the support from the learning center could potentially make someone the best reader in the class. Finally, Edward thought learning center was just what he needed to get the job done.

Next is a matrix illustrating the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the first research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

9: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #1

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development?	Student	Jonathan	“I’ve been on a different reading system that I did every day. It was called Family Literacy Network, and it was based in Texas, and that helped. It’s pretty much the same thing they have at school, but they don’t do enough of it at school. It’s not enough to actually make a really big difference, I think. If we did that more I think it would help because we’re going over other kinds of skills and stuff, but they need more of the support for the reading ‘cause when I was on that program it actually helped a lot, and picked up my reading.”
	Student	Jenna	“I didn’t like it when I was in lower school, like I said earlier, but I think it really does help you in the long run because I...I think I was behind the other students. Some of them were even lower than me, but I was behind also. And...resource really helped to catch up on that and learn what I needed to learn. And, in middle school, I like it because I can organize and I can learn new study techniques to get ready for high school...and um, the reading, I don’t know if it really helps me or not because I don’t really like see a difference, but I also practice on spelling which I need to practice on also.”
	Student	Aaron	“Uh, I didn’t want to do anything that was given to me, and stuff, but I know now that it

table continued

		<p>pretty much helped me. Even though it might have helped a little bit more in different ways...</p> <p>“Well, it probably helped me...probably. Like, I can’t really tell how I’d be if I didn’t go. Uh, so yeah, I guess how I liked how it somewhat helped me.”</p> <p>“Uh, well one thing I know I really didn’t like was we had to go during like free play or recess. And um, and I only really had like one or two friends in there with me and like all the rest of my friends were outside playing basketball and football and soccer and stuff like that. So I couldn’t really uh, I didn’t really get to do everything that I liked to do. And uh, that kind of like really was not fun.”</p>
Student	Andie	<p>“You could be the best reader in the class because you got that extra help. And you’re probably embarrassed now and just keep doing it...just keep doing it. You get better at your reading and writing. Maybe when you get older you may be a writer or be a teacher just by that help.”</p> <p>“But now in middle school it’s much better because I know how to do this stuff and I know how to read, how to read these big words that I never knew I could. And it’s a lot easier.”</p> <p>“Um, well I did not. I was always embarrassed when they came to pick me up. I was always embarrassed because I was the only girl in the whole grade who got to go to the room where they helped you, and it was very embarrassing, and I remember being called “stupid” by another student and I remember that to this day, and it was very hurtful and I just remember that.”</p>
Student	Samantha	<p>“When I’m in the whole class, I don’t like reading aloud because I’m always scared that I’m going to mess up like on an easy, something easy. In learning center, it wasn’t</p>

		<p>bad, well not bad at all. Some people in there had reading problems, too.</p> <p>I really liked it, but the whole time I was at the learning center, I was with the same person so I didn't really get to see anything different, and how any other person would do it. Uh, I really liked how she gave us stickers so it made you want to improve and do better."</p> <p>"I was sometimes embarrassed to go because sometimes we weren't reading the same book in class, and we were always one, maybe one book, behind in the learning center."</p>
Student	Edward	<p>"I'm Edward, uh...the learning center was helpful and it helped me learn in a better way even though some of the other kids were learning in a normal way...not really a normal way, just a different way. And, but it still helped me. It just got the job done."</p> <p>"We got to sit in these chairs, like cushion chairs, and we got to like, lay there and it was just kind of like taking all of the stress off from our class work and let us just relax and sort of do our homework."</p> <p>"Uh, I liked that a lot because it's like, just like, take your mind of everything. Take your mind like off all the school work, and we got to look outside the windows, and see all like the trees and stuff. And, yeah, it was just like relaxing."</p> <p>"Well, learning center isn't really a big deal. I mean, it's just, it's actually pretty fun, or it was pretty fun experience. It's not like a special way. It's just like a different way. There's nothing wrong with it. And, you get to miss, well you get to skip class. And the class you would miss is more stressful than the learning center because you're in a larger group and with the learning center, you're in a smaller group. So like, there's not as much stress."</p>

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student responses that help to explain how the learners in this study perceived the impact of the learning center. The next question examined dealt with the influence a teacher has on a student.

How does the child's discernment of how he or she is perceived academically by his/her reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read?

Teachers have a major influence on students that can be either negative or positive. Jonathan talked about the effect different teachers had on him. He said that when a teacher does not think a student is good enough, it destroys everything and that all hope is lost. In contrast, Jonathan said that the teachers in the learning center support him and that they are on his side. He feels like these teachers help students figure out what strategies best support an individual's learning.

Andie said that her teachers really wanted her to do well. She talked about how they helped her and were patient with her. Very compassionately, she thanked all of the reading teachers and specialists for helping children who have dyslexia. She said that she is so grateful that she got the extra help and that she is who she is today because of it.

Samantha did not talk about how she was perceived by her reading teacher, but she did explain that since she was with the same reading teacher all throughout lower school, she did not have the opportunity to see anything different, or how another teacher would lead the group.

Jenna, Aaron, and Edward did not talk about their teachers in their interviews.

In summary, Jonathan described a terrible experience of a time when he felt like a teacher did not believe in him, and he lost all hope. He also talked about how his resource teachers supported him. Andie's teachers had a positive influence on her because Andie believed that her teachers really wanted her to do well. Next, Samantha explained that she had the same resource

teacher all throughout lower school, so she does not know how another teacher would run the program. Finally, Jenna, Aaron, and Edward did not talk about their teachers in their interviews.

Next is a matrix illustrating the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the second research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

10: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #2

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
How does the child’s discernment of how they are perceived academically by their reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read?	Student	Jonathan	<p>“Less classroom teachers, but when you’re with that one teacher and she doesn’t think you’re good enough... It really destroys the whole...everything. You just lose all hope. If someone tells you that you can’t do it.”</p> <p>“And uh, it’s support and it gives you back up so that you have the time you need and you can get stuff done. It gives you a lot of support.”</p> <p>“I think that they support, support you, and that’s one of the main things. You need someone on your side so that you know there’s someone you can go to when you have problems.”</p>
	Student	Andie	<p>“Um, my teachers really, they really wanted me to do well in school.”</p> <p>“I just want to say to all the reading teachers and specialists, thank you so much for helping people with my disability...for helping with kids who may not be able to read and mix up letters and numbers. Um, just, I’m really grateful that I got that extra help and that I am who I am today. And, just, thank you, and um,</p>

		those kind of teachers really help students a lot. And, I'm just really grateful for them, and just, thank you for helping me."
Student	Samantha	"I really liked it, but the whole time I was at the learning center, I was with the same person so I didn't really get to see anything different, and how any other person would do it."

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student responses that help to explain how the learners in this study were affected by how they were perceived by their teachers. The next question examined dealt with the sensitivity associated with needing extra support.

How does a child's sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience?

Some students were embarrassed by their participation in the learning center and these students talked about how their association with the learning centers at their schools called attention to the fact that they needed extra help.

Unlike the other students, Jonathan did not mention any sensitivity linked to the fact that he needs extra support in reading. His tone was more that he knew he needed the support of the learning center in order to be successful in school. Jonathan talked about how he would not be able to get good grades at all if he did not have the extra support.

Being associated with the learning center had a different affect on the other students. Going to resource made Jenna feel badly about herself as a lower school student. Jenna wanted to be with her friends instead, and she did not want to miss fun classes like art and PE. As she has gotten older, Jenna has matured and become more positive about how the extra help has supported her in becoming a reader.

Andie was always embarrassed when she got picked up for extra help and she vividly retold the story of a classmate calling her “stupid” and other classmates laughing at her. She described the experience as “very hurtful.” Like Jenna, Andie talked about how going to the learning center bothered her more when she was younger, but now that she has matured she realizes that if she had not gotten the extra help, she would not be the person she is today. When asked about receiving assistance within the general classroom, Andie felt like that would be even more embarrassing. She suggested that teachers should make the whole process a little more private.

In agreement, Aaron did not like how it was so obvious that he went to extra help. He recalled that experience as “definitely never being any fun.” His suggestion mirrored Andie’s in that the teachers should set up a more private dismissal.

Samantha remembers other students looking at her “funny” because she went to the learning center. It was more embarrassing for Samantha in lower school than it is now because she was reading different books than her classmates.

Unlike the other learners, Edward did not exhibit any sensitivity about the fact that he needs the extra support of the learning center.

In summary, Jonathan and Edward did not talk about any sensitivity connective to needing resource support. On the other hand, Jenna, Andie, Aaron, and Samantha all share stories of times when they were either embarrassed or felt badly about themselves as a result of being associated with the learning center.

Next is a matrix illustrating the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the third research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Table 11: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #3

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
How does a child’s sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience?	Student	Jonathan	“It’s helpful. If I didn’t have the support, I wouldn’t be able to get good grades at all.”
	Student	Jenna	<p>“Um, probably just the fact that I didn’t really have the resource with my friends, and I was missing the funnest classes of the day, so...”</p> <p>“I didn’t like it when I was in lower school, like I said earlier, but I think it really does help you in the long run because I...I think I was behind the other students. Some of them were even lower than me, but I was behind also.”</p>
	Student	Andie	<p>“I was always embarrassed when they came to pick me up. I was always embarrassed because I was the only girl in the whole grade who got to go to the room where they helped you, and it was very embarrassing, and I remember being called “stupid” by another student and I remember that to this day, and it was very hurtful and I just remember that.”</p> <p>“Well, when I was little it bothered me more...but now that I think about it, if I’d never, I mean, I think it would be more embarrassing if they like came and sat down with you during the class, but the way they picked you up. Now that I think about it, if they didn’t pick me up then I wouldn’t be the person that I am today. I wouldn’t be a good reader, but I think maybe they could have liked called you in...maybe if they teacher was like, Andie, you can go now. So it’d be more private.”</p>

table continued

			<p>“Well, when I was little in lower school, I hated it. I hated being called out the room to go do that. I was very embarrassed. Some of the kids, they would like laugh at me. When I would get back in the room, they would be like, where’d you go, where’d you go. And I would be like embarrassed to tell them that I went to get extra help. But now, lower school, it was very difficult for me. You know I was embarrassed, all the kids knew where I was going and I had dyslexia and I was very embarrassed by it.”</p>
Student	Aaron		<p>“I didn’t like how it was so obvious that I went to it. It was like, Oh Aaron, and you and you and you, go right now. You know, you go. And that was never fun. That was definitely never fun.”</p>
Student	Samantha		<p>“Um, maybe don’t always put yourself down if you are behind everyone and sometimes people look at you funny if you go there, mostly when you’re younger. When you’re older it’s not that big of a deal, but when you’re like in 3rd or 4th grade it, they sort of. I was sometimes embarrassed to go because sometimes we weren’t reading the same book in class, and we were always one, maybe one book, behind in the learning center.”</p>

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student responses that help to explain the sensitivity of being associated with needing the extra support of the learning center.

Although redundant in some cases, the next question examined dealt with what students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers.

What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers?

A constant in all of the responses is that learning centers make a positive difference in some way. Jonathan described the learning center as “very effective” and giving him the support he

needed to get things done. He said that the learning center was helpful to him and that he would not do well in school without its support. His mother, MaryAnn, said that it was a good experience and she liked that Jonathan went to learning center. She thinks that it helped him and that Jonathan's teachers were extremely committed. She also liked the accommodations he received and the feedback she got from the IEPs. The problem that MaryAnn had was that Jonathan had to miss fun classes because of scheduling issues in exchange for the extra help.

Jonathan's father, TJ, shared mixed emotions. He admitted from the very beginning that it has been a real struggle, and he has wondered if he has gotten his dollar's worth. Later, he said that he was very satisfied that they stayed the course, but again admitted that it was a real struggle. Yet in another statement, he said that resource kids get the short end of the stick and that the model as it stands does not work. While he believes that they were "shorted" by the program, overall he said that he thinks the things Jonathan learned were important. Although TJ's thoughts were indeed mixed, he stayed the course and even said that "everybody's not perfect" and you do not throw out the whole system because parts of it do not work.

Also at Dixon, Jenna said that she likes the way resource is, but she just does not like reading short stories that are boring and answering questions about them. She explained that she did not like going to resource as a lower school student, but it really helped her catch up on what she needed to learn. Jenna's mother, Brenda, felt like the resource center at Jenna's school saved their lives in some ways. She said that she was "very good" with Jenna going to resource. She liked the one-on-one and small group support. She also praised the quality of the teachers who provided the support.

Andie thought the extra support she received through the learning center was extremely helpful. She talked about how her spelling, pronunciation of words, and reading improved as a

result of the support. Likewise, Andie and her mother agree that Andie's teachers were "incredibly helpful" and that they were "tremendous". Her mother added that she always liked resource and as time passes she realizes just how much she liked it.

Not as enthusiastically, but in agreement, Aaron's mother, said that Aaron seemed to be getting what he needed at school through the learning center and she was really happy with the lower school model. She felt like the support seemed pretty consistent and she was very pleased with the help all throughout lower school.

Samantha said she really liked the learning center the whole time she was in it. The only drawback, she thought, was that she had the same specialist all throughout lower school. But nonetheless, Samantha liked learning center because it really helped her. Samantha's mother recalled that the feedback she would get from "probably" all four of her children was that they enjoyed going to learning center and working in the small group.

Edward said that learning center was useful to him and it helped in learn in a better way. He said, "It just got the job done." He also added that going to learning center really was not a "big deal" and that it was actually pretty fun. He saw it as a different way of learning and that there was nothing wrong with it.

Like Becca, Violet (Edward's mother) also had four children who attended the learning center. Violet felt like her children benefited a great deal from the extra support, especially the children who began in the early grades. She said that she would like to see her children spend more time receiving learning center time at school. She thinks that reading in the resource room everyday would be a great start for a model of reading support.

In summary, the participants in this study agree that learning centers make a positive difference. Jonathan's family likes the support the program provides. Jenna and her mother

believe that the help from the learning center helped Jenna catch up on what she needed to learn. Similarly, Andie and her mother are grateful for the support and consider describe it as “extremely helpful.” Although he did not like it, Aaron thinks that the support probably helped him, and his mother was very happy with the model. Likewise, Samantha and her mother, as well as, Edward and his mother, all look back to the learning center as a positive experience.

Next is a matrix illustrating the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the fourth research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Table 12: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #4

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers?	Student	Jonathan	<p>“And uh, it’s support and it gives you back up so that you have the time you need and you can get stuff done. It gives you a lot of support.”</p> <p>“I think that they support, support you, and that’s one of the main things. You need someone on your side so that you know there’s someone you can go to when you have problems.”</p> <p>“They support you on the way to get there, and once you’re there it comes and lot easier, and you can just figure out...they can adjust how you take tests to have that to an advantage, to your reading style.”</p> <p>“It’s helpful. If I didn’t have the support, I wouldn’t be able to get good grades at all.”</p>
	Parent	MaryAnn	<p>“That was a good experience. I liked him going to resource. The only thing I didn’t like was when he would get pulled out of classes</p>

that I liked, like art...and fun classes you know. It's like you almost wish that he could do it either before school or after school so that he wouldn't get pulled out of these fun class, you know. Um, that's the only thing I didn't like was him getting pulled out...different semesters it would be different classes, but um...the teachers in resource were extremely committed. I liked what they were doing."

"Um, I think that it has helped him and you know sometimes we would have exercises we would have to do at home."

"Well, I, I like the special accommodations they get. Like he had preferential seating all these years, you know because he's easily distracted...extra time on tests, and then the teachers would do prompts you know if they were like going to ask him a question, you know they might like do something to get him ready, or like give him more time to respond...because that was like one of the things."

"Um, I do think that I would like to see some way that they are not pulled out of the other classes. I do think that that they do miss something from that, but he did need the extra help, so I don't know what else you could do, and I don't know...I don't know how they could set that up, but I would like that. You know he went to more resource days when he was younger than he does now. You know, I do like the small class. I do like the feedback that you get with the IEPs. I think that's very good. And then I also like that the last IEP of the year, they give you what to do over the summer...kind of what to work on, and so um, you're like really keeping going because you like can't stop for long periods of time. It's just like, especially with the reading, you know they have to keep that up."

Parent

TJ

"Uh, well, I think uh, and this is a real kind of

struggle. I think that a parent has is, is from a dollar and cents standpoint...wondering what are we getting for what we are paying, okay. And you sit there and you're saying, we're being taking out of these other classes, but then being put there in these classes, but then we wonder are we really getting a fair shake for our dollar in the place where we are at...and you see other parents with us going through the same struggles, and some of them choose to take other steps."

"I think in retrospect, we were very satisfied with the fact that we stayed the course...on it, but I still think that it was a struggle, okay."

"We were shorted, I believe...uh, uh, in the program, but overall, I think the types of things they helped him learn, I think were important."

"You know, I think the thing of having three kids and one teacher twice a week is...bullshit, okay...and I think that, if, if you want to do something...and I think that those kids are getting the short end of the stick, and I think now if you can prove that it doesn't prove up than go do something else. I don't think that the way that's it's working, that it's worked."

"Everybody's not perfect, you know. The whole system, you know, you don't throw it out because parts of it don't work."

Student

Jenna

"I kind of like the way resource is, like you have three or four, maybe even two people in a group, and you go meet twice a week and you just like learn things, and they teach you study techniques and they help you organize, and they...I don't really like the reading things, when they like grade you on your reading and comprehension, but I do like the way resource is."

"I didn't like it when I was in lower school, like I said earlier, but I think it really does help you in the long run because I...I think I was

behind the other students. Some of them were even lower than me, but I was behind also. And...resource really helped to catch up on that and learn what I needed to learn. And, in middle school, I like it because I can organize and I can learn new study techniques to get ready for high school...and um, the reading, I don't know if it really helps me or not because I don't really like see a difference, but I also practice on spelling which I need to practice on also."

Parent	Brenda	<p>"Um, and so going to Dixon sort of saved our lives a little bit. It sort of stopped us from running around, and doing all that extra stuff, and so it helped us out a lot, so...um, I, I was very good with her going to resource."</p> <p>"Um, I think the fact that they're working either one-on-one, or either three on one with a teacher is wonderful, and I think that they, I think that their faculty there...all of their faculty is so trained on helping kids with learning disabilities, not just the learning specialists, everybody. And so, in every class that they go into, all the teachers are trained."</p>
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Student	Andie	<p>"Well, um...the extra help I got in reading, it was really helpful."</p> <p>"And it was helpful because as I like graduated on to like, I graduated on to like bigger words and bigger words and it helped me with my spelling and pronouncing words better and it helped me read them better."</p>
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Parent	Caroline	<p>"They were incredibly helpful in offering extra help."</p> <p>"I was incredibly grateful. They were tremendous in trying to help her."</p> <p>"I liked it. I can't say...there was nothing I did not like about it. And as, as time passes, you realize how much you liked it because at the time...as, as a mother of a young child, you're</p>
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table continued

			just kind of freaked out a little bit because you just want everything to be okay for your baby that you love. I know we're all in agreement on that."
Student	Aaron		"I didn't like it, but it probably helped me. I didn't like it."
Parent	Jamie		"I mean he seemed to be getting what he needed...the support he needed in lower school... Um, I really was, like I said, happy with the lower school model... Um, I guess the advice is to take full advantage and encourage them to do it because in lower school, I think it's really useful." "Um, it seemed pretty consistent. Actually, I liked it. I mean I was very pleased with the school one through five with the support they gave out of the class."
Student	Samantha		"I really liked it, but the whole time I was at the learning center, I was with the same person so I didn't really get to see anything different, and how any other person would do it. Uh, I really liked how she gave us stickers so it made you want to improve and do better." "I liked it because it really helped me..."
Parent	Becca		"Well the feedback I would get from probably <i><emphasis></i> all four of them is that they enjoyed going. Um, they enjoyed working in a small group and that would actually help them in the classroom. They always enjoyed getting to be able to pick out of a treat box or get stickers. That was always a great incentive. It was always relayed back to me as a positive reinforcement."
Student	Edward		"...the learning center was helpful and it helped me learn in a better way even though some of the other kids were learning in a normal way...not really a normal way, just a different way. And, but it still helped me. It just got the job done."

			“Well, learning center isn’t really a big deal. I mean, it’s just, it’s actually pretty fun, or it was pretty fun experience. It’s not like a special way. It’s just like a different way. There’s nothing wrong with it.”
Parent	Violet		“I have four children who were participants in the learning center. Um, some of them started in late middle school...4 th or 5 th grade...and two of them started early on...Pre-K...not Pre-K, K-1 and those that started in 1 st and 2 nd grade benefitted a great deal from the learning center.”
			“Well, what I think is effective...what I would like to see is that the child spends more time in the learning center. Two days a week is fine, but three days, even four days, I think you would see a huge jump even a lot quicker than you would now.”
			“Um, I think that reading in the resource center everyday would be a great start for a model of reading support.”

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student and parent responses that describe what they think of learning centers. The next three questions are related to teaching and models of teachings. We begin with how children perceive teacher effectiveness.

How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction?

The responses gathered for this question were limited to two students and one parent. I think this is because I did not pointedly ask students, “What makes a teacher effective?” I tried to get at how they viewed successful reading instruction, but they all had assorted responses that seemed to fit elsewhere in the study. Mindful of what was uncovered, Jonathan felt like some of his teachers were ineffective because they did not have a plan for the learning, and if they did have one, it was not a very good one. He even said that there are some teachers who will just

“interrupt that good line of teachers that can do something and get how you work.” He said that teachers need to figure out how the “reading thing” works.

Jonathan’s position was very similar to his father’s. TJ talked about the doctor associated with the Family Literacy Network and explained how he was able to tell why things in language were the way they were. His explanations were refreshing to Jonathan because they de-mystified our system of language to some extent, and provided concrete answers to the questions he had been asking classroom teachers for quite some time. TJ also reiterated that successful reading instruction calls for a plan, and he felt like there just was not a plan in the school where Jonathan was. He recalled times when Jonathan would come home and tell him that not much was going on in resource or class, and soon after TJ observed that there were actually teachers who were replaced during the school year. He felt like ineffective teachers were put in positions where they did not belong. In summary, though, TJ gave credit to the teachers who were excellent at Jonathan’s school.

Lastly, Andie provided the brief comment that the extra support she got in reading was really helpful. Although she did not add many details about why or how it was helpful, it is fair to conclude that her perspective of the instruction is that it was effective.

In summary, Jonathan and Andie talked about the effectiveness of their reading teachers. Jonathan did not feel that the instruction he received at school was sufficient, so he participated in an alternative program. Andie talked about how she believes that she benefitted from the extra support in reading. The other learners did not talk about reading instruction in particular, or reading teacher effectiveness. What should also be considered here is that several students had outside help, such as private tutors and literacy programs, in addition to the resource support they received at school.

Next is a matrix illustrating the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the fifth research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Table 13: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #5

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction?	Student	Jonathan	<p>“Okay, sometimes they ought to have a plan for the day...or it’s just like teaching you how to like, like keeping organized and stuff, but they don’t really like have a plan for learning. Well, they do, but it’s not like very good. It doesn’t...sometimes you’ll just sit there and not really do much.”</p> <p>“That’s why I don’t understand language arts. It’s just abstract...”</p> <p>“It was that kind of year...because you can’t, you can’t...you have to totally restart every year. It’s not connected. It’s just, there isn’t a plan, so it just sort of breaks the way you learn and all that...”</p> <p>“The thing is that there are some teachers that will interrupt that good line of teachers that can do something and get how you work...”</p> <p>“Yeah, and they do. They do. The thing is that they provide a lot of support. They talk with all the other teachers and figure out what you need. That...they do a great job with that, but the thing is the reading...the thing that each kids has weak with them. They need to figure out how that works.”</p> <p>“..and you got to act. You can’t wait. If you can figure it out, figure it out. If someone would have figured out that I can listen real well, but I can’t read, but I’m really good at science and at history so that I understand how things work somehow. So I can understand</p>

table continued

		how things work..."
Student	Andie	"Well, um...the extra help I got in reading, it was really helpful."

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student responses that illustrate how children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction. What follows next are comments made by the students that should inform the planning of teachers.

How does a child's perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists?

There were a number of comments made by students that should inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists. What comes into focus is that children need different things during different phases of their education. Because this study focused mainly on the student perspective, the discussion that follows is from that standpoint.

To begin, because reading and languages are so abstract to Jonathan, it is difficult for him to learn. If instruction were more concrete, he would be more successful.

Next, Jenna said that she likes mathematics, but she does not like reading in front of people. She also added that she does well with one-on-one and she learns by typing. Jenna attended learning center twice a week and felt like that was just enough time, not too much, not too little. She suggested, though, that the resource teacher should just give the students a schedule to save them the embarrassment of being pulled out of class. Like Andie, Jenna does not think it would be a good idea for a resource teacher to provide extra help inside the general classroom. In fact, she said that that would "just be embarrassing."

Jenna also suggested that students should be able to pick out their own stories. She thinks that the short stories that she was required to read were boring and they caused her to read

more slowly because she could not focus. She said that she is able to read better when she picks out her own books because they are interesting and she can read them faster and comprehend more.

Andie remembered the small group reading that she participated in during learning center time. She said that each person would read a page and it was sometimes difficult and embarrassing for her because she could not read all the words. Following that, she added that reading in the small group helped her because she felt better about her reading as a result of participating in the activities during learning center.

Aaron very honestly admitted that he hated reading ever since he was in first grade. Prior to that, he used to like it and he read a lot for fun even though he was not a very good reader. He reminisced about reading a Harry Potter book with his mother, and how once he started getting reading assignments, he would have to stop whatever book he was reading in order to meet the deadlines. He said, "I'm still not a very fast reader, so I hate that because I now, I have a deadline and don't get to pick the books that I'm reading and ever since then I really hated reading."

Aaron also said that he *really* did not like going to extra help during free play or recess. As he thought about all of his friends playing outside, he became frustrated and actually fought going to resource because he wanted to be with his friends instead. Moreover, he felt like he missed out on a lot because he was not in class. Further, Aaron did not like all the extra work he had to do as a resource student.

Like Jenna, Aaron values the importance of allowing children to pick out their own books. When asked about how to set up a successful model of reading he said, "I would say to get them [struggling readers] to catch on to reading, let them read their own books." He

suggested giving students lots of books from which to choose. He also mentioned that the Accelerated Reader program in which students are awarded points for the amount of books they read, was discouraging to him and to other students because it made them feel excluded and “dumb.”

Next, Samantha shared her fear of reading in front of the whole class. She said that she is always scared that she is going to mess up on something easy. Samantha felt more comfortable reading with the group in learning center because those students had reading difficulties, too. She also liked reading at her own pace instead of trying to keep up with the whole class. She said that she never felt left behind in learning center.

Parallel to many of the comments made by other student participants, Samantha talked about the embarrassment of being a part of the learning center. She warned other students that people may look at them funny, but when they get older, it is not that big of a deal. On the contrary, Samantha’s mother thought that her children enjoyed being pulled out of class.

Edward talked a great deal about the physical environment and atmosphere of the learning center. He suggested that the learning center should expand on doing homework on a cushion seat. He added that it should be “more laid back”. He recommended that students should be allowed to bring a snack or a drink, and the positive reinforcement of sticker charts and the treasure chest should remain intact.

In regard to being pulled out of class, Edward’s statement was that resource students get to “miss class” and the class that they are missing is more stressful than the learning center because students are in a larger group. Despite this view, Edward said that the method of reading in a small group during learning center time did not help him very much. Like the

others, he said that students should be given more choices about their learning. Lastly, Edward explained that it is not helpful when his teacher reads out test questions to him.

Edward’s mother, Violet, talked about how she did not like it when her children were pulled out of class for resource when they were interested in the activities that were going on in the classroom. Interestingly, in a separate interview, Edward’s learning specialist also talked about the challenge of teachers who do not follow the schedule and how it was difficult for students to leave the fun activity happening in the classroom to go to resource.

To summarize, the comments made by the learners in this study demonstrate that children are unique individuals. They have different likes and dislikes. What works for one, may not work for another. What is important to one student may be trivial to another. The point is this: one size does not fit all in the case of teaching and learning.

Next is a matrix illustrates the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the sixth research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Table 14: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #6

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
How does a child’s perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists?	Student	Jonathan	“That’s why I don’t understand language arts. It’s just abstract...”
	Student	Jenna	“Um, I...I as a student...I like math, but I don’t like reading much, like in front of people, but I don’t mind reading alone. I just don’t like it in front of people...and I do well with learning by mainly typing it and looking at it and one-on-one contact with the teachers.”

“Um, I went twice a week and I thought that was enough time. I don’t need any more or any less, and the teacher gives us a schedule at the beginning of the year and we just go whenever we have it scheduled.”

“I think that the teacher should give you a schedule because some students may be embarrassed. I’m not, really.”

“I honestly wouldn’t like that [a teacher coming in the classroom to help] because I don’t know it would just be...embarrassing.”

“I would say that the kids should pick out their own books because those short stories that the teacher give you to read are boring and kids, I think, I still do this...when you read something boring you slow down and you just don’t focus on it because you’re bored of it, and if you pick out things that you want to read than you’ll go faster and comprehend it more.”

Student	Andie	“Um, well, when we had free reading time, you would get in a group and read a page, each person would read a page. Sometimes that was difficult for me and I was embarrassed sometimes because I couldn’t read the words sometimes. It helped because then I, like, as I was doing the extra help I got better, so then I like felt better in my reading.”
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Student	Aaron	“And uh, I’ve always hated reading since I was like in first grade. Uh, I used to like it, but then I really started hating it.”
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“Well, when I was like a lot younger, I used to read a lot for fun. I wasn’t very good. I wasn’t very fast, but me and my mom we used to always sit on the couch and she would read her book and I would read Harry Potter, and then I started getting reading assignments. So I would like have to stop whatever books I was reading, and I wasn’t a very...I’m still not a very fast reader, so I hate that because I now I have a deadline and don’t get to pick the books

that I'm reading and ever since then I really hated reading."

"Uh, well one thing I know I really didn't like was we had to go during like free play or recess. And um, and I only really had like one or two friends in there with me and like all the rest of my friends were outside playing basketball and football and soccer and stuff like that. So I couldn't really uh, I didn't really get to do everything that I like to do. And uh, that kind of like really was not fun. I mean, I don't know if there would be another time that we could have gone, but I know that definitely was not fun at all because I couldn't really do anything with my friends and that really sucked."

"But, I probably fought it because I couldn't hang out with my friends and stuff. When they were like in recess and I was inside, and all that put together, you know having to do extra work and not getting what I want to do..."

"...and so, stuff like that since we weren't in class, we missed out on stuff."

"I would say to get them to catch on to reading, let them read their own books. Maybe if we could have for reading, you get to pick, like not just a certain couple of books they lay out, but lots of books that they really want to read. But obviously like, if it's too low of a level to read, like you can't pick *The Cat and in the Hat* when you're like in fifth grade, but they could pick the book that they wanted to read."

"And also "AR"...accelerated reader, accelerating reading, or something like that. That wasn't fun because they had like two or three kids in the class who were like really, really smart and they were like always getting all kinds of medal and stuff, so it kind of like made you feel left out and stuff, especially for people who couldn't read that well.... They were like, here good job, and they would put

up stars and stuff, and I guess that made them feel better, but it made the rest of us feel like we were the dumb kids. So, it wasn't fun. We felt kind of excluded because they're were like five or so kids who could really read, so they would get stuff like about them put up around the library, and that was like not fun."

Student Samantha "When I'm in the whole class, I don't like reading aloud because I'm always scared that I'm going to mess up like on an easy, something easy. In learning center, it wasn't bad, well not bad at all. Some people in there had reading problems, too."

"Um, maybe don't always put yourself down if you are behind everyone and sometimes people look at you funny if you go there, mostly when you're younger. When you're older it's not that big of a deal, but when you're like in 3rd or 4th grade it, they sort of. I was sometimes embarrassed to go because sometimes we weren't reading the same book in class, and we were always one, maybe one book, behind in the learning center."

"Um...in 4th grade, we didn't have learning center and we read as a class and we just picked up with learning center. So, I didn't really like reading with the class because we hadn't done that before because like in 3rd and 2nd grade, we just went at our own pace, and in like 4th grade and 5th grade we stayed with the classes and we didn't go as much so it was just like a checkup. In 1st and 2nd grade we went like twice or three times a week because we read in a small group and you never felt like you were left behind because they would always stop and wait for you."

Edward Student "I think that, we...the learning center should sort of like expand on doing homework on a cushion seat, and like we should like just get to do all of our work on a cushion seat. And, like have the learning center more laid back."

Maybe you could like bring a snack in if you wanted, maybe a drink. And, but I think you should keep the same...I think you should keep the stickers and keep the stickers the same, so like once you got your chart full you get to get something out of the treasure box. I think that's helpful because it like made you want to go to the learning center more to get more stickers so that you could get an item."

"And, you get to miss, well you get to skip class. And the class you would miss is more stressful than the learning center because you're in a larger group and with the learning center, you're in a smaller group. So like, there's not as much stress."

"And, it's harder because my teacher reads out all of the questions, which doesn't help me very much."

"In lower school, when it was time to read and I would be separated from the class, I didn't like the method that the learning center would use, which was as I said, getting in a small group and reading it in a circle because it just, it just didn't help me very much. I think that she should just tell us that we can go sit down anywhere in the classroom, even on the floor and read, and when you...or when the time is up for learning center you can go back to your classroom. That's the method that helped the most for me."

"The method that I think we should use is when the students come into learning center, the teacher should ask the student more, just say, what are you going to do in class today? And say, I say, read my book. The teacher could say, well you...you should be doing stuff. And then, the student shouldn't have, you know, they should get to sit anywhere they want. And then, the teacher asks another student, what are you going to do today? And say, they say, I'm going to work on my math."

And the teacher should say, okay, you should get that done. So you won't have to do it for homework or something like that. And then, I think it's important to like let the students sit wherever that want. Like, if they were reading, they could like lay down on the floor, and read on the floor because it helps the students more because it's more..it's like more free, or "free-er".

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student responses that should inform the planning of reading teachers. What follows next are specific comments made by the students in regard to the activities in which they participate in during learning center time.

What do students think about the activities they participate during learning center time?

Students have suggestions for how to improve the activities they participate in during resource. Jonathan talked about how he would read passages once or twice a week, but because the activity was not steady, it did not work as well as it could have. Jonathan's father, TJ, said that as Jonathan got older, he became more attuned to the activities that were going on in the learning center. TJ felt like there were short comings in the program. He recalled Jonathan telling him that at times that there was not really anything happening in the class.

Jenna worked in the same resource center as Jonathan. She said that she remembers doing work in a workbook, reading stories, and going over comprehension questions. She also said that she read aloud to her resource teacher. She said that she did not like any of those activities because the stories were boring. Jenna believes if the stories were more interesting she could read them better and more quickly.

Andie attended a different school than Jenna and Jonathan. She recalled doing word work with big black boards. She said she would write words by spelling them out, reading them

out loud, and then sounding them out. She felt like this was helpful because she was able to “graduate” on to bigger words. She said it also improved her spelling and reading.

Aaron and Andie received learning center support at the same school. Aaron remembers doing vocabulary and writing exercises. He said that it “probably helped him,” but he did not like it. He added that he “hated” the extra homework, especially over holidays.

Providing some positive feedback about his experience, Aaron talked about one activity in particular. Aaron participated in writing a script for a play and performing it for the rest of his class. He said that that experience was fun and it helped him at the same time. This play apparently had quite an impact on Aaron because his mother also talked about how it made him feel special being in resource because he got to do something that other students did not.

At the third site, Samantha remembered working on an immigrant project and presenting it to older students. She felt like that experience showed her improvement as a reader even though the book was really difficult for her. She also said that her learning specialist had all of the students over for spaghetti.

Edward received learning center support at the same school as Samantha. He explained that reading in a circle was awkward because everyone just wanted to get it over with and he would get aggravated waiting for the slow readers.

In summary, students shared their perspectives on the activities that they participated in as resource students. Jonathan hoped for more consistency, and Jenna wanted more interesting material. Andie thought the word work she did was helpful, while Aaron did not like any of the activities he took part in except for the play. Samantha enjoyed presenting for older students, and Edward complained about reading waiting for the slow readers in the group. All of these experiences reinforce the notion that effective reading instruction should be individualistic.

Next is a matrix illustrating the responses gathered across-cases in consideration of the last research question. Each transcript was read several times, marginal notes were made, codes were assigned, and keyword searches were utilized to support the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Table 15: Cross-Case Analysis Based on Guiding Research Question #7

Research Question	Source	Participant	Example
What do students think about the activities they participate during learning center time?	Student	Jonathan	“Uh, yeah...sometimes they do, and we’ll do different things. We’ll read a passage like every week, like once, and I go like twice a week, and we’ll go over different things. Like we’ll go over words and stuff, but it’s not really steady, if it were steady it would work.”
	Student	Jenna	<p>“We did a workbook...I forgot what the name of it is. We would like have to go...and after you read the story, you would like answer the questions about it and stuff. And we also read out loud with the resource teacher... Um...I honestly didn’t like it when I was younger, and to this day I still have to do that. And I still don’t really like it because mainly because the stories are boring.”</p> <p>“Um, I think the stories are kind of boring, and I think that maybe the stories should get more interesting so that maybe you could...when I read boring things, I don’t really read it well because I have to read it more slowly. When I read interesting stuff, I read it better because I’m more interested in it.”</p>
	Student	Andie	“And, sometimes the activities we did...I remember we had big black boards and they would write little words, and we would have to spell them out, read them out loud, and then sound them out. And it was helpful because as I like graduated on to like, I graduated on to like bigger words and bigger words and it helped me with my spelling and pronouncing words better and it helped me read them better.”

Student	Aaron	<p>“I didn’t like it [vocabulary and writing activities], but it probably helped me. I didn’t like it.”</p> <p>“Um, I guess like what we did in there was fine. I think sometimes we had like extra homework which I really hated. I remember one year we had Christmas homework. We had to do to like a whole big book for Christmas, so I had to sit down on Christmas Day and do homework while everyone else was playing with their toys. That wasn’t fun.”</p> <p>“But they did do some cool stuff. Like when I was in third or fourth grade, we did a play. What our extra help teacher did, was like, she put together, she had us put together a script like so that we would be writing, and she made us do it in complete sentences and proper grammar, and stuff. So um, like that was fun. I guess now I realize that she was helping us and at the same time making it fun. So it was a lot of fun. We got to put together a whole play and we got to like show the whole grade. It was fun.”</p>
Student	Samantha	<p>“Uh, we made an immigrant project when we were in 3rd or 4th grade and we presented it to the 5th graders so that was improvement to be able to present in front of older people. And, we went to her house and we had spaghetti. I don’t really know, but I think it had something to do with the book. I don’t remember, but it was a really hard book. We read it in 4th or 5th grade. It was about the Holocaust and I thought that book was really, really hard for me. And, I’ve always, even now when I read for the class, I skip over a lot. I mess up on like really easy words.”</p>
Student	Edward	<p>“Well, it [reading in a circle] was kind of...it is a little awkward sort of, because we would always like, if somebody would mess up, then it would be really awkward because the other people would just like want to get it over with,</p>

so...Say like if somebody before you is like a really slow reader, and you're like a really fast reader, it would kind of like aggravate you to like have to wait for the other person."

The cross-case matrix above provides examples of student responses in regard to what students think about the activities that they participated in as resource students.

What follows next is a discussion of three major themes that emerged from the data. The first two themes are related to findings significant to the study which include: (1) students and parents attach a stigma to resource support, and (2) students feel like they miss out and have given something up because of their participation in the learning center. The last theme is methodological and involves the structure of the interviews. Specifically, many participants arranged the interview around their own preferences despite my suggestions for order and privacy.

Discussion of Major Themes

Students and parents attach a stigma to resource support

Throughout this study, parents and students talked about the negative feelings associated with needing resource support. Many students also talked about how they did not like getting pulled out of class for extra help. One word that appeared repeatedly was "embarrass." Whether students were saying that they were embarrassed when they were younger, or they were warning other learning center students not to be embarrassed, *embarrassment* emerged as a major theme. Embarrassment over reading disabilities and reading rate was also tied to the students' perceptions of proficient readers. Further, the labels of dyslexia and ADHD encapsulated the stigma and rationalized the need for learning center support in the minds of students and parents.

The next chart displays the results of key word searches and a re-examination of the data in search of this particular theme.

Table 16: Theme I

Theme I: Students and parents attach a stigma to learning center support.		
Source	Participant	Example
Student	Jonathan	<p>“I wouldn’t be able to finish anything, so...that’s very important because I’m a very slow reader.”</p> <p>“And with the, I’m trying to in resource, get my reading level up.”</p>
Parent	TJ	<p>“Fluency...was the constant thing that we went up against. It just wasn’t moving ahead.”</p> <p>“With this program, I’d say we went from about 65 to 105...words per minute.”</p> <p>“And we would change it, and it was a schedule, and at the point where we had gotten to about a 100-105 words per minute”</p> <p>“At that particular point, Jonathan created a cough that for some reason popped in, and for some reason he just wasn’t going to go beyond this 100-105 words per minute...”</p>
Student	Jenna	<p>“I think that the teacher should give you a schedule because some students may be embarrassed. I’m not, really.”</p> <p>“I honestly wouldn’t like that because I don’t know it would just be...embarrassing.”</p> <p>“Um, I would tell them not to be embarrassed or anything because it’s not that big a deal...because you may need help on particular things, but the other students may also need help on other particular things. So you don’t have to be embarrassed...”</p>
Parent	Brenda	<p>“I think that she didn’t like the stigma a lot of times that went on with it, but as she’s gotten older she’s realized that she needs the help and in order to move on, she needs it.”</p>

table continued

		<p>“So um, she has felt bad about it at time, but she uh, was sad, and a lot of crying about the pairing because they pair up in twos and threes, and a lot of crying about who, who she’d be paired up with (laughing), but definitely more positive than negative.”</p>
Student	Andie	<p>“Sometimes that was difficult for me and I was embarrassed sometimes because I couldn’t read the words sometimes.”</p> <p>“I was always embarrassed when they came to pick me up. I was always embarrassed because I was the only girl in the whole grade who got to go to the room where they helped you, and it was very embarrassing, and I remember being called “stupid” by another student and I remember that to this day, and it was very hurtful and I just remember that.”</p> <p>“Well, when I was little it bothered me more...but now that I think about it, if I’d never, I mean, I think it would be more embarrassing if they like came and sat down with you during the class, but the way they picked you up.”</p> <p>“And you’re probably embarrassed now and just keep doing it...just keep doing it.”</p> <p>“Well, when I was little in lower school, I hated it. I hated being called out the room to go do that. I was very embarrassed. Some of the kids, they would like laugh at me.”</p> <p>“And I would be like embarrassed to tell them that I went to get extra help. But now, lower school, it was very difficult for me. You know I was embarrassed, all the kids knew where I was going and I had dyslexia and I was very embarrassed by it.”</p>
Parent	Caroline	<p>“So, if, if, I was in that field I would just make it a different class, and not make it so, so...appear negative to the child because Andie was a little embarrassed to “walk the walk.” It was like, “walking the walk” to go.”</p> <p>“I would reiterate that to just make those classes...you know, these extra help classes not so odd, for the lack of a better word. You know, it’s not odd, it’s just something extra, or something different. So that, that they don’t feel like they’re strange. You know, because of course a</p>

table continued

		dyslexic child has those feelings.”
Student	Aaron	“I didn’t like how it was so obvious that I went to it. It was like, Oh Aaron, and you and you and you, go right now. You know, you go. And that was never fun. That was definitely never fun.” “Well, when I was like a lot younger, I used to read a lot for fun. I wasn’t very good. I wasn’t very fast...” “I’m still not a very fast reader, so I hate that because I now... I have a deadline and don’t get to pick the books that I’m reading and ever since then I really hated reading.”
Parent	Jamie	“He just kind of went to extra help, I guess. It was just something that he did. He didn’t seem embarrassed by it.”
Student	Samantha	“Um, maybe don’t always put yourself down if you are behind everyone and sometimes people look at you funny if you go there, mostly when you’re younger. When you’re older it’s not that big of a deal, but when you’re like in 3 rd or 4 th grade it, they sort of. I was sometimes embarrassed to go because sometimes we weren’t reading the same book in class, and we were always one, maybe one book, behind in the learning center.” “Um...um, I always thought, I think I still am not the best reader. It takes me a long time to read...” “And, I’ve always, even now when I read for the class, I skip over a lot. I mess up on like really easy words.” “When I’m in the whole class, I don’t like reading aloud because I’m always scared that I’m going to mess up like on an easy, something easy.” “In 1 st and 2 nd grade we went like twice or three times a week because we read in a small group and you never felt like you were left behind because they would always stop and wait for you.”

To summarize, the matrix above illustrates that the students and parents attach a stigma to learning center support. Some students talk about the discomfort of being pulled out of class,

while other students talk about the embarrassment of using different materials than their classmates. Students and parents also associated reading rate as an important characteristic of good readers. Students shared their embarrassment when they stumbled over words or could not read as quickly as their classmates. Finally, parents and students made suggestions on how to make the transition from the classroom to the resource room easier.

Related, another important theme that emerged from the data is that students feel like they missed out because they need resource support. This was reiterated by parents. The main concern is that students miss other classes and fun activities to go to the resource room. The next matrix displays the responses associated with this theme.

17: Theme II

Theme II: Students feel like they miss out and have given something up because of their participation in the learning center.

Source	Participant	Example
Student	Jonathan	<p>“Uh, what they do is they’ll uh, pick out different periods during the day, like PE and writing lab, which is a class we take, like just writing...they’ll, we’ll go to resource instead of going to those classes. And there’s like a couple, a small room, and that’s where it’s held.</p> <p>“Uh, yes, but sometimes I want to go to PE (laughing).</p>
Parent	TJ	<p>“And you sit there and you’re saying, we’re being taking out of these other classes, but then being put there in these classes, but then we wonder are we really getting a fair shake for our dollar in the place where we are at...and you see other parents with us going through the same struggles, and some of them choose to take other steps. I remember there were some parents who said, no, I’m not taking my students, you know my son or daughter out of it, you know, I feel as though they are getting the short end. They are missing the classes that he would be in, and I’m not going to do it.”</p>

Parent	MaryAnn	<p>“Um, I do think that I would like to see some way that they are not pulled out of the other classes. I do think that that they do miss something from that, but he did need the extra help, so I don’t know what else you could do, and I don’t know...I don’t know how they could set that up, but I would like that.</p> <p>“The only thing I didn’t like was when he would get pulled out of classes that I liked, like art...and fun classes you know. It’s like you almost wish that he could do it either before school or after school so that he wouldn’t get pulled out of these fun class, you know. Um, that’s the only thing I didn’t like was him getting pulled out...different semesters it would be different classes.”</p>
Student	Jenna	<p>“Seriously...and I realize that you miss art and PE, but you’ll have to kind of just get used to it because that’s when it happens.”</p> <p>“No, they do that on purpose so that you don’t miss the important subjects like math and language arts and history and science and subjects like that.”</p> <p>“Um, you’re either going to miss like, switch up between art and music and 8th grade photography, but you’re either going to miss those...I do it during writing lab which I like because I don’t really like writing lab. So you miss it one time a week and I miss PE one time a week.”</p> <p>“Um, probably just the fact that I didn’t really have the resource with my friends, and I was missing the funnest classes of the day, so...”</p>
Student	Aaron	<p>“But, I probably fought it because I couldn’t hang out with my friends and stuff. When they were like in recess and I was inside, and all that put together, you know having to do extra work and not getting what I want to do...”</p> <p>“And so, stuff like that since we weren’t in class, we missed out on stuff.”</p> <p>“Uh, well one thing I know I really didn’t like was we had to go during like free play or recess. And um, and I only really had like one or two friends in there with me and like all the rest of my friends were outside playing basketball and football and soccer and stuff like that. So I couldn’t really uh, I didn’t really get to do everything that I liked to do. And uh, that kind of like really was not fun. I mean, I don’t know if there would be</p>

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		another time that we could have gone, but I know that definitely was not fun at all because I couldn't really do anything with my friends and that really sucked."
Student	Edward	"In lower school, when it was time to read and I would be separated from the class, I didn't like the method that the learning center would use, which was as I said, getting in a small group and reading it in a circle because it just, it just didn't help me very much."
Parent	Violet	"Some of the things that I didn't like about it was that they would get pulled out of class, possibly when they were interested in doing the activity that was going on in the classroom. For example, if they enjoyed art, they might get pulled out in art due to the scheduling issues."

The matrix above illustrates that parents fear that their children may have missed out on something because they were in the resource room. Likewise, student responses point to the belief that they have missed out and given something up because they needed extra support.

Theme III

Finally, the last theme stems from methodological patterns during the interviews. This theme is important to address because of the qualitative nature of the study, as well as the impact the structure of the interviews could have had on the responses of the participants. My observation is that students and parents arranged the setting of the interviews around their own preferences despite my suggestions. To be specific, I wanted to interview all children and parents separately. Except for in Jenna and Aaron's interviews, parents were present during all student interviews. In some cases, students were also present during parent interviews. There was even a situation in which two younger siblings were in the room. For the most part, parents

and students at least did not interrupt each other when they were sharing experiences, but I am sure that responses were influenced by what was said, and what was heard.

To be specific, Andie's mother was present when Andie shared. Andie's discussion centered mainly on the embarrassment she endured when she was pulled out of class, and the hurt she felt as a result of being dyslexic. Consequently, Andie's mother's first recommendation was to make the transition from the classroom to the resource room easier. She repeated this twice in her interview. This raises the question of whether Andie's mother would have talked about the issue at all if she had not been present for her daughter's story.

Another example of a problematic setting was that of Jonathan's interview. During his parents' interview, Jonathan interrupted with his own comments and clarifications. When he talked about how he lost all hope because he thought his teacher did not believe he was good enough, his father responded with tears and asked Jonathan for specific details about that experience. Jonathan's dad did not contribute much following that scenario. This quietness raises some uncertainty about the content of what Jonathan's father might have said about Jonathan's experience had his father not been so emotionally impacted by his son's words.

Finally, Edward's mother was present during Edward's interview. Observational and reflective notes in my journal were made that Edward's mother prompted him to talk about his lower school experiences instead of his middle school experience. In the transcripts, it is apparent that Edward was confused about the purpose of the interview, as he responded with lower school experiences in some cases, and middle school experiences in others. Edward's mother indicated to me that Edward has expressive and receptive language delays. An exception to the others, having Edward's mother present during this interview was actually helpful.

Implications of the interview structure are addressed again in the last chapter connective to research literature.

Summary of Answers to Research Questions & Themes

The analysis of the data across cases demonstrates the following: (1) being associated with the learning center has a positive impact on some students, and a negative one on others, (2) teachers have a major influence on students that can be either negative or positive, (3) some students were embarrassed by their participation in the learning center (4) learning centers make a positive difference in some way (5/7) effective reading instruction is unique to the individual, as students have mixed feelings about the activities that they participant in during learning center support, and (6) in consideration of planning, students need different things during different phases of their education.

All of these themes point to the obvious; teachers should pay particular attention to how their students respond, react, and feel about the activities that teachers plan. Good reading instruction is not “packageable” and one size does not fit all. Students from the same schools shared very different experiences, and they had varying perspectives about what worked best for them. This assortment of responses indicates that good reading instruction should center on the individual who receives it. Good reading instruction is individualistic by design.

To summarize, three major themes emerged from a re-examination of the data across cases. Two themes related to the student experience include: (1) students and parents attach a stigma to resource support, and (2) students feel like they miss out and have given something up because of their participation in the learning center. The final theme was methodological and involved the structure of the interviews.

Chapter Conclusion

Connective to the research questions, this chapter examined the responses of student, parent, and teacher participants across cases. Specific themes emerged related to student experience and teaching models. Major themes in recognition of the stigma students and parents attached to learning centers, as well as their feeling of missing out were also addressed. Finally, the design of the study was analyzed and a methodological theme emerged in consideration of the arrangement and settings of the interviews. All of these themes are addressed again in the final chapter in relation to the research literature.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The last chapter of this dissertation restates the purpose of the study and the guiding research questions. It also includes a summary of the methods, procedures, and data analysis employed. The findings of the study are linked to the research literature, and the chapter concludes with considerations for future research.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate phenomenologically the experiences of students who participated in literacy support services. Through a constructivist lens of advocacy, the focus was on learning from the experiences of students.

The omnibus question was this: What are the experiences of students (more specifically, struggling readers) who participated in reading intervention through learning centers in independent schools?

1. Questions related to student experience:

- a What are the perspectives of students on the impact of the learning center experience in regard to reading development?
- b How does the child's discernment of how he/she is perceived academically by his/her reading teacher contribute to/hinder the process of learning to read?
- c How does a child's sensitivity to being identified as needing extra support in learning to read affect/support the experience?

- d What do students, parents, and teachers think about learning centers?
- C. Questions related to teaching/models:
- e How do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness and successful reading instruction?
 - f How does a child's perception of a model of reading intervention inform the planning of teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists?
 - g What do students think about the activities they participate during learning center time?

These questions guided the design of the interview protocols, and were later used in a cross case analysis in consideration of answers to research questions and emergent themes.

Methods, Procedures, Data Analysis, and Summary of Findings

The research questions driving this qualitative study called for phenomenological narrative inquiry as the research methodology. Within this qualitative framework, an interview/observation strategy was followed in an effort to explore the student perspective.

To begin, three independent schools in Louisiana were recruited for the study. Recruitment involved several emails, phone calls, and meetings to explain the extent of each school's participation. At two sites, most communication was with the lower school heads initially, and then with the respective learning specialists. At another site, communication began with the learning center department head, and then with the middle school head of school. All three schools expressed an immediate interest in supporting the study once their questions of confidentiality and protecting the student participants were addressed. At all three schools, the learning specialists recruited the families for the study. Shyness of student informants was a

problem, and it took several weeks for the learning specialists to find participants. Following their recruitment, contact information was passed along to me via email. I immediately called parents as soon as names were provided because I suspected that scheduling might be difficult. And it was in some cases. There were 17 interviews total: 6 students, 7 parents, 3 learning specialists, and one self-interview. All interviews were scheduled around the convenience of the participants in consideration of location and time. One interview was rescheduled three times because of the holidays, and three others were postponed because of soccer games and other typical middle school commitments.

At the start of each interview, consent forms were signed and questions related to the study were answered. Students were eager, but parents were nervous in some cases. Passing the voice-activated tape recorder was awkward for the participants and for me. Other than a few minor problems, the interviews went pretty well and by the end of January, all interviews and observations were complete.

Interviewing and transcribing happened concurrently. In my effort to gain the richest understanding possible, I transcribed all of the tapes myself. I also wrote reactions in my journal immediately following each interview. Everything went smoothly until I went to transcribe the last interview with the learning specialist from Dixon Elementary and Middle School. I have no explanation for why the interview did not record; however, I explained the unfortunate situation to the learning specialist, and she graciously agreed to answer the interview questions again via email.

Once the tapes were transcribed, I read each transcription several times to get a sense of the whole. A qualitative analysis examined the interview responses of the student, parent, and

learning specialist informants with particular attention given to the questions guiding this study. Marginal notes were made, themes began to emerge, and then I started segregating the data into categories. The analysis process was very difficult. At the start of it, a story map was conducted based on each interview. After that, the coded data from the transcriptions were organized into the tool I developed for polyvocal analysis. This process was utilized for all interview transcriptions. Finally, the story map, the polyvocal analysis, and the transcriptions were all mulled over to carefully craft the narratives of each participant. These narratives were emailed back to the informants to serve as a member check. No one responded, so follow up emails and phone calls were made.

Once all of the data was considered for individual analysis, I went to the research questions again to guide a cross-case analysis of students, parents, and learning specialists. The comparison of students at different sites was an interesting and important part of the study. It was also intriguing to compare the student's perspective of their experiences with the parent's perspective. In summary, the data collected and analyzed supports the following answers to my questions: (1) being associated with the learning center has a positive impact on some students, and a negative one on others, (2) teachers have a major influence on students that can be either negative or positive, (3) some students were embarrassed by their participation in the learning center (4) learning centers make a positive difference in some way, (5/7) and effective reading instruction is unique to the individual, as students have mixed feelings about the activities that they participant in during learning center support, and (6) in consideration of planning, students need different things during different phases of their education.

In addition, three major themes emerged from a reexamination of the data across cases. Two of these themes are related student experience and include: (1) students and parents attach a

stigma to resource support, and (2) students feel like they miss out and have given something up because of their participation in the learning center.

Lastly, the procedures and methods of the study were examined and led to the final theme which was methodological and involved the structure of the interviews. These findings are related to current research in the next section.

Findings and Current Research

In this section, conclusions about the emergent themes are drawn and connections to the research literature are explained. The findings are presented parallel to the research questions that guided the study. A summary concludes the section and introduces the call for more research in the area of students' perspectives around learning center support.

Being associated with the learning center has a positive impact on some students, and a negative one on others.

Learning centers have a positive effect on children, but there are also some negative implications. The six students in this study believe that the support they received from the learning center was helpful. Students liked the extra help they received, the fun activities, the easier work, and the fact that the resource room provided a quiet place where they could better concentrate on their work in a small group. The reasons the students provided confirmed the findings of several other researchers (Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998; Padeliadu & Zigmond, 1996; Vaughn & Bos, 1987)

In regard to reading development, students suggest that the activities in learning center need to be steady and consistent. Students want clear plans for learning and support and back-up from their specialists to get things done. This study therefore supports Allington's (2006) idea

that reading intervention must work to ensure both coherence and balance. This study also agrees that extensive reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency (Stanovich, 2000), and that extensive practice gives students the opportunity to consolidate the skills and strategies that teachers work so diligently to develop (Allington, in press).

Next, being pulled out of class has a negative impact on children. Students are embarrassed about needing the extra support, and they feel singled out when they have to leave the regular classroom to go to the resource room. Scheduling also presents a challenge. Behavior can be negatively affected when a student has to go to extra help instead of recess or free play. Furthermore, students do not like being picked up for reading when other fun activities are happening in the classroom. This study supports the assumption of Vaughn and Klingner's (1998) that students who are pulled out of class to receive special services pay a high cost socially.

Inasmuch as students feel singled out when they have to go to the resource room, this study confirms the findings of Jenkins and Heinan (1989) that avoiding embarrassment is a reason provided by intermediate-grade students for preferring pull-out. Students feel more comfortable and safer in the smaller group provided by the learning center. Students are more willing to take a risk because there is less pressure when they are not surrounded by high achieving peers.

Teachers have a major influence on students that can be either negative or positive.

Children value the way a teacher perceives them, and children internalize those perceptions whether negative or positive. When Jonathan said that he lost all hope, it became very clear how profound an effect a teacher's view can have on a child's motivation. On the

other end of the spectrum, Andie said that she is who she is today because of the teachers who believed in her. What is known is that students with learning disabilities are generally viewed as being at risk for low self-concept (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003). Further, Horner and Shwery (2002) found that differences in self-efficacy and in motivation can have far-reaching implications for young children. This study supports the view that motivation plays an important role in reading success, and further suggests that teachers have a powerful influence on the motivation of a child. In agreement with the International Reading Association (2000), this study concurs that every child deserves an excellent reading teacher because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation.

Learning centers make a positive difference in some way.

This study puts forward that students benefit from participating in learning centers in independent schools. For some students it is the safe environment and the comfort of the small group setting, for others it is the teacher support and the routine practice that makes it valuable. For some parents it is the highly trained teachers, the small group activities, and the consistency of the program. For specialists and teachers, it is the idea that children are getting the individualized support they need in a structured environment to help them be successful. Students, parents, and teachers expressed views on how the support of the learning center is beneficial, but they also shared recommendations on how to improve it.

To reiterate, students want to have consistent plans for learning that engage them and keep them interested. Students with learning disabilities want teachers to figure out a way so that it is not so obvious that they need extra support. Students want teachers to coordinate schedules so that the plan works for all.

In consideration of the parent perspective, parents in this study raised the same concerns as those in the study of Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, and Mallette (2004) in that their children miss important instructional time and fun activities because of their participation in a pull-out program. In addition, learning specialists talked about the challenge of coordinating resource time with teachers. Some program restructuring is needed.

Effective reading instruction is unique to the individual, as students have mixed feelings about the activities that they participant in during learning center support.

Students have different perspectives on what activities are helpful to them. One student talked about how reading a passage once or twice a week simply was not enough to make a difference. This student wanted more time to be devoted to reading and reading instruction. In line with Allington (2006), this student believes that students should spend the majority of time engaged in reading. This study is also in agreement with Vaughn (2006) and Stanovich (2000) that time spent reading is an essential principle, and extensive reading is a critical component of the development of reading proficiency.

Another student talked about how the activities she did in learning center did not help her because the stories she read in there were boring. This study supports the view of Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) that children should be taught through interesting and engaging texts. Similar to Speaker and Speaker (1991) this study also indicates that an important goal of a literacy program should be to develop readers who actually enjoy the things they read. Further, like Allington (in press), this study supports the view that making connections and meaning during reading instruction are key elements.

Another student talked about how working with words helped her become a better reader and a better speller. Consistent with the National Reading Panel's (2000) call for instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness, this study agrees that developing strong phonetic skills are important elements in effective reading instruction.

One student and his mother recalled very fondly an activity that called for the students to write and produce a play. The student talked about this positive experience and how it motivated him and helped him to learn. Another student talked about an individualized project that she presented to older students. This study is in agreement with Turner (1995) that students assume greater ownership of the work and greater engagement with the work when they are given choice.

In summary, this study therefore supports the view of Vaughn and Klingner (1998) that, "Future research is needed to explore ways in which students' perceptions can be better incorporated into decision making and how their perceptions might improve services in both the general and special education settings (p.86)"

In consideration of planning, students need different things during different phases of their education.

Some of the students in this study talked about how they enjoyed going to learning center when they were younger, but as they got older, there was a stigma attached. On the other hand, some students said that they were very embarrassed when they were in the early grades, but as they have matured, being a part of the learning center is "no big deal."

Some students said that they like reading in a small group, while other students said that they got aggravated waiting for slower readers. Some students said that they liked the helpful

activities that they participated in during learning center, while others said they did not like the activities and they did not help them. Moreover, the physical setting and the atmosphere was very important to one student, and was never even mentioned by any of the others.

The point is this: children are individuals, and each of them needs something different, and what they need may change depending on their age and their unique perspective as a learner. As a result, this study supports the view that the profession should continue to advocate for better teaching practices to meet the needs of the individual learners (Frey, 2006), because as Allington (2006) points out, the details of instruction will vary for every struggling reader.

Major Themes

Students and parents attach a stigma to resource support.

Being a learning center student can be uncomfortable and awkward. Students are embarrassed because they are singled out and removed from the general classroom to receive specialized instruction. This study confirms the findings of Graham (1995) that some students perceive a stigma associated with attending the resource room. Individual perspectives on this present a distinctive challenge. Students agree that going to learning center as a lower school student is embarrassing, and they also think that it would be more embarrassing if the specialist came into the classroom to provide support in that context. Consistent with Graham's (1995) findings, despite the discomfort of being pulled out of class, students liked the resource room. In harmony with the findings of Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan (1998) and Whinnery (1995) students identify the resource room as a place where they were better able to learn. However, just as Graham (1995) presents in his finding, students do not like to go to the resource room because of the negative stigma they perceive as being associated with the resource

room. Miles, Stegle, Hubbs, Henk, and Mallette (2004) also reported that there was a stigma attached to pull-out programs that was disturbing to many parents.

The challenge is this: students know that they need the support, they agree that they benefit from it, and they concur that they are more comfortable in the small group, but they do not like the feeling of being singled out.

In addition to the stigma they attach to the learning center, students in this study also identify reading rate as an important component of the being a proficient reader. Associated with embarrassment once more, many students talked about how they did not view themselves as good readers because they stumbled over words or could not read quickly like their classmates. Similar to the students in Jenkins and Heinan's (1989) study, these students also preferred the smaller setting of the resource room for reading because embarrassment could be avoided in this context.

Students, parents, and learning specialists addressed the negative feelings associated with needing extra support in school. Although most discussion centered around the embarrassment of being pulled out and separated from the rest of the class to receive the extra support, this study supports the view that when given a choice, the majority of students would prefer to be in the resource room (Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998). Every student agreed that the extra support they received in learning center helped them. Many students also said that they preferred the small group setting of the learning center, and that they were more comfortable reading with the members of that particular group than with all of their classmates. The test that still remains is coordinating schedules and organizing the structure of the pull-out program, more specifically, recreating a plan for students to get to the physical space without being singled out.

Students feel like they miss out and have given something up because of their participation in the learning center.

Parents and students expressed concern that students missed out on something because they were in the resource room. This theme is similar to Padelia and Zigmund's (1996) finding that some students were concerned about what they missed (academically or recreationally) when they were pulled out of their general education classroom. Pugach and Wesson (1995) also found that students did not like missing instruction when they were pulled out to go to resource. Students in Jenkins and Heinen's (1989) study reported that they preferred the in-class model because the classroom teacher knew them best and this way they would not miss anything. In addition, Allington (1994) found that classroom teachers felt that resource students most needed the classroom instruction, so teachers were hesitant and uncomfortable introducing new skills when kids were in resource.

Moreover, students and parents feel like student have given up something socially because they were in the resource room. Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan (1998) found in their study that the majority of students believed that staying in the general education classroom helped kids have more friends. Results from several studies addressing this issue have yielded somewhat converging findings (Bear, Juvonen, & McInerey, 1993; Vaughn, Elbaum, & Schumm, 1996; and Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, & Hughes, 1999). Overall, students do seem more successful at making mutual friends when they are not pulled out of class. The findings from the current study therefore support the view that students do miss out and have to give some things up because they are pulled out for resource support.

Interview Structures

The interview structure of this study raises some issues with regard to the content of the informants' responses. In most interviews, students and parents were present. Separate interviews may have elicited different responses. It was my observation that parents were influenced by hearing their child talk about his or her experiences.

For example, Andie's interview centered mainly around the hurt she endured because of her disability, as well as the embarrassment she suffered when she was pulled out of class. As a result, the very first recommendation her mother made was for teachers to come up with a better plan to "protect their little spirits." She reiterated this twice during our conversation. It was the case in this interview, that Caroline was influenced by listening to her daughter talk about her difficult experiences.

Another example of when a parent might have been influenced was during Jonathan's interview. Jonathan talked about how he lost all hope when he felt like his teacher did not think he was good enough. After his comment, his dad interrupted him and asked him specific questions about that experience. Following his interjection, his dad talked about how "you don't throw out the whole system because parts of it don't work." He was crying at this point, and did not add much to the conversation after he heard his son share this negative experience. In the case of this interview, having the child present interrupted the flow of conversation.

In addition, I made an observational note in my journal in regard to the exchanges made by Edward and his mother during Edward's interview. I noted that Edward's mother would coach him and remind him between questions that he was supposed to be thinking back to lower school. She repeated to him several times that I was interested in learning about the lower school model. Edward's interview demonstrates his confusion because he bounces back and forth

between his lower school and middle school experiences. I later found out from Edward's mother that Edward has expressive and reception language delays. In the case of this interview, having Edward's mother present was helpful.

Patton (1990) identifies one central strength of interviewing as providing a means to find out "what is on an on someone else's mind" (p.278). Obviously, the purpose of my interviews was to do just that. The problem is that responses might have been influenced by the presence of both students and parents during interviews. Hatch (2002) explains that formal interviews are different from informal settings in that both the researcher and the participant know that they are there to generate data. This was made clear to the participants. Hatch further discusses, "Learning the roles and enacting the rules of formal interviews are part of being a qualitative researcher" (p.94). This is one of the weaknesses I have identified with the study. I was very flexible with participants, and honestly truly grateful for their participation. Although I requested doing separate interviews, I did not require it. In retrospect, I think this could have been handled upfront, and no one would have been offended. Hatch's (2002) discussion on the interview process provides some helpful guidelines on how to clearly state researcher goals to participants, and how to structure successful interviews.

Considerations for Future Research

This study was informed by the research literature discussed in chapter two, and in many ways, contributes to the current body of knowledge related to the field of reading. Nonetheless the results that emerged gives rise to the need for future research and suggest the following:

1. The findings of this study could be enhanced if a similar study were conducted with more students. Limited to just one boy and one girl from each site, additional perspectives could be considered if more participants were included in a future study.
2. Some participants talked about having different resource teachers at different grade levels, while other students suggested keeping the same teacher all along. A separate study could be conducted on these polar views. Comparable to this study, students, parents, and teachers could be interviewed on their positions for or against working with the same specialist over the course of lower school.
3. Another goal of this study was to find out what kind of activities would be enjoyable to students, and at the same time support their reading growth. Student responses on this topic were limited. A study that asks students very specifically about their ideas for activities and how they envision those particular activities supporting their learning would be valuable to reading researchers and classroom teachers. Of specific interest would be to survey students with dyslexia or ADHD on what activities they believe would support them and why.
4. Being pulled out of class was a real concern of almost everyone involved. These students did not want to be with the whole class for reading instruction, but they were embarrassed when they were pulled out for reading support. More research is needed to get ideas from children on how this can be done more delicately.
5. The presence of students during parent interviews, and parents during students presented some issues in light of the informants' responses. A similar study could be conducted that clearly establishes the expectations for interviews.

Previous to this study, most of the ideas about reading support were from the adult perspective. This study introduced the perspective of the children involved and calls for even more research as their responses raise several new questions.

Summary of the Study

Additional research on the perspectives of the children involved in learning center programs will offer a more comprehensive understanding of how to best support struggling readers. This study revealed that students have different views about their experiences, and put forward that participating in the learning center helped them in some way. Some students enjoyed the comfort of the small group setting, others benefitted from the support and extra time, while others talked mainly about how the activities in the learning center helped them catch up on what they needed to learn. Parents also agree that their children benefitted from the support, but that improvements could be made to the system. Finally, learning specialists continue to practice in the profession because they believe the extra support makes a positive difference. Historically, the issue of resource support has been hotly debated by professionals and parents. This study sought to represent the voices of the students who are most affected and have been less frequently heard.

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APPENDIX A
STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Begin by thanking the student for participating.

Introduce myself and talk briefly about who I am personally and professionally.

Explain the purpose of the interview and my goals for this research. Explain that I hope to tell the stories of children who have experienced reading intervention through learning center support.

Present the Student Assent Form and get required signatures

Ask the interviewee to share introductory information about himself

Explore the following questions once the above is accomplished:

Start with background

Please tell me a little about yourself as a student...as a learner.

Experience/behavior

Tell me about your experiences with the learning center. Tell me about the activities you did in learning center. What did you (do you) think of them?

Based on your experiences, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the learning center model? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

What advice can you offer to students who currently attend?

Feelings

How did you feel about receiving learning center support? (Have them talk about this during different phases of their life).

What did you like about it? Dislike?

Knowledge

Based on your experiences, and what you know about your journey of learning to read, how would you design a model of reading support for young readers?

Concluding thoughts based on responses....be open and prepared to discuss various components of learning center.

Thank the student after the interview is complete.

APPENDIX B
TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Begin by thanking the teacher for participating.

Introduce myself and talk briefly about who I am personally and professionally.

Explain the purpose of the interview and my goals for this research. Explain that I hope to tell the stories of children who have experienced reading intervention through learning center support.

Present the Adult Consent Form and get required signatures

Ask the interviewee to share introductory information about himself

Explore the following questions once the above is accomplished:

Start with background

Please tell me a little about yourself as a teacher, and how and why you currently work as a specialist in the learning center.

Experience/behavior

Tell me about your experiences as a learning specialist. How do you define your role? How is your role defined to others, and by whom? How were you prepared for this role?

Do you think classroom teachers feel prepared to work with struggling readers? Why? Can you share some examples from your own experiences?

Based on your experiences as a specialist, what is your philosophy of teaching and learning? Is this philosophy the same for students who struggle? How does your philosophy inform your teaching?

What does a typical day/week look like for students in your program? What kinds of activities do you do?

Feelings

How do you think children feel about receiving learning center support? How do you think their parents feel? How do you feel? Can you think of any examples to support your thoughts?

What do you think kids like about coming to learning center? Dislike? How about teachers?

Knowledge

Based on your experiences of watching and supporting your students in becoming readers, how would you/have you design(ed) a model of reading support for young readers?

Concluding thoughts based on responses....be open and prepared to discuss various components of learning center.

Thank the teacher after the interview is complete.

APPENDIX C
PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Begin by thanking the parent for participating.

Introduce myself and talk briefly about who I am personally and professionally.

Explain the purpose of the interview and my goals for this research. Explain that I hope to tell the stories of children who have experienced reading intervention through learning center support.

Present the Adult Consent Form and get required signatures

Ask the interviewee to share introductory information about himself

Explore the following questions once the above is accomplished:

Start with background

Please tell me a little about yourself as a parent of a child who has participated in learning center support.

Experience/behavior

Tell me about your child's experiences as a learning center student. What did your child think about going to learning center? What did he/she say about it? What do you think about the experiences he/she had?

Based on your experiences as a parent, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the learning center model? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

What advice can you offer to other parents who have children who currently attend?

Feelings

How did you feel about your child receiving learning center support?

What did you like about it? Dislike?

Knowledge

Based on your experiences of watching and supporting your child in becoming a reader, how would you design a model of reading support for young readers?

Concluding thoughts based on responses....be open and prepared to discuss various components of learning center. Thank the parent after the interview is complete.

APPENDIX D
SELF-INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me about your study.

What is your major research question?

What else are you interested in finding out?

Tell me about your methodology and theoretical framework.

What measures will you take to ensure the trustworthiness of your study?

Why is your study worth conducting?

What will your findings contribute to the field of reading and to the students who participate?

APPENDIX E

Observational Protocol

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
<p>Models:</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <p>Duration:</p> <p>Group Size:</p> <p>Other Observations:</p>	

APPENDIX F



LETTER OF CONSENT FOR ADULTS

Dear Parent (this will be personalized):

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Richard B. Speaker in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of middle students who participated in learning center support when they were in elementary school.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve one taped recorded informal interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes. The purpose and content of this interview is to explore your thoughts of learning centers in general, as well as your child’s experiences with the learning center at your school. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but neither your name nor the school’s name will be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is that your experiences and perspectives as a parent of a child who has experienced academic difficulties may be used to enhance and improve the design of learning centers in independent schools.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call or email me Lori Despau (504) 512-9022 or ljdespau@uno.edu or Richard Speaker (504) 280-6605 or rspeaker@uno.edu .

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, please contact Dr. Ann O’Hanlon at the University of New Orleans (504) 280-6501 or aohanlon@uno.edu.

Sincerely,

Lori J. Despau

By signing below you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Printed Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Witness	Lori J. Despau	Date

APPENDIX G



PARENTAL LETTER OF CONSENT FOR MINORS

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Richard B. Speaker in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of middle students who participated in learning center support when they were in elementary school. I am interviewing middle school students for this information, and would like to present my findings through narrative inquiry.

I am requesting your child's participation, which will involve one tape-recorded informal interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes. The purpose and content of this interview is to explore your child's experiences with the learning center at his school, and to talk about reading instruction in general. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no consequences. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but neither your child's name nor the name of the school will be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is that information from his perspective may be used to enhance and improve the design of learning centers and reading support services for many children.

The risks associated with participating are minimal and include reflection and discussion of a time when learning may have been difficult for your child. These risks are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call or email me Lori Despau (504) 512-9022 or lidespau@uno.edu or Richard Speaker (504) 280-6605 or rspeaker@uno.edu .

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon at the University of New Orleans (504) 280-6501 or aohanlon@uno.edu.

Sincerely,

Lori J. Despau

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child _____ to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____

Witness	Lori J. Despau	Date
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APPENDIX H



LETTER OF CONSENT FOR ADULTS

Dear Teacher (this will be personalized):

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Richard B. Speaker in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of middle students who participated in learning center support when they were in elementary school.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve one taped recorded informal interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes. The purpose and content of this interview is to explore your thoughts of learning centers and reading instruction. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but neither your name nor the school's name will be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is that your experiences and perspectives as a teacher of children who have academic difficulties may be used to enhance and improve the design of learning centers in independent schools.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call or email me Lori Despau (504) 512-9022 or lidespau@uno.edu or Richard Speaker (504) 280-6605 or rspeaker@uno.edu .

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon at the University of New Orleans (504) 280-6501 or aohanlon@uno.edu.

Sincerely,

Lori J. Despau

By signing below you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Printed Name	Date
_____	Lori J. Despau	_____
Witness		Date

APPENDIX I



WRITTEN CHILD ASSENT FORM

I have been informed that my parents have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning my experiences with and participation in the learning center at my school.

I will be asked to participate in one tape-recorded interview. The purpose and content of this interview is to explore my experiences with the learning center at my school, and to talk about reading instruction in general. This interview will be scheduled around my convenience and will probably last around 30 minutes. I understand that neither my name, nor the name of my school will be identified.

I am taking part because I want to. I know that I can stop at any time I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop.

Sign Your Name Here

Print Your Name Here

APPENDIX K

Date: January 9, 2010

Participant: Jonathan

Lori: Testing...okay, I have the right side of the tape. We're going to start with the first question. Please tell me a little about yourself as a student and as a learner.

Jonathan: I go to Dixon. Um, I found out in first grade that I had dyslexia. Um, in fifth grade...I can't remember anything before fifth grade because that's when I got my pill and I can't remember anything. I have a pill for uh...uh...what is it dad? The pill for? Yeah, ADHD, and I can't remember anything before that. Then it got...in sixth grade when I got my pill I ended up getting all A-s. So from then on, I've been getting all A-s.

L: Wow, um...would you tell me about yourself as a learner. Maybe talk about what you're best at and maybe also talk about what might be difficult for you?

J: Um, my best subjects are science and history. I think that's because they just make sense to me. There's some things that click in people and some things that don't, I think. And...what was they question?

L: Oh, um..are there subjects that you don't like, or subjects that are difficult?

J: Oh, and uh, yeah...language arts, and they thing about me is that I take a really long time to do my papers, or anything. Like, so I need extra time. If I didn't have the extra time, I would be doing terrible. I wouldn't be able to finish anything, so...that's very important because I'm a very slow reader.

L: Good, um...so we'll move to the next question. Would you tell me about your experiences with the resource center? You can tell me about some of the activities that you did in there, or do in there, and tell me what you think about those activities.

J: I've been in resource since first grade, I think. And uh, it's support and it gives you back up so that you have the time you need and you can get stuff done. It gives you a lot of support. And with the, I'm trying to in resource, get my reading level up. It hasn't been very effective. I've been on a different reading system that I did every day. It was called Family Literacy Network, and it was based in Texas, and that helped. It's pretty much the same thing they have at school, but they don't do enough of it at school. It's not enough to actually make a really big difference, I think. If we did that more I think it would help because we're going over other kinds of skills and stuff, but they need more of the support for the reading 'cause when I was on that program it actually helped a lot, and picked up my reading. I did that every day, but they don't do that every day at school, so it just...they don't do it enough.

L: Um, was the Family Literacy Network, actually I'm unfamiliar with that, can you tell me what you do with that network.

J: Um, it was based in Texas and I, you pretty much read a passage everyday and work on...you read a passage every day, and you also say words and you try to expand your...

L: vocabulary

J: Vocabulary! Yeah, right...vocabulary, by saying words from a dictionary or something like that, and uh...and then you do, you do um, the little parts of speech, parts of speech, but work on the way words work in the English language, like...how they're put together and you say those things. It's pretty much like the same thing they do in school for resource, but it's like a lot more, like every day. And that really helped.

L: Um, the activities that you do do in the resource center at Dixon, do you think those do help you?

J: Um, yes. I think that they support, support you, and that's one of the main things. You need someone on your side so that you know there's someone you can go to when you have problems.

L: Now, you're in middle school and you're more mature and you know more about yourself as a learner. When you said that in first grade, that's when you found out, or that's when your family found out that you had dyslexia, can you think of anything that was done in resource that was helpful to you...or do you even remember that far back?

J: I remember a couple of things, but I don't like remember resource, but I know I had it.

L: That's fine. Okay, that's really good. Let's talk about um, any suggestions you have for ways that teachers can improve the resource model...or teaching kids to read, or any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same.

J: Okay, sometimes they ought to have a plan for the day...or it's just like teaching you how to like, like keeping organized and stuff, but they don't really like have a plan for learning. Well, they do, but it's not like very good. It doesn't...sometimes you'll just sit there and not really do much.

L: Um, do they ever ask you what you want to do when you come in?

J: Uh, yeah...sometimes they do, and we'll do different things. We'll read a passage like every week, like once, and I go like twice a week, and we'll go over different things. Like we'll go over words and stuff, but it's not really steady, if it were steady it would work better...

L: Steady like...same thing every week?

J: Yeah, yeah.

L: Do you think being in resource helps you come up with strategies to manage your dyslexia?

J: Yes, I think it does because it gives you the support...the support, and when you finally figure out what your learning strategy is they'll help you with that, once you figure it out. They support you on the way to get there, and once you're there it comes and lot easier, and you can just figure out...they can adjust how you take tests to have that to an advantage, to your reading style.

L: Um hum, oh yeah, and that's important. Do you have recommendations for things we should definitely keep the same with the resource model?

J: Uh, yes. I think that they should uh...I think they should still uh...provide a bunch of support, and they shouldn't just let the kid do it on their own. So, um...

L: How do you get to resource? Is it a period during the day? Do you just walk over there? When does it happen?

J: Uh, what they do is they'll uh, pick out different periods during the day, like PE and writing lab, which is a class we take, like just writing...they'll, we'll go to resource instead of going to those classes. And there's like a couple, a small room, and that's where it's held.

L: And, is that okay with you...to go to resource instead of writing lab or PE?

J: Uh, yes, but sometimes I want to go to PE (laughing).

L: Of course (laughing). Okay, so um...can you offer some advice to other students who attend resource? Or better yet, let's say they have some younger students in lower school who go to resource, since you're older, can you offer some advice to them?

J: Uh, yes. Keep trying and just figure out how you learn and what you need. Figure out exactly the best way you learn so that you can use it to your advantage.

L: That's great. Um...the next question is how do you feel about getting the extra support in reading? Um, did you feel differently as a lower school student than you do now as a middle schooler?

J: Um, lower school wasn't as hard, of course, so you didn't really need it as much, but when you go up into middle school, it's a lot harder, so you really need that support.

L: So are you glad you get that support?

J: Uh, yes. It's helpful. If I didn't have the support, I wouldn't be able to get good grades at all.

L: Actually this is a tough question...so based on all of your experiences in resource, from you to someone like me, is there something you can say, um...to, I don't know, help reading teachers be the best that they can be? Is there something that we just don't know?

J: Uh...keep a schedule for every week and follow that every day that your kids have resource so that you work on the same things and so that you can get there more steadily.

L: Um hum, so Jonathan, that's it. Thank you so much for all of your thoughtful responses and the richness that I know you're going to add to my report, so thank you.

J: You're welcome.

APPENDIX L

Date: January 9, 2010

Participants: TJ and MaryAnn

Lori: Alright, so we've just finished the interview with Jonathan and now we're going to talk with his parents. We went over the questions and now we're going to start with the first one. Please tell me a little bit about yourselves as parents of a child who has participated in reading support?

MaryAnn: Well, um...I guess I'll start with when I first realized that something wasn't right for Jonathan's learning was about three years old. Um, he would learn his colors and then he didn't know them the next week. He would learn numbers and then he didn't know them. We went to this little group called "infancy to independence" and they would, it was mothers with their kids, and they would sing songs and he could never learn the word like to *Old McDonald*, he couldn't learn his ABCs until he was like five years old. We remember exactly the day.

Jonathan: I remember...we were in the car.

MaryAnn: Yeah, we were in the car and he could finally say his ABCs at five, and then his behavior was kind of erratic, but we didn't know because this was our first child. You know I didn't know if it was just me or him, or what. You know we really didn't find anything out until we went to Dixon, for sure. And then, um...I was really, I was not surprised that he had the dyslexia, but the ADHD, that was really shocking, and uh...it was upsetting because I knew then what kind of struggle he was going to have in terms of learning, and so, but I felt like we were at the best school for it. TJ and I had committed early on that whatever Jonathan needed in his first twelve years, you know, we could get it for him. You know whatever special tutoring...or whatever it was, so resource was right there at school. That was a good experience. I liked him going to resource. The only thing I didn't like was when he would get pulled out of classes that I liked, like art...and fun classes you know. It's like you almost wish that he could do it either before school or after school so that he wouldn't get pulled out of these fun class, you know. Um, that's the only thing I didn't like was him getting pulled out...different semesters it would be different classes, but um...the teachers in resource we extremely committed. I liked what they were doing. It's slow going, but they would always tell us...I'll never forget when they told us his diagnosis, they said that usually around fourth grade children with ADHD and dyslexia, they figure out with help how they learn and what their learning style is. Well, Jonathan just took a little bit longer. His big break through was really sixth grade. I mean fourth grade was Katrina, so like, oh my God, you can just write that one off the map. That was terrible year, and then fifth grade he was having a hard time with his studying and everything, but something

changed. I don't know if it was just a little bit, or if it was just like they said, everything came together, but in sixth grade, he started getting on the honor roll.

L: Just to repeat the question...please tell me a little about yourself as a parent of a child who has participated in resource support for reading?

TJ: Uh, well, I think uh, and this is a real kind of struggle. I think that a parent has is, is from a dollar and cents standpoint...wondering what are we getting for what we are paying, okay. And you sit there and you're saying, we're being taking out of these other classes, but then being put there in these classes, but then we wonder are we really getting a fair shake for our dollar in the place where we are at...and you see other parents with us going through the same struggles, and some of them choose to take other steps. I remember there were some parents who said, no, I'm not taking my students, you know my son or daughter out of it, you know, I feel as though they are getting the short end. They are missing the classes that he would be in, and I'm not going to do it. I think in retrospect, we were very satisfied with the fact that we stayed the course...on it, but I still think that it was a struggle, okay.

I think in later years, when Jonathan was more attuned to what was happening in the classes that...that we felt...that there was short comings in the program. He said that, he suggested that they have uh, uh structure to it. In fact we were alerted to different points in time that there wasn't really anything. In fact, he would come back to us and say, there wasn't really anything happening in that class right now. In turn, we would be in tuned to that when we would listen to teachers, or when I would listen to teachers. In retrospect, you would see teachers that were no longer around shortly thereafter, and so they just weren't able to cut the mustard with what they were doing. We were shorted, I believe...uh, uh, in the program, but overall, I think the types of things they helped him learn, I think were important. How am I as a parent of somebody who...I'm not a person who is satisfied generally with where we are. I want to press on. I want to take it a step further. I want not to be satisfied with where we're at because I'm not seeing the results in my mind. I always felt like we needed to move ahead, and that's where we ended up doing with the family literacy network which was good for us to head in that direction, you know.

L: Thank you. That is a great response. Um...let's talk next about...we're sort of going to continue with those responses and talk about Jonathan's experiences in resource. Um, what do you think, or what did Jonathan think about going to resource? What did he say about it? Do you think he liked it, or he didn't like it? What do you think about those experiences?

MaryAnn: Well, I think when we was in the young...earlier years, you know he doesn't remember much of that, and you know I don't really remember him complaining about it. Um, I think that it has helped him and you know sometimes we would have exercises we would have to do at home. You know, certain red words, they would call them, and he didn't really like to go over them, but that was because he didn't really like homework when he was younger, you

know. Um, other than that I can't think of any real protests or complaints that he had about the resource center. I really don't remember any.

L: So do you think his experiences in resource were positive ones?

MA: I think most of them were. I think when you look back, you know that year of Katrina, you know, that was totally disruptive, and I think the school was having a hard time getting back on track with that, you know so I think we kind of lost a year. Even though when we evacuated, we did get him a tutor to work with him, um...so I think um, that's the only thing I can think of about that.

TJ: About a year off in Pittsburg, in my mind, you know from Katrina, was than...I think you understood at that point that he was more than, he was not too far off. What they were clear about, or what his teacher was clear about, was that she would simply put him alone, give him extra time, and that solved out almost all of the problems. You know, in fact, their statement to us was that, I don't think he really needed anything more than that. You know, I mean you're hearing them say that all he needs is more time, and he can get it...and I don't think that's too far off, so in retrospect you know, you go like, okay was it worth it or not...and obviously you want to think that it was. But, I think that year was one where it was like, okay, all she did was put him in another class and let him take the test and he was fine.

Jonathan: Yeah, I had a tutor there. I can't remember her name.

TJ: That was your teacher, or at least she was the one who told me what she was doing. She was a relative of ours, too...which was pretty neat. But anyway...

L: So having had the experiences with so many years in resource, do you have specific suggestions as parents for ways we can improve it, and do you have recommendations for ways we can keep it the same?

MA: Well, I, I like the special accommodations they get. Like he had preferential seating all these years, you know because he's easily distracted...extra time on tests, and then the teachers would do prompts you know if they were like going to ask him a question, you know they might like do something to get him ready, or like give him more time to respond...because that was like one of the things. His processing speed was initially slower, so that was very good.

Um, I do think that I would like to see some way that they are not pulled out of the other classes. I do think that that they do miss something from that, but he did need the extra help, so I don't know what else you could do, and I don't know...I don't know how they could set that up, but I would like that. You know he went to more resource days when he was younger than he does now. You know, I do like the small class. I do like the feedback that you get with the IEPs. I think that's very good. And then I also like that the last IEP of the year, they give you what to do over the summer...kind of what to work on, and so um, you're like really keeping going because

you like can't stop for long periods of time. It's just like, especially with the reading, you know they have to keep that up.

One thing that Jonathan was lucky was that he was able to start using a computer at school in fifth grade which was fantastic. He took a, um, typing class, and he was able to take his notes on it, and then a program called Kurzweil would read to him and that helped tremendously because then he became more independent. You know, he could go to his room and he could just put it on the screen. You know, there have been glitches with that over the years, but it was like, a great, I think advantage for kids that like to have access to laptops. I think that helped him a lot. So...

TJ: The problem that I saw is when he went through is an attempt at him getting better speed at um...

Jonathan: fluency

TJ: Fluency...was the constant thing that we went up against. It just wasn't moving ahead. It was reminiscent of uh...if you go back to the alphabets. We met up with his nursery school teacher years later and I told her about the fact that he didn't have his ABCs, and she said, TJ, I'm certain of the fact that when he came out of nursery school, he knew his ABCs, and so that thing of, of not moving ahead...It just wasn't, you know, it just wasn't happening. And so at that point I dealt with, you know it was more like looking at changing the brainwaves...was the focus.

MA: To retain the information, right?

TJ: No, it's actually changing from one side of your brain to the other side of your brain.

MA: Oh, retraining it.

TJ: Yeah, Jonathan had a real big disagreement to a degree because he sees the ways that he thinks as being very important to him as an individual, okay. So when I brought it up to him, it was, I'm not ready, I'm not feeling ready to change. I'm not certain I want to change the way I think because I like the way I think, you know. And uh...so anyway we went to Houston to go with the family literacy program, and we went over there on a Thanksgiving. They took us for a week at Thanksgiving and they worked with us together for five days or something like that.

L: You and Jonathan? Or you and...

TJ: All of three of us went, okay. And his name is doctor...whatever his name is, okay. And basically we sat down with, with different types of exercises, and one thing that, that, that I remember Jonathan saying when we say there...Jonathan has told you that he's interested in science and history...the understanding that I get from that is if he can be explained how something works, he will be able to carry it out and demystify to a great degree how it works.

Jonathan: That's why I don't understand language arts. It's just abstract...

TJ: So when this doctor sat with us, he was a linguistic guy. He knew where all the words came from, and so when he would sit there he would say, that word comes from third century Germany...and here's why it happened at that particular time. He was able to tell us why things are the way they are, and I remember Jonathan saying, you know, I've been asking teachers about that for some time...nobody can tell me why, and finally someone was giving him, you know, reasons why, okay.

So anyway, this is some of the things we would deal with. (Opens binder from FLN). I'm sure this will make more sense to you, different types of....

MA: Different sounds

Lori: So all of these would make the /uh/ sound.

TJ: Right, (pointing to words on page), uh, uh, and uh. And there's different ways of doing it, and so we went...we'd go over these, and then he would have to repeat these, and give us examples.

Lori: Jonathan would repeat them to you?

TJ: Yes. He would repeat them to us and I'd say, give me an /aw/ sound and he'd have to name the four different ways, or however many different ways we'd worked up to.

Jonathan: And over a year, I saw really good improvement with that.

TJ: With this program, I'd say we went from about 65 to 105...words per minute.

Lori: Wow...

TJ: And this is just one of the things, and we had to do reading...but there's like six different sets or seven different sets of exercises that we did, okay. And we would change it, and it was a schedule, and at the point where we had gotten to about a 100-105 words per minute...the same way you're doing this, you know recording, and on Sundays was our test day, okay. And when I say a test day, was that we would record it, and I would email it to him so that he could give us feedback on how we were doing. I can't say that his feedback was wonderful, okay, but he would give us...he'd email us back at some point in the near future on how we were doing.

We had started this in November. We went back from Martin Luther King Day. We took another trip there, okay. Sometime in February, he reported back to me, he said, look you are right at the cusp. If you can keep it going a little bit longer his thought pattern is ready to jump...because they've used this program in conjunction with brain scans and can see the actual jump. At that particular point, Jonathan created a cough that for some reason popped in, and for some reason he just wasn't going to go beyond this 100-105 words per minute...(phone

rings)...which I thought was phenomenal. And at that point I went to doctor whatever his name was, and I said here's what we got forming up...and he gave me all kind of reasons why Jonathan may be making that decision, and at that point we went to Tyra and said, Tyra what do you think, and she said Jonathan is trying to tell you something, and it's up to you what you want to do. I don't want to push him in any directions except the way he wants to go, okay. I'm not going to force him to do something he doesn't want to, okay. Although, maybe that's not true, but I didn't think it was good to put pressure on him for something that was out of his control. He was doing too well at what he does for me to screw him up, and I don't want to screw him up (emotional), I want him to be good, you know, and he was doing too good, you know...and I slacked back, and I said, that makes sense, and I'm going to listen to the people who I got advising me and, and back off. His reading went down to about 85, something like that, and I think we're still around that at this point.

Now where in his lifetime he decides he can try to make it up...it'll probably happen over time. My only hopes is that this Kurzweil program that we've had him on since...he at one point was like that poster child at school...right (turns to Jonathan), right, if they needed to explain how to work something in Kurzweil, they'd come to you, right.

Jonathan: (nods) Right.

TJ: They'd get him to deal with it. My only fear is that this isn't going to work the next step...is that, yeah, it works fine at Dixon and uh, we've come up with programs possibly of where we're going to next, but we'll deal with that as we go along...and in, in life it's, I think it's that you deal with it and you figure out how you can get to work to work. Maybe I'm talking in obscurities, but...

MA: To dovetail on something that Jonathan was saying was, he keep saying that they needed to have an organized consistency. This thing was 30 minutes every day, every day (emphasis).

TJ: And it was one-on-one...one-on-one.

MA: Either he or I would do this with Jonathan. For what, how many months was that, six months or more...that we did it?

TJ: No, it went from November to about late February...about four months, three months, something like that...and it didn't take long.

MA: No

TJ: And if he would have been on this program, I feel like if they would have started this program with him three years earlier, I don't know...the mind's a lot more ...uh...

MA: "Meal-able"

Jonathan: Malleable...

TJ: ...that, that you know it would have worked at that point much better, and that's where I think it needs to move. You know, I think the thing of having three kids and one teacher twice a week is...bullshit, okay...and I think that, if, if you want to do something...and I think that those kids are getting the sort end of the stick, and I think now if you can prove that it doesn't prove up than go do something else. I don't think that the way that's it's working, that it's worked.

Lori: I, um...I think everything that you said is incredibly powerful, and something that opened my eyes is that you all as parents were so in touch with your son as a learner...the fact that Jonathan like science and social studies, and that's very concrete...and language arts, and reading, and sounds and everything that happens in our system of language is abstract...so that's why, that's part of the reason why it was so difficult for him and it didn't come together.

(Looking at Jonathan)...and your dad and your mom found this program where they do make all of this mystical language concrete...

MA: It's very, very repetitive. You do the same things over and over again.

TJ: You work with a chalkboard, and it's immediate response to what...

MA: Yeah, if you stumble...

TJ: You got to deal with it right at that point.

MA: Yeah...

TJ: Okay, not like, it's like this...we want to know it right then, and so we learned how to write upside down and backwards...

MA: Yeah, upside down backwards...

Lori: Oh, over the chalkboard...

TJ: Yeah, so I was showing it to him and his eyes were responding to it immediately. I think that's the one thing with Kurzweil, you know I try to...a lot of kids just use Kurzweil as a way of listening...and my hope is constantly that you go to look at the words...

MA: Yeah, you got to look at it...

TJ: And it's going to help you get more but doing it...

Lori: Yeah, if you're reading along with it, it's really going to um...help you become a more proficient reader, otherwise you're just going to become a really good listener.

TJ: Which we know he is...we know he can listen. We know that for sure.

I think it was interesting that we had a really good teacher that alerted us...I think it was back in third grade. She sat with us when we took his test and she said he was a really good listener, and if he's getting it then, then that's what I'm interested in...

Jonathan: On the science section, I didn't miss any...

Lori: Wow, that's incredible, that is really incredible.

TJ: And then we...on the flip part, we had a teacher in fourth grade who, we went through the whole year with them and when we sat down for his final talks on Stanfords...and we got how many teachers there, two teachers, or three teachers...

MA: I think four...

TJ: We got in front of us and we're talking with them and all of a sudden they're like, he won't do good on any of them, and he spent the whole year with these teachers, and I got his teacher telling me he ain't gonna do any good on them, and all of a sudden she looks at the one for whatever you call it, comprehension...and she's blown away...

Lori: The auditory comprehension...listening comprehension?

TJ: Yes...and the teacher was just blown away...and I'm like wait, you've been with my son for a whole year and this is what you're giving me? It just...it drove me up a frecking wall...and a teacher who has kids that are the same kind of shape as him...and a teacher that has the same kind of stuff to deal with. Where was his teacher at? And in uh, uh...the perimeters of a school like Dixon...what!?! You know, I was like, I was literally ready to scream at these people...you know, like, like...it's interesting, it's interesting.

So as far as I'm concerned, a program that is one-on-one daily...

MA: That's consistent...

TJ: Is the answer...

Lori: I'm going to research that...the technical name is the family literacy network?

TJ: Yeah, it's changed now...

Lori: Um, for advice that you could offer to other parents...what advice would you give to other parents.

MA: For children with reading...

Lori: Yes...

MA: With dyslexia and uh...

Lori: Yes, yes...

MA: I would say um...if you think there's a problem when your child's young, catch it early...because we were lucky that we did that with Dixon...uh, you know first grade, he was already, we were, so you know you got to face it, deal with it, work with it... you know we were already...because we found some other kids that weren't diagnosed until a lot later and it was like...how? You know, you could have been working with this child for years.

Jonathan: One of my friends was at a different school, and I think he was just diagnosed this year.

TJ: It's interesting too, because you know, we have a place in Poplarville, and you know the kids...in fact, Jonathan would use a tutor from up there, while we were there for the summer, and uh...she was a first, second grade teacher. You'd ask her about that, and she would say, yeah, they've told us about that, and you know this was five years ago, six years ago...and then you realized, the students up there, the kids I was working with in the field...in the agriculture field...you know going out there in working in the field, you know, they were shorted by the system. It was just the way things were done. You know they just needed the right kind of steps...and I'd ask them questions like, you know, tell me about your dad...does he like to read, you know, and you'd always get the answer, he can't stand to read...and you knew it was something that was passed down the line, you know, and it was really sad to see that because that could be to anybody...you know the system fails...

MA: And I wanted to say that with St. George's we chose to go to them because we knew that they had a system that worked with kids who had learning problems...

TJ: But we didn't know we had a problem when we went to Dixon.

MA: We didn't know it, but I knew something was off, I just didn't know what, but we were in the right place when we did find out...but I think, my point that I'm trying to make is that parents, whether they are in private school or public school, because in public school there are certain laws that they have to, you know if the child has special needs, there's laws about that... you have to advocate for your child. You know your child better than anyway and you have advocate for your child...you (emphasis) YOU have to do that for your child. No matter where he is. He's about to go to high school, and it's like, okay, what kind of program do they have? Are they going to let him use the computer? Uh, if it's a public school, are they following the laws for special accommodations for kids that are diagnosed with ADHD or dyslexia? You know because I've heard again, you know some teachers do, some teachers don't...you know you've got to advocate for your own child, I think.

Lori: Um, we've been talking a lot about the experiences...can you think back to Dixon and the experiences there...I mean you sort of alluded to that, but maybe we can talk about what you did like, if anything...and what you didn't like, if anything.

MA: Um, I thought that...he had different resource teachers almost every year.

J: That was kind of year...because you can't, you can't...you have to totally restart every year. It's not connected. It's just, there isn't a plan, so it just sort of breaks the way you learn and all that...

Lori: So is it...would it have been better if you had the same resource teacher all the way through?

J: Definitely...

TJ: In other words, there needs to be a plan...it's just not there.

L: The continuity of care?

TJ: Exactly.

MA: Because we had a tutor for Jonathan for about four years and that was wonderful because she was his second grade teacher...

TJ: First grade...

MA: I'm sorry, first grade teacher, and she totally knew how he learned and she would interact and work with him based on that.

TJ: She was an advocate...

MA: Oh, yeah...she would advocate for him.

TJ: With tests, if she thought that he was shorted for some reason, she would go out...

L: That's wonderful.

MA: Oh, yeah. She was wonderful. Anyway, I don't know...I lost my strain of thought...

L: I think you were going to say something you may have liked or disliked...

MA: Oh, yeah. Even though he did have different resource teachers every year, I think I liked their perceptions, some of them...you know, I really feel like they got Jonathan...they got him, and they were able to tell you about that in the IEP meetings.

Jonathan: The thing is that there are some teachers that will interrupt that good line of teachers that can do something and get how you work...

L: So maybe like, second and third grade, you really like get rolling, and then fourth grade happens...and then, is that like what you mean...

J: Yeah, exactly. It throws you off.

L: Yeah, sure. That's a good point.

TJ: In fact, I think that's what I was trying to state, too. He'd say that there were certain teachers and they're not really doing anything, right?

Flip tape

TJ: There was actually teachers that, we'd get into the semester, like two months, and Jonathan would say to the fact, you know that we're not doing anything, and the next thing you'd know we'd have like another teacher stepping in because the teacher really wasn't...she didn't know what she was doing. They would put her there and she didn't belong there. Isn't that what we're talking about?

Jonathan: Classroom teachers...

TJ: No, resource.

Jonathan: We're not talking about classroom teachers, here.

Lori: Okay? So you had those experiences with classroom teachers and with resource teachers?

Jonathan: Yes, yes...both.

Lori: Or were you just saying classroom teachers?

Jonathan: Less classroom teachers, but when you're with that one teacher and she doesn't think you're good enough.

TJ: You had that feeling?

Jonathan: Um, hum...

TJ: Is that right?...that's, that's...

Lori: Okay, so when you had that feeling...when you picked up on that, that that is what your teacher thought of you, in your performance, how did that affect what you did in her classroom? Did it make you want to work harder?

J: No it didn't, of course not.

L: Did it make you feel like, oh well.

J: It really destroys the whole...everything. You just lose all hope. If someone tells you that you can't do it.

TJ: Who was it?

J: Mrs. Taylor

TJ: He's never said...you've never told us that. But maybe you picked that up on your own.

It's too bad because there are other teachers in the school who are excellent teachers...a bunch of them a great. It's just that we had that particular teacher. We had the wrong one for that one year.

MA: It just wasn't a good fit.

TJ: I had a friend tell me, you know, you're going to go through school and every grade is not going to be great. So what if he got ten good grades or eight good teachers and you miss one or two.

L: Yeah

TJ: And that happens, you know. Everybody's not perfect, you know. The whole system, you know, you don't throw it out because parts of it don't work.

L: Right. (looking to Jonathan) and I've just been here for an hour and I think you're absolutely incredible, you are. You know who you are and you can verbalize who you are and what you think and I just think that you are incredible and you're smart and you are able to sit here and do an interview that a lot of people wouldn't be able to do...and from the 15 people that I've met with and talked to, I think that this has been the most powerful conversation. I'm getting the most from just sitting and listening to everything that you're offering. Um, so actually that kind of leads into the last question...just, just, what do you think is the best way that people like me, and reading teachers and reading professionals can support children and students like Jonathan?

MA: I think first and foremost is to get to know each child as an individual as much as your time would allow initially, like you have been doing...and then asking the child, too, you know how they think that they learn. You know in younger grades, of course, they might not be able to realize that, but I think knowing the child and then um, really when they do all that testing and everything, really looking at the testing and seeing how does this test fit with what Jonathan is showing me.

Jonathan: I think, this is just...this would be a good idea, I guess. Uh, like for the lower school teachers and maybe middle school, like every trimester...this would take a long time, but they could have like, they could look at how...their grades and see like how it works, like spelling and all that. Just figure out what's better and what's worse. Pretty much just do like a kind of study and figure out what's going on.

Lori: So, look at each subject and see how they're performing?

J: ...and how, how they think.

L: Um, hum. So um...let's say with spelling, looking at, okay I notice that every week writing the words on the board is working, or is it not working, and then figuring out if that's how to best support you? Is that what you're thinking?

J: Uh, yeah...just, yeah I guess.

L: Yeah, like really looking at what we do and measuring it's effectiveness.

J: Using what you know, like tests and grades, what you know and figuring out how to get it all to work.

L: Yeah, like capitalizing on the strengths...yeah

J: Yeah, and they do. They do. The thing is that they provide a lot of support. They talk with all the other teachers and figure out what you need. That...they do a great job with that, but the thing is the reading...the thing that each kids has weak with them. They need to figure out how that works.

L: (looking to TJ) Did you want to add to that?

TJ: Yeah, yeah because what he's, what Jonathan is talking about sounds like somebody would take as being an IEP at first glance, but I think he's saying something more than that, you know. So I think instead of just saying, well an IEP takes care of it...that is not what he's saying in my mind.

L: It's deeper.

TJ: Yeah, it has to do with actual...what makes it take it to the next step.

J: ..and you got to act. You can't wait. If you can figure it out, figure it out. If someone would have figured out that I can listen real well, but I can't read, but I'm really good at science and at history so that I understand how things work somehow. So I can understand how things work...

L: So put all of that together to try to teach you...

J: Yeah, but that's pretty hard. I didn't figure that out until like a little...a couple of years ago. Right, I think they need to have someone who can do that.

TJ: And now the question is...you know, the fear that I had is that you, you have the younger grades where you're trying to learn how to read and that sort of stuff, and, of course now, he's to the point where he has to make it work because you, you now are going where you got to start using it over and over again, and I guess, I think that that should be stopped at that point...I think it should continue, that attempt to get them to learn to read faster ends up continuing and not put on the second burner...well it has to be on the second burner because he has to start going the next step with his learning process...which is using that to start thinking and producing because that's where you're at.

L: I think actually that concludes that interview and I thank you so much.

APPENDIX M

Date: January 6, 2010

Participant: Jenna

Lori: Please tell me a little about yourself as a student and as a learner.

Jenna: Um, I...I as a student...I like math, but I don't like reading much, like in front of people, but I don't mind reading alone. I just don't like it in front of people...and I do well with learning by mainly typing it and looking at it and one-on-one contact with the teachers.

L: That just makes me think of something...when you say that you don't like reading aloud in front of people, in middle school, do they require much of that? Do you all read aloud in middle school? I don't teach middle school, so I don't know.

J: Um...sometimes like in history class we have to read like textbooks and stuff, but I sometimes read but I don't really like to...like right now we're reading *To Kill a Mocking Bird*.

L: Okay, so you mentioned that you don't really like to read aloud, but you do like to read alone. So is it true that you um...like to read, and also um...when you're in class you don't like to read aloud, do you ever volunteer to read aloud, or do you just read when your teacher class on you?

J: Sometimes I volunteer if like no one else volunteers, but other than that, no.

L: And at home...you like to read at home? Do you read for pleasure, or do you just read what you've been assigned?

J: I mainly just read what my homework calls for.

L: Okay, so the next question. Tell me about your experiences with the learning center. Tell me about the activities you did in learning center. What did you think of those activities?

J: We did a workbook...I forgot what the name of it is. We would like have to go...and after you read the story, you would like answer the questions about it and stuff. And we also read out loud with the resource teacher.

L: Did you feel more comfortable reading aloud with the resource teacher and that small group than you did reading in your classroom?

J: Yes, because it was only in front of two or three people.

L: So I guess in that smaller group, you felt a little more comfortable and...safe, I guess. Do you think that reading those short stories and answering the questions at the end...what did you think of that activity?

J: Um...I honestly didn't like it when I was younger, and to this day I still have to do that. And I still don't really like it because mainly because the stories are boring.

L: You know because that's a common practice, really...to do those comprehension questions after reading at the end to make sure that you understand. Do you have a better idea, a better way...for teachers to figure out if students understand what they've read?

J: Um, no I don't, but I think that helps you, but I don't think students like it very much.

L: I understand...so it's kind of like worth it because it really helps, sort of like doing vocabulary words. No one really likes it, but it really does help.

Okay, so could you tell me about the time you spent in resource? Was it enough time? And also tell me about the scheduling of it?

J: Um, I went twice a week and I thought that was enough time. I don't need any more or any less, and the teacher gives us a schedule at the beginning of the year and we just go whenever we have it scheduled.

L: Do you think it is best to have it printed on the schedule and to just go to resource as your next class, or do you think it would be better for the teacher to come and pick you up, or do you think the teacher should go into the classroom and provide the support?

J: I think that the teacher should give you a schedule because some students may be embarrassed. I'm not, really. And, what was the other question?

L: How would you feel if your resource teacher came into the classroom to help you?

J: I honestly wouldn't like that because I don't know it would just be...embarrassing.

L: Okay, so we're moving along with the next question. Based on your experiences, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the resource model? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

J: I kind of like the way resource is, like you have three or four, maybe even two people in a group, and you go meet twice a week and you just like learn things, and they teach you study techniques and they help you organize, and they...I don't really like the reading things, when they like grade you on your reading and comprehension, but I do like the way resource is.

L: Those "reading things" are those the questions at the end of chapters that you were talking about with those books?

J: Yes, and we also have to do this thing...I think it's called like, "Dibs"...or something like that.

L: Dibels? Oh, I'm just curious, what do you think about Dibels? If somebody said, tell me what you think about that Dibels, what do think?

J: Um, I think the stories are kind of boring, and I think that maybe the stories should get more interesting so that maybe you could...when I read boring things, I don't really read it well because I have to read it more slowly. When I read interesting stuff, I read it better because I'm more interested in it.

L: Okay, next question. What advice can you offer to the lower school students who currently receive extra support in reading through the resource room?

J: Um, I would tell them not to be embarrassed or anything because it's not that big a deal...because you may need help on particular things, but the other students may also need help

on other particular things. So you don't have to be embarrassed...and you shouldn't complain about it because the teachers get mad when you complain. Seriously...and I realize that you miss art and PE, but you'll have to kind of just get used to it because that's when it happens.

L: With the missing art and PE...is that just purely a scheduling issue? It just happens that way?

J: No, they do that on purpose so that you don't miss the important subjects like math and language arts and history and science and subjects like that.

L: So the bottom line at your school is that if you go to resource, you're going to miss art and you're going to miss PE.

J: Um, you're either going to miss like, switch up between art and music and 8th grade photography, but you're either going to miss those...I do it during writing lab which I like because I don't really like writing lab. So you miss it one time a week and I miss PE one time a week.

L: That's okay with you?

J: Um, yes...and sometimes if I'm behind in writing lab, I don't go to resource. I okay it with my teacher, or like sometimes if I'm behind on something, I make it up during that time.

L: Okay, so next we're just going to talk about how you felt about receiving resource help at your school in reading. So if you could talk about that when you were in lower school, and also how you feel about getting that extra help now.

J: I didn't like it when I was in lower school, like I said earlier, but I think it really does help you in the long run because I...I think I was behind the other students. Some of them were even lower than me, but I was behind also. And...resource really helped to catch up on that and learn what I needed to learn. And, in middle school, I like it because I can organize and I can learn new study techniques to get ready for high school...and um, the reading, I don't know if it really helps me or not because I don't really like see a difference, but I also practice on spelling which I need to practice on also.

L: Um, you said when you were in lower school that you didn't really like it. Do you know why you didn't really like it?

J: Um, probably just the fact that I didn't really have the resource with my friends, and I was missing the funnest classes of the day, so...

L: That makes sense to me.

Um, okay, and let's see...so the last question is...based on your journey of learning to read, if you were sort of in charge of designing this model of support, what would you have to say about that?

J: I would say that the kids should pick out their own books because those short stories that the teacher give you to read are boring and kids, I think, I still do this...when you read something boring you slow down and you just don't focus on it because you're bored of it, and if you pick

out things that you want to read than you'll go faster and comprehend it more. And teachers should ask them everything that they remember, and...

L: That's actually really very helpful. Thank you for offering that piece of advice, so thank you.

APPENDIX N

Date: January 6, 2010

Participant: Brenda

Lori: Okay, so we're moving along and I'm talking to Jenna's mother. We'll start with the first question. Please tell me a little about yourself as a parent of a child who has participated in resource support for reading.

Brenda: Okay. Well, um...Jenna, when she was little had to move schools. She was at Ursuline and we had to move her to Dixon at the end of her kindergarten year, and that was difficult, but she was extremely dyslexic. She was unable to hold a pen. So for us it was a necessity. I, um...was ready to do whatever it took. Do you need more...

L: Um...

B: So we did whatever...she had gone through, even in kindergarten she had gotten outside support. Um, and so going to Dixon sort of saved our lives a little bit. It sort of stopped us from running around, and doing all that extra stuff, and so it helped us out a lot, so...um, I, I was very good with her going to resource.

L: So, she left Ursuline and went to Dixon...and once she got there, you felt like she got what she needed during the school day? You felt like you were able to cut out some of that extra stuff?

B: Absolutely, she received occupational therapy, also...she had to go to resource in the beginning, I think five times a week, and she received occupational therapy, I think three times a week when she first started. Occupational therapy came into Dixon because it was in addition because the school did not employ an occupational therapist.

L: So now if we could talk a little bit about the experiences Jenna had in the resource center, um...when she was in elementary school. So what do you think Jenna thought about getting the extra help? Do you think she like it or disliked it? Did she say anything about it to you?

B: Um, when she was little there were years that she was, um...she would start out strong in the beginning of the year, but by the end of the year she would be completely worn out. I think that she didn't like the stigma a lot of times that went on with it, but as she's gotten older she's realized that she needs the help and in order to move on, she needs it. She's done unbelievable well coming from where she's come from because her, her learning disability was so severe. So um, she has felt bad about it at time, but she uh, was sad, and a lot of crying about the pairing because they pair up in twos and threes, and a lot of crying about who, who she'd be paired up with (laughing), but definitely more positive than negative.

L: Um, and do you find with age, it's gotten more positive as she's matured, she's gotten more positive about it?

B: Absolutely. As she's aged she's gotten more mature. She's realized how much, how far she's come, and she's all positive about it now. So um, it's been a wonderful experience for her.

L: Okay, so the next question. Based on your experiences as a parent, do you have any suggestions for ways to improve the resource model, or/and do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

B: Um, I do think that Dixon in particular has a great resource program. I do think that one thing they could do, would be to keep parents more involved. Instead of having two yearly meetings, I think that maybe we should be brought in on a monthly basis and taught some, especially when the kids were younger, taught some, some um, of the methods so that we could do some of the work at home. You know it would be helpful if we knew, if we were more educated when we were doing homework with them. If we knew some of the methods, and I feel like some of the time, I didn't feel included in that way, and I would have liked to have been educated more. So I'd have to do a lot of calling and calling at one point to try to find out what I could do to help. Instead of them calling me in and saying this is what you could do...but I do think overall, Dixon resource program is wonderful.

L: Yeah, um...that's a good piece of advice, actually. Is there anything that you could think about that you just wouldn't want to change about the model as it stands? Something that we should keep the same.

B: I think there's a lot of things that I wouldn't want to change. Um, I think the fact that they're working either one-on-one, or either three on one with a teacher is wonderful, and I think that they, I think that their faculty there...all of their faculty is so trained on helping kids with learning disabilities, not just the learning specialists, everybody. And so, in every class that they go into, all the teachers are trained. So um, I have another...out of five of my children, four of my children are dyslexic. Two went to Dixon and I have two more at Holy Name, and it's amazing the training...the teachers at Holy Name have no training, and they have a resource department and...but it's no where near the training. And I can tell you, the only reason my other two children that are dyslexic aren't at Dixon is because of the financial part because of the money. We simply weren't (laughing)...we weren't planning on having five children. And it's just so expensive. And that's the only reason why they're not at Dixon. I feel like I love those teachers, all around everywhere, they're so well trained. And that's something I definitely wouldn't want to see changed.

L: So what advice can you offer to other parents who have children who receive resource help in reading?

B: I would say get help as soon as you possibly can and as early as you possibly can...and try not to stress too much about it because it's gonna be okay. (Laughing) I think that some parents get very, very stressed, and I was very sad because anytime something happens to your kids, you get very emotional when it first happens, but then you realize that worse things can happen. I would say most of all, get help as soon as you possibly can. I know most get as most help as you can possibly afford and would say that's the two most important things to do in my opinion.

L: Okay, and moving on to the next question, how did you feel about Jenna getting the extra help in reading? What did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?

B: Well, Jenna really did only get help in reading. Um, she, she is wonderful in math and everything else. She was only affected in reading. Um, and writing of course...what did you...the things I liked best were, I liked everything, I guess. They were a few years that I struggled that I didn't click very well with the person that was giving her the resource help, and I would have to go back and talk to the administration. I couldn't really change it, but there were a few years that we had some changes and that didn't really work out. And it, it's hard when...from year to year...I don't like, I like to have the same person for as long as possible. I don't like when you're like starting over every year. And so all through middle school, I think she's had the same person, and I think that's, I love that continuity. In elementary school, I think she changed just about every year and that was very hard. And sometimes she changed two or three times in one year, but that was because of the hurricane and all that stuff, but I didn't like that at all...the changing and that...and I already said that I didn't like the lack of communication, and sometimes I felt like I needed to be involved more. I needed to know more. I wanted to know more what was going on, on a daily basis instead of every three months. I wanted to know what was going on constantly...even email updates. And I guess that's in all parts of the school. I'd like to be even more involved and know more everyday instead of just on those parent teacher conferences when you get a bulk of information and you're kind of lost.

L: Right, right...thank you um, the last question is for people like me...reading teachers, reading specialists, what do you think is the best thing we can do for kids like yours?

B: I think the best thing that you can do is work as hard as you can and find their weak spots and try to make it their strongest. For Jenna, it was always her reading comprehension...it was always so weak. I guess it's something that's always going to be weak, but it's something that...she's been in resource for seven years and she's gotten so much better. So I think it's so important for teachers to learn about the child, find out what's their weak and strong points and boost their self esteem and make them...and help them in any way that can.

L: I agree with you...and that concludes that interview. Thank you so much.

APPENDIX O

Date: December 21, 2009

Participant: Andie

Lori: Please tell me a little about yourself as a student and as a learner.

Andie: Um...well, as a student. I'm just trying to get through. My dyslexia really affects me in school. It's like, sometimes difficult for tests and all the hard words and everything during the test, and so it's...sometimes difficult.

L: Do you have a favorite subject or a least favorite subject?

A: My probably least favorite subject is life science because um...like the material is sometimes really hard to read, and like the big words are really hard to read. And my favorite subject is LA history because I have like a really good memorization. So, just...and it's like I like hearing about stories and things that happened in the past. So, that's my favorite subject.

L: Okay, so moving along to the next question. I'd like for you to tell me about the extra help you received in reading. You can talk about the extra help in school, out of school...and would you tell me about the activities you did during resource. What did you think of those activities?

A: Well, um...the extra help I got in reading, it was really helpful. Um, my teachers really, they really wanted me to do well in school. And, sometimes the activities we did...I remember we had big black boards and they would write little words, and we would have to spell them out, read them out loud, and then sound them out. And it was helpful because as I like graduated on to like, I graduated on to like bigger words and bigger words and it helped me with my spelling and pronouncing words better and it helped me read them better.

L: Do you know where those words came from? Were they out of a book that you were reading or a workbook or something?

A: I think...it was books that we read and we had a workbook. I don't think...I can't really remember. As I got older it got harder and harder and so I learned more. I learned way more.

L: How about actually reading during extra time. Can you talk about the kinds of things you did with books and how you read...maybe in a small group or alone...

A: Um, well, when we had free reading time, you would get in a group and read a page, each person would read a page. Sometimes that was difficult for me and I was embarrassed sometimes because I couldn't read the words sometimes. It helped because then I, like, as I was doing the extra help I got better, so then I like felt better in my reading.

L: Okay, moving on...the next question is based on your experiences, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve extra support for reading? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

A: Um, well I did not. I was always embarrassed when they came to pick me up. I was always embarrassed because I was the only girl in the whole grade who got to go to the room where they

helped you, and it was very embarrassing, and I remember being called “stupid” by another student and I remember that to this day, and it was very hurtful and I just remember that. And the thing that I like about it, that they helped me, was that they were very patient with me and they really like wanted me to get the answer right. And when I was working in the workbook or on the blackboard or something and if I got something wrong, they weren’t like, oh my gosh, you have to do this. They were very helpful. But some of the things I didn’t like were, when you got something wrong they were patient, but they kind of would have a little, they would be frustrated with you a little, and that kind of, I didn’t really like that.

L: You said that you didn’t like when they picked you up. Can you think of a better way that could have been done? Do you think it would have been better if the specialist came into the class to help you? Can you think of another way to do it so that it would have bothered you the way that you said that it did?

A: Well, when I was little it bothered me more...but now that I think about it, if I’d never, I mean, I think it would be more embarrassing if they like came and sat down with you during the class, but the way they picked you up. Now that I think about it, if they didn’t pick me up then I wouldn’t be the person that I am today. I wouldn’t be a good reader, but I think maybe they could have liked called you in...maybe if they teacher was like, Andie, you can go now. So it’d be more private.

L: So you’re sort of saying, saying that if the classroom teacher dismissed you instead of the teacher coming to pick you up at the door to pick you up...

A: Yes, ma’am. I think that would be much easier for a student.

L: Okay, thank you, Andie. What advice can you offer to students who currently receive extra help in reading?

A: Keep doing it. It’s...keep doing it. It’s like, you probably don’t like it right now, but once you get older and like go to middle school and go to high school, it’s gonna be like very easier for you. You could be the best reader in the class because you got that extra help. And you’re probably embarrassed now and just keep doing it...just keep doing it. You get better at your reading and writing. Maybe when you get older you may be a writer or be a teacher just by that help.

L: Okay, the next question. How did you feel about receiving the extra help? Um, you can talk about this during different phases of your life. What did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?

A: Well, when I was little in lower school, I hated it. I hated being called out the room to go do that. I was very embarrassed. Some of the kids, they would like laugh at me. When I would get back in the room, they would be like, where’d you go, where’d you go. And I would be like embarrassed to tell them that I went to get extra help. But now, lower school, it was very difficult for me. You know I was embarrassed, all the kids knew where I was going and I had dyslexia and I was very embarrassed by it.

But now in middle school it’s much better because I know how to do this stuff and I know how to read, how to read these big words that I never knew I could. And it’s a lot easier. And all of

my friends, they really support me on it. They'll help me. Some of my friends, when I'm doing homework... Olivia, she really helps me with my disability. She'll tell me how to spell this words, and it's really helpful, and I'm really grateful for all my friends that help me. And, it's just so much better now, and I'm really grateful I got the extra help.

L: Okay so this brings us to the last question. Based on your experiences and your journey of learning to read, what do you think reading professionals and teachers should know?

A: Um, well. I just want to say to all the reading teachers and specialists, thank you so much for helping people with my disability...for helping with kids who may not be able to read and mix up letters and numbers. Um, just, I'm really grateful that I got that extra help and that I am who I am today. And, just, thank you, and um, those kind of teachers really help students a lot. And, I'm just really grateful for them, and just, thank you for helping me.

L: Um, Andie, that's the last question and that will conclude our interview, and I just want to thank you so much because your responses and your insight will add so much richness to the study. Thank you.

APPENDIX P

Date: December 21, 2009

Participant: Caroline

Lori: Okay, so now we're moving on and I'm talking with Caroline, Andie's mother, and we're going to start with the first question. Please tell me a little about yourself as a parent of a child who has participated in extra help for reading.

C: I'm Andie's mom, and it's been quite a journey. When she was very, very small she couldn't write and there was a challenge and we couldn't quite recognize what was going on. And we were just very, very grateful at her school that they did. They were incredibly helpful in offering extra help. Sometimes even regular teachers would help her out of the kindness of their hearts and I will never, never forget that.

L: Thank you. Um, next would you tell me about Andie's experiences as a child who got extra help in reading? What did she think about getting the extra help? What did she say about it? What do you think about the experiences she had? And, I can repeat these questions if you need me to.

C: I would just recommend that they protect their little spirits and make...I think that could be done in a way that they're not pulled out and made to look different. They're just as special as everybody else. They just have a challenge. So, if, if, I was in that field I would just make it a different class, and not make it so, so...appear negative to the child because Andie was a little embarrassed to "walk the walk." It was like, "walking the walk" to go. She, she would never say that she didn't want to go, so I would imagine that she really appreciated it at the same time.

L: Um, what do you think about the experiences she had in lower school getting that extra help?

C: I was incredibly grateful. They were tremendous in trying to help her. I think sometimes it's difficult...you know how much help a child needs, and recognizing the individual situation. I'm sure there were other children there that had issues...I know there were. And we did some other things outside of school, and that was nice, too. At the time, financially, we were able to get her a lot of help and I'm really grateful for that.

L: Okay, the next question. Based on your experiences as a parent, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve extra support in reading? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

C: The wonderful, loving people in that field have been very special, and that's what I have experienced where Andie goes to school; however, I would reiterate that to just make those classes...you know, these extra help classes not so odd, for the lack of a better word. You know, it's not odd, it's just something extra, or something different. So that, that they don't feel like they're strange. You know, because of course a dyslexic child has those feelings.

L: Okay, what advice can you offer to other parents who have children who get extra help in reading?

C: Enjoy it. Communicate with the person that's helping your child, you know so you can help them...help them with the...I'm talking over myself, I know. In other words, they're helping them and you can support that help if you're in great communication with the person that's doing the help. I don't know if I'm explaining myself correctly. But, but, but I was just so incredibly grateful for that and I wish, I really kind of wish that it would have started a tiny bit earlier, but it's hard to recognize with little kids. Often dyslexic children are so bright in so many other ways that you keep thinking that, tomorrow that will come, tomorrow that will change...I wish that I could have had recognized that earlier.

But mainly, stay in communication with the educators. I think we deserve that. I think the children deserve that and I think the parents deserve that.

L: Okay and here's the next question, and I know it may be repetitive...but again, how did you feel about your child receiving extra support in reading? What did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?

C: I liked it. I can't say...there was nothing I did not like about it. And as, as time passes, you realize how much you liked it because at the time...as, as a mother of a young child, you're just kind of freaked out a little bit because you just want everything to be okay for your baby that you love. I know we're all in agreement on that.

You're freaked out. You don't quite know what's going on and so, just embrace it. Enjoy the ride. They're all so special and so wonderful and it all works out, and they're going to be great at whatever. The greatness might be in a different area, like my daughter seems to think that she can do anything. And I think that's part of the schools that we send them to and how we parent them. They are great. They are great and wonderful.

L: Thank you, and the last question is...based on your experiences of watching and supporting Andie in becoming a reader, what do you think is important for reading professionals to know?

C: To be very aware of the problem, very sensitive to the problem. Um, I try to really communicate with our teachers and most of them are so wonderful and loving and supportive, and some more than others. But that's just huge because if you have a great relationship with the teachers and the specialists, they can help you so much to support what they're doing in school at home. It's a journey. It is really a journey, and I'll just...I hope I'm not saying something out of turn, but I'll still read a whole book out loud and do whatever I have to do to help her be all that she can be.

L: Thank you so much, Caroline. That's the last question and that will conclude our interview.

APPENDIX Q

Participant: Aaron

Date: December 21, 2009

Lori: Okay, so I've introduced myself and I am speaking with Aaron, and um today is December 21st. We are going to start. Aaron is going to tell me a little about himself as a student and as a learner.

Aaron: Well, uh...my favorite subject is by far history. I kind of like languages, but I definitely hate the ones that they offer at school. And uh, I've always hated reading since I was like in first grade. Uh, I used to like it, but then I really started hating it. Math is definitely not a fun subject for me. And English is getting better...that's pretty much all.

L: So when you were talking about reading...because you used the word "hate"...what made you hate it?

A: Well, when I was like a lot younger, I used to read a lot for fun. I wasn't very good. I wasn't very fast, but me and my mom we used to always sit on the couch and she would read her book and I would read Harry Potter, and then started I getting reading assignments. So I would like have to stop whatever books I was reading, and I wasn't a very...I'm still not a very fast reader, so I hate that because I now... I have a deadline and don't get to pick the books that I'm reading and ever since then I really hated reading.

L: Okay, thank you. So moving on to the next question, we're going to talk about your time in lower school. I'd like for you to tell me about your experiences and the support you received in reading. Tell me about the activities you did. What did you think of them?

A: Well, I think I had like two or three extra help teachers...I think that's what we call it. Um, and uh, well we did a lot on reading, and they had like this set of leveled books in the back and um, uh, I'd usually go. When I was like in 2nd grade I went with like two people. It was me and another girl. We went and uh, we did a lot of vocab with our vocab books, and sentence writing and stuff. Definitions...all that vocab stuff. We did do a little math, but not as much as we did in reading and like English stuff. And uh, yeah I mean that's uh, oh, and in 1st grade I went with a little bit bigger group. Actually it was a lot bigger group. It was like six of us, and in 3rd grade, too. I think in 4th grade, too. Third grade and fourth grade were pretty much the same as first grade because we had the same person and uh, a lot of...like we sat at the table and I think we like passed the book on. I'm not sure. We might have, though. We sat in like a semicircle table and read like that and did work like that.

L: Um, of those activities, what did you think about the vocabulary and writing activities? And also, what did you think about sitting in the semicircle to read? Was there only one copy of the book, or did you all have your own copies of the book?

A: We had our own copy of the book. I'm pretty sure. I didn't like it, but it probably helped me. I didn't like it.

L: Okay, so the next question is...based on your experiences, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve extra help? Do you have any recommendations for ways to keep it the same?

A: Uh, well one thing I know I really didn't like was we had to go during like free play or recess. And um, and I only really had like one or two friends in there with me and like all the rest of my friends were outside playing basketball and football and soccer and stuff like that. So I couldn't really uh, I didn't really get to do everything that I liked to do. And uh, that kind of like really was not fun. I mean, I don't know if there would be another time that we could have gone, but I know that definitely was not fun at all because I couldn't really do anything with my friends and that really sucked.

L: Yeah.

A: Um, I guess like what we did in there was fine. I think sometimes we had like extra homework which I really hated. I remember one year we had Christmas homework. We had to do to like a whole big book for Christmas, so I had to sit down on Christmas Day and do homework while everyone else was playing with their toys. That wasn't fun.

L: Oh, no. Is there anything that you would keep the same?

A: I think it was, it was...pretty good what we did in there, I guess. I can't remember exactly what it was, but I probably helped me.

L: Yeah, because you said you eventually did learn to read.

A: Yeah, I learned to read like pretty much, basics in kindergarten and stuff, like pretty much towards the end of the year. I was always like pretty much catching on like right at the end of the year. And uh, I remember at the beginning of first grade...I remember in first grade I was always like the last one to finish everything. I uh, went to extra help...or whatever it's called.

L: What advice can you offer to students who currently attend extra help?

A: Well, don't fight it as much as I did because I like fought it a lot. Uh, I didn't want to do anything that was given to me, and stuff, but I know now that it pretty much helped me. Even though it might have helped a little bit more in different ways, but just try not to fight it too much and just pay attention and try not to mess around like I did. I mess around in class a lot. I still do that. Yeah.

L: Um, why do you think you fought it? And why do you think you mess around in class I'm just asking because I see you smiling about it.

A: Because it's fun and more fun to be a rebel then to just go along with it then uh...well, I wouldn't say I'm a rebel. But, I probably fought it because I couldn't hang out with my friends and stuff. When they were like in recess and I was inside, and all that put together, you know having to do extra work and not getting what I want to do...I remember in fourth grade, they took the movie we were going to watch and we were, like ten people in the class, we were all at extra help, and so luckily I didn't have to go to school and watch a really bad movie. And so, stuff like that since we weren't in class, we missed out on stuff.

But they did do some cool stuff. Like when I was in third or fourth grade, we did a play. What our extra help teacher did, was like, she put together, she had us put together a script like so that we would be writing, and she made us do it in complete sentences and proper grammar, and stuff. So um, like that was fun. I guess now I realize that she was helping us and at the same time making it fun. So it was a lot of fun. We got to put together a whole play and we got to like show the whole grade. It was fun.

L: Great. So, now just to move on to touch on your feelings again with receiving the extra help. What did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?

A: Well, it probably helped me...probably. Like, I can't really tell how I'd be if I didn't go. Uh, so yeah, I guess I liked how it somewhat helped me. I didn't like how it was so obvious that I went to it. It was like, Oh Aaron, and you and you and you, go right now. You know, you go. And that was never fun. That was definitely never fun.

L: Okay, and the final thought is...based on your experiences and what you know, sort of the journey that you've gone through, if someone asked you what's the best way to provide extra help to people who need it for reading. What would you say to them?

A: Uh, for reading. I would say to get them to catch on to reading, let them read their own books. Maybe if we could have for reading, you get to pick, like not just a certain couple of books they lay out, but lots of books that they really want to read. But obviously like, if it's too low of a level to read, like you can't pick *The Cat and in the Hat* when you're like in fifth grade, but they could pick the book that they wanted to read.

And also "AR"...accelerated reader, accelerating reading, or something like that. That wasn't fun because they had like two or three kids in the class who were like really, really smart and they were like always getting all kinds of medals and stuff, so it kind of like made you feel left out and stuff, especially for people who couldn't read that well.

L: Is that just a program for your school?

A: No, no. I think that's what it's called, accelerated reading...

L: How does that work?

A: Well, each book has uh, like a certain amount of points on it. You know, bigger books might have like 25 points or something and a smaller book might have like 5 points, depending on the difficulty. You would get like a certain amount of points each quarter, and uh, so like our class had to get like 21 points, so there were always a like two kids in the class who would get like a 1000 points and like I mean...one of my friends right now, he's like one of my friends right now, this kid's like literally a genius. I have no doubt that he could make it in to Harvard right now. I mean he speaks so many...he's a, a genius. I remember he could get like a 1000, maybe 2000, I don't know, maybe 500 a quarter, and they would always put up signs about it...like he's so great, and they would always give out medals. They were like, here good job, and they would put up stars and stuff, and I guess that made them feel better, but it made the rest of us feel like we were the dumb kids. So, it wasn't fun. We felt kind of excluded because they're were like five or so kids who could really read, so they would get stuff like about them put up around the library, and that was like not fun.

L: Well, that question concludes our interview, and I just need to thank you so much for what you offered and what you said. I learned a great deal from sitting here listening to you, so thank you so much.

APPENDIX R

Date: December 21, 2009

Participant: Jamie

Lori: Please tell me a little about yourself as a parent of a child who has participated in receiving extra help in reading.

Jamie: So we found out that Aaron had learning issues in Pre-K based on tests that recommended that Aaron start to get some sort of extra help. So actually what we did was we hired Charlotte and Charlotte met with Aaron two days a week all the way through seventh grade. I don't even know at school at what point they started using extra help or whatever, or they don't, or they didn't then, even use the term "learning center," so I don't know if they consider themselves having a learning center now or not because what they had was extra help that started...I don't remember if it started in kindergarten or first grade, but he went and there were, there was Ms. Taylor and there was another learning person whose name I can't remember. And they would go for extra help during the day with those folks all the way through middle school and they, I think mainly work on reading. I don't think that they worked on any other topics. Not to my knowledge, I don't think they worked on math or anything. I think it was all geared towards reading, okay.

L: So in preschool, when you got that testing information, how did you react to that?

J: Oh, I guess I was disappointed. I was worried because I guess I didn't understand 'cause Aaron, to me, seemed very bright. I didn't really understand a lot of the issues. In fact, I think it was very neat that they caught it. He had gone to the Little Red School House and they had no clue that there were learning issues. And um, they had been working with him so I was really kind of surprised. But then I did notice, because it was funny, because I remember going on a cruise with him and I remember he couldn't keep track of the days of the week even in kindergarten...uh, first grade. Like, they had on those...the elevator, Monday, okay, so you'd go tomorrow is going to be...and he couldn't figure that out. And that was kind of the first thing I had that I went, Oh, man. He really doesn't get sequencing and some of these concepts. So um, you know I just kind of then decided we would have somebody kind of help him all the time. We had Charlotte and then we had the support at school for the extra help.

L: Okay, so please tell me about Aaron's experiences going to extra help. What did he think about it? What did he say about it? What do you think about the experiences he had?

J: Um, he never complained about going to extra help. He just kind of went to extra help, I guess. It was just something that he did. He didn't seem embarrassed by it. Um, you know, he um...got frustrated a lot in school. He had a lot of trouble in second grade. That was probably in lower...second grade and fourth grade were his hardest grades where he had trouble because of his learning issues. But really, honestly, he's a pretty good reader. So as far as learning center, or whatever it is, went, which I think reading is what they concentrated on, really I think he's a pretty good reader for a kid who has dyslexia and all these other things. Really, I think he's fine.

We did a lot of reading together. Like the way we got through *Harry Potter* was I read a page, he read half a page, I read two pages...and that's how we read a lot of stuff. And he would read

over my shoulder, or we would have two copies. And I read out loud so that we could read through it together.

So, when he was a little older they wrote a play, they were in the play, and they did it. She really started to make it more fun. Now whether she always did that with the higher grades or not, I don't know. But that was a really good experience, and all the kids who were in that, really enjoyed it and got into writing their play. They all learned their parts. It was really, it was really good. They felt special being in extra help because they got to do this play and other people didn't. So I thought that was a real good thing she did. I don't know if she...I almost got the sense like that had just popped in her head and she hadn't thought about it. And I thought, that's great, and it was really very good for them. It was kind of a hands-on reading and writing experience. So I thought that was good. So, anything else?

L: What did you think about the experiences he had?

J: I mean he seemed to be getting what he needed...the support he needed in lower school. And between the extra help, or learning center, and going to Charlotte, I felt like he really had all the support he needed in K through fifth grade, you know. So...

L: Okay so moving on...based on your experiences as a parent, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the extra help model? Do you have any recommendations for ways to keep it the same?

J: Um, I really was, like I said, happy with the lower school model. I just think it would be useful to call it something like "the learning center." But, what are you going to do? We always thought of it as extra help, but I think it would be neat to have a title to it. The main comment that I would have is that getting the assistance they needed in lower school, there is no assistance in middle school. I mean there's just individual teachers who help out, but there is no learning center. There's only one person who seems to be providing learning assistance, and she's just incapable...whether she's just incapable, or not willing to assist kids. So, for having done such a good job in lower school, they do a dismal job in middle school.

L: Okay, thank you for that. Moving on, what advice can you offer to other parents who have children who receive extra help?

J: Um, I guess the advice is to take full advantage and encourage them to do it because in lower school, I think it's really useful. I think one thing, though, especially if they're staying is to figure out what you're going to do when you move out of that lower school into middle school because it was really misleading in a way. We kind of had all the support in lower school and we have no support in middle school. They said they were going to have support. We had this big meeting and they talked about it, but it wasn't there. So they had actually encouraged me not to have Charlotte and Aaron would have dropped out after sixth grade, and I think some kids did because their parents thought they would have extra support and they didn't. I think what needs to be made clear is that it works out fine in lower school, but then you have to figure out what kind of program you're going to have for yourself in middle school because there is none.

L: Okay, and so continuing, how did you feel about Aaron receiving the extra help? What did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?

J: Um, it seemed pretty consistent. Actually, I liked it. I mean I was very pleased with the school one through five with the support they gave out of the class.

L: Thank you so much. Actually, I think that's the last question. I really appreciate everything that you offered. It's really going to add richness to my study and I appreciate it.

J: Good!

APPENDIX S

Participant: Tammy

Date: January 22, 2009

Lori: Okay, so we'll just start with the first question. Um, please tell me a little bit about yourself as a teacher and how and why you currently work as a specialist in the learning center.

Tammy: Okay, well I started as a regular classroom teacher and the Catholic schools where I taught a variety of grade levels and I did graduate with a bachelor's in elementary education and certification in grades K-8 and learning disabled...back then it was called learning disabled...certification. And um, I taught in the Catholic schools for seven years and I came to Tall Oaks as a regular classroom teacher in 2nd grade and moved into the learning specialist vacancy that was created with the departure of one of our reading specialists, and they were happy to have me because of my learning disabled background. I also went back and got my master's degree in special education and I also have an add-on certification in gifted education. So it was an easy transition to go from the regular classroom to the learning specialist. I also had, uh, the learning specialist that was here previously was my mentor and she helped me through...getting to know the position, getting to know my responsibilities, and we uh, grew the position together. Initially it was just reading specialist and as the needs of the children became more diverse, um, we branched out into learning specialist so that I cover math, language arts, and study skills, and I also am responsible for the enrichment program and a lot of other things, too. We wear of lots of hats.

My philosophy of teaching is to find out how the student learns best and to create a program that will incorporate those strengths, and then also to come up with some strategies to help strengthen the weak areas, so if the student is visual learner, I'm going to want to things that strengthen auditory and then bring in kinesthetics so that all modalities are being addressed.

L: Great. Um, could you talk to me about your experiences as a learning specialist. I'm interested to hear how you define your role. How your role is defined to others, and by whom. And also, you've already mentioned how you were prepared for this role, but feel free to add anything if you'd like.

T: Okay, um, the teachers see my role as support for them, and I do try to fulfill that in some ways, and I also try to supplement my teaching to help the students be more effective learners in the classroom. So I really try to work as a team with them, but I also try to relay to them that in addition to my role as support for their classroom, that I also am giving the student strategies to help them become better learners.

L: Um, for the administration...do the administrators define you in the same way that you view yourself functioning?

T: The administrators, um, I don't think truly understand everything that goes on in my classroom and the number of responsibilities that I have because I see a student from the beginning when they are referred by a teacher or I take them out through some screening process like the Dibels, and then I talk with teachers, I ask teachers to release students so that I can help

them, I meet with teachers so that we can confer on what the needs of that student are. The administration also thinks that these students aren't necessarily in resource for an extended period of time. They think that um, they receive support services and then they are released. Um, when in fact I probably see most students throughout from kindergarten through fifth grade. The administration continues to add responsibilities. It is with all administrators, we try to help them out as best we can. There is a defined role. There is a paper with my role defined, but I find that that description does not necessarily speak to all the aspects of my role as a learning specialist. It, it provides a framework, but it's really more extensive than what is down, or what was explained to me when I first started. And, of course, through the years the position has evolved and of course the descriptive role was never really revised.

L: Right. <both giggle>. Um, for the support, the support that you provide to struggling readers, I know that you mentioned earlier that you don't need a formal evaluation to come and get the extra help from you. For those children, are you primarily their reading teacher for reading groups? Or could you sort of explain how that happens to me?

T: For the students who come for reading support, I am not their primary reading teacher because I can only see students a maximum of two times a week because I see so many and my time is limited. So I work in support of their primary reading teacher, whether it be their homeroom teacher, or in fourth or fifth grade they are departmentalized, it would be the teacher responsible for reading for those classes. I don't give grade, but every quarter, I do write a progress report that goes home in the report card so that parents have at least a quarterly, if not more often, report of accounting of how their student is progressing through with my support, and then the teacher also provides a reading grade and a comment if necessary.

L: So during the two times that they come to you, you sort of have skills sets aside based on their needs? Or is it like an on-going story that they are reading, or does that change per grade?

T: Every grade level has different skills that I work on. In first and second grade, I use Project Read to strengthen phonics skills, and then we also have Literacy by Design by Rigby to support reading in third grade, and in fourth and fifth grade I work primarily on language, on written language skills, and study skills, and reading comprehension skills.

L: Um, the next question is, do you think the classroom teachers feel prepared to work with these readers who struggle so much? Why do you think that? Can you think of any examples from your experiences?

T: The teachers, I find in kindergarten, first, and second grade, because they are doing reading groups, they are better prepared to work with students who have learning difficulties, or who are weak in reading because they will take them aside and work in a small group or individually. So we work very closely in that capacity. It's more difficult in third, fourth, and fifth grade because the teachers are teaching more whole group, in a whole group setting, and they don't have as much time to give a student individually. And also, fourth and fifth grade teachers are expecting students to be more independent learners and responsible, and probably receiving outside help. Their expectations are greater for those students, and not so much individualized help is afforded to them at those levels.

L: Um, that just brings to mind, too...could you talk about the cases in which you recommend to the parents, in addition to the kind of help that you give, the tutors or the specialists that are hired outside of what's offered here at school.

T: Um, we sometimes see students who are in need of speech therapy and we recommend speech therapy. For the students who continue to struggle and reading resource twice a week does not seem sufficient to fulfill their needs then I will speak to the parents about recommending an after school tutor, or perhaps a tutor that comes on campus and would pull the students out in addition to the two times that they come to resource. Currently we have a learning specialist who's on campus and she contracts privately with parents, and she comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So what I do is make sure that I see the students on Mondays and Wednesdays or Wednesdays and Fridays. So that they are getting resource help four days a week in a more consistent pattern. That private contracted learning specialist and I work closely together to make sure that our programs are in sync and that we are supporting each other, and that we are supporting the classroom teacher in the skills that the student needs.

L: Um, does the program, the learning center here, is that an additional fee, or is that included in the tuition?

T: The learning center here at Tall Oaks is not an additional fee. It's included in the tuition.

L: And um, for the students who come two days a week, or three days a week, could you just sort of talk about what a typical week or day looks like in your program? You sort of already talked about Project Read and what you do, but could you talk about specific activities or describe anything that might be good for that question.

T: Okay, um, I like to use a lot of that strategies that I learned when I went to the University of Columbia and participated in Lucy Calkins' project writing and project reading courses, and a particular book that I like very much is called *The Mosaic of Thought* and the strategies are very helpful for students in third and fourth and fifth grade for reinforcing comprehension skills. In first and second grade, I continue to use Project Read. Also for language arts, I like to use the Susan Carrakur program called Multisensory Grammar that grammar program provides a color coded program in which each part of speech is a different color and you learn to build sentences based on the color patterns. Students learn to identify and associate the color with the part of speech and it helps to reinforce the learning that the teachers present in third and fourth and fifth grades in relation to learning grammar and parts of speech. And I use the Dibels program to screen kindergarten and first grade students, uh, all of kindergarten, and first grade students that we are particularly concerned about.

L: That's great. So the last part of the interview is just sort of talking about feelings. How do you think the children feel about receiving the extra help? How do you think their parents feel? Can you think of any examples to support your thoughts?

T: The students that come from kindergarten, first, and second grade are always very excited to come and what I like to think that I did is that I provide a lot of interesting activities, a variety of activities and some fun activities so that they are interested in returning and I help them how to learn. When the students reach fourth and fifth grade, they tend to not want to come so much because they don't want to feel singled out. They start to feel self-conscious about their

weaknesses. Parents usually are very supportive in the younger grade and they want their child to come see the learning specialist, and as the student grows older, they are more resistant to it because they want to see their child relying less on the learning specialist and becoming more responsible for their own learning, and so there is some difficulty in getting parents of older students agree to let their students be released. And the other problem is that they don't want their students to miss critical class time because our fourth and fifth grade is departmentalized and each class is loaded with a lot of information and they don't want their students to miss.

L: Thank you. I think that concludes the interview. Thank you so much.

T: You're welcome.

APPENDIX T

Date: December 16, 2009

Participant: Samantha

Lori: Please tell me a little about yourself as a student and as a learner.

Samantha: When I was in lower school, I went to the learning center and I always thought I had a lot of trouble with reading when I was in lower school. So I mostly went, well, we went there and we read books. Um...um, I always thought, I think I still am not the best reader. It takes me a long time to read and it, uh, normally if I read it in my head I don't understand it so I have to read it out loud.

L: Tell me about your experiences with learning center. Tell me about the activities you did in learning center. What did you think of them?

S: Uh, well we always went in there and read and she would give us stickers if we did a good job, and if we got a certain amount of stickers we got to get something out of the treat box. Uh, we made an immigrant project when we were in 3rd or 4th grade and we presented it to the 5th graders so that was improvement to be able to present in front of older people. And, we went to her house and we had spaghetti. I don't really know, but I think it had something to the book. I don't remember, but it was a really hard book. We read it in 4th or 5th grade. It was about the Holocaust and I thought that book was really, really hard for me. And, I've always, even now when I read for the class, I skip over a lot. I mess up on like really easy words.

L: So when you were in the small group in the learning center, were you um, in a more comfortable position to read aloud with your classmates or did it make a difference to you whether you were in a small group or with the whole class?

S: When I'm in the whole class, I don't like reading aloud because I'm always scared that I'm going to mess up like on an easy, something easy. In learning center, it wasn't bad, well not bad at all. Some people in there had reading problems, too.

L: Based on your experiences, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the learning center model? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

S: I really liked it, but the whole time I was at the learning center, I was with the same person so I didn't really get to see anything different, and how any other person would do it. Uh, I really liked how she gave us stickers so it made you want to improve and do better.

L: Samantha, when you say that you had the same person, do you mean the teacher.

S: Yeah.

L: So would you have liked to work with a variety of different teachers so that you could see how else it could be done? I guess that's what I am trying to say.

S: Um, I like how she didn't, but if I were with a different teacher, I would know if I wanted to be with a different teacher because I was never with a different one, so I'm not really sure.

L: That makes sense to me. That's a good point that you make.

L: Okay, so what advice can you offer to students in the lower school who currently attend?

S: Um, maybe don't always put yourself down if you are behind everyone and sometimes people look at you funny if you go there, mostly when you're younger. When you're older it's not that big of a deal, but when you're like in 3rd or 4th grade it, they sort of. I was sometimes embarrassed to go because sometimes we weren't reading the same book in class, and we were always one, maybe one book, behind in the learning center.

L: Um, so when you say one book behind was it that your classmates already read that book and you would read it after them? Is that, was that the situation?

S: Sometimes it was, or sometimes we just read really slow to make sure everyone understood it, and we would...

L: So is it true that you read the same books that your classmates read in 3rd and 4th grade?

S: Um, I think most of the time, as I remember most of the time we did. Um, on occasion we might read a different book.

L: Oh, okay that makes sense.

L: Okay, um...so how did you feel about receiving learning center support? And uh, you can talk about this during different phases in your life. And if there were things you liked about it or disliked about it, you can talk about those things as well.

S: I liked it because it really helped me, and I was always, um...in 4th grade, we didn't have learning center and we read as a class and we just picked up with learning center. So, I didn't really like reading with the class because we hadn't done that before because like in 3rd and 2nd grade, we just went at our own pace, and in like 4th grade and 5th grade we stayed with the classes and we didn't go as much so it was just like a checkup. In 1st and 2nd grade we went like twice or three times a week because we read in a small group and you never felt like you were left behind because they would always stop and wait for you.

L: So if you were in charge of conducting a day in the learning center, or designing a learning center what would you say about that?

S: Well, I'm not really sure because I was with the same person through lower school, so I don't really know any methods besides what she did. Um, I still think it's good to have the same person most of the time, but maybe like two of the years, maybe someone different. But it doesn't have to be someone different every year because they might not know where you left off. They might not know where you are, so it might just be like a fresh start and not like...starting where you left off.

L: Well, thank you so much. And that concludes that interview and I certainly appreciate so much the information that you provided.

APPENDIX U

Date: December 16, 2009

Participant: Becca

Lori: Please tell me a little about yourself as a parent of a child (children) who have participated in learning center support for reading?

Becca: Okay, I'm a mother of four children. Four children, who have which had to receive help in school...um, extra support in school. I also went through the same process myself as a child. You know, I guess I wasn't surprised by my children needing extra help. I was probably a little bit more laid back in the beginning than I am now. So...

Lori: Would you please tell me about your child's experiences as a learning center student. What did she think about going to learning center? What did she say about it? What do you think about the experiences she had?

Becca: Well the feedback I would get from probably *<emphasis>* all four of them is that they enjoyed going. Um, they enjoyed working in a small group and that would actually help them in the classroom. They always enjoyed getting to be able to pick out of a treat box or get stickers. That was always a great incentive. It was always relayed back to me as a positive reinforcement.

Lori: Um...what do you think about the experiences your children had?

Becca: From my children, the experiences seemed to be pretty much the same. They enjoyed being pulled out and they enjoyed the positive reinforcement.

Lori: In consideration of your experiences as a parent, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the learning center model? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

Becca: Um, well, um...I guess I'll start off with what I would probably keep the same. And the same would be the positive reinforcement. Um, working...pulling them out of the classroom and working in small groups on specific issues that they need help with and um...building their confidence.

Um...things that I would like to change, and it may be hard to do, but maybe to see how they interact more in the classroom, um...and maybe have a little extra help there so that they can also function in the big group, too. Um, I also have experienced um...that I've learned that it's good for the learning center to talk with the teachers, to talk with the parents, to talk to the head of the school...well not the head of the school, I guess the principal, and to have a program set's pretty concise and they're being monitored along the way so that there are not things being done that are being done and not being productive. Um...just sort of spinning the wheels.

You know, this year as parents we have been really involved with our sons in learning center and so it's been a great thing for us because we communicate with the teacher, with the learning specialist, and also with the principal of the school. We have a pretty good program that's going on throughout the day. Um...so know everybody is on the same page. It's not like someone is

trying to do a reading group with a bunch of kids, you know, when the child probably needs more one on one help. And so, it's been positive.

Lori: What advice can you offer to other parents who have children who attend the learning center?

Becca: Um...I guess it would be more of a support group for parents because as a parent coming through the first time around, I really didn't know what to expect. But now, having four children go through, we are wiser. And it probably would have been beneficial having my first child go through to say, hey, these are the things to maybe look out for, these are the questions to maybe ask, these are the sources to maybe use, these are the things to maybe figure out...instead of the alarm bells going off too late. Um...so there's, there's things happening at school. They are having support groups for not only ADHD but for other things, too. We are having parents talking about their kids experiences...just to keep an eye, just to sort of prepare you. Even if they have different issues, it might be nice just to sort of know what to expect.

Lori: We're getting down to the last few questions here...and this will probably be reiterating, but how did you feel about your child receiving the extra help in reading? What did you like about it? Dislike?

Becca: Um...I liked that, I liked it. Uh...the things I liked about it were um, the fact that they were getting extra help. Um, I have a child in middle school who still gets extra help and so it's nice to know that she can go in there when there's a test. Um, what was the rest?

Lori: Um...dislike?

Becca: Oh, dislike. Dislike, I guess would be um...the disconnect that can be between the parent, the teacher, and the learning specialist. I have found some years that have been better than others. You know, not as cohesive.

Lori: Okay, um...and the last question. Based on your experiences of watching and supporting your children in becoming readers, how would you design a model of reading support for young readers? Basically, what would you do if you were in charge of designing this sort of support system?

Becca: Um...probably to have them evaluated so that you know exactly what the issue is. Then, um...it just instead of those little readers that were in kindergarten and first grade, because they never made sense to me on how if a child has a problem reading to just practice over and over again. I guess if I would be to design a program it would be, the children would be evaluated quite often to see areas they can work on to help them to get where they're supposed to be.

Lori: Tests?

Becca: Through test scores to see where they are. Those little level books show exactly what level they are on and what grade appropriate level in a way for us to understand.

Lori: Thank you so much for participating and for your time. That was the last question.

APPENDIX V

Date: December 10, 2009

Participant: Edward

Lori: Thank you for participating, Edward. Please tell me a little about yourself as a student...as a learner.

Edward: I'm Edward, uh...the learning center was helpful and it helped me learn in a better way even though some of the other kids were learning in a normal way...not really a normal way, just a different way. And, but it still helped me. It just got the job done.

L: So Edward, please tell me about the experiences you had in learning center. I'd like for you to tell me about the activities you did in learning center. What did you think of them?

E: In the learning center, an example would be like, we would get out our books that the teacher assigned that we'd have to read. And, we'd get in a circle and we'd have to read them out loud. And, another would like, if we had gotten all of our class work done, we would work on our homework, but we would...we got to sit in these chairs, like cushion chairs, and we got to like, lay there and it was just kind of like taking all of the stress off from our class work and let us just relax and sort of do our homework.

L: Good. When you read in a circle...could you tell me what you thought about that activity?

E: Well, it was kind of...it is a little awkward sort of, because we would always like, if somebody would mess up, then it would be really awkward because the other people would just like want to get it over with, so...Say like if somebody before you is like a really slow reader, and you're like a really fast reader, it would kind of like aggravate you to like have to wait for the other person.

L: ...and getting to do your homework in those comfy chairs, what did you think of that?

E: Uh, I liked that a lot because it's like, just like, take your mind of everything. Take your mind like off all the school work, and we got to look outside the windows, and see all like the trees and stuff. And, yeah, it was just like relaxing.

L: Okay, so based on your experiences, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the learning center model? So, ways we should change it...And, do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

E: I think that, we...the learning center should sort of like expand on doing homework on a cushion sheet, and like we should like just get to do all of our work on a cushion seat. And, like have the learning center more laid back. Maybe you could like bring a snack in if you wanted, maybe a drink. And, but I think you should keep the same...I think you should keep the stickers and keep the stickers the same, so like once you got your chart full you get to get something out of the treasure box. I think that's helpful because it like made you want to go to the learning center more to get more stickers so that you could get an item.

L: Okay, Edward. So what advice can you offer to students who currently attend learning center or are new to learning center, and they have questions to you about it?

E: Well, learning center isn't really a big deal. I mean, it's just, it's actually pretty fun, or it was pretty fun experience. It's not like a special way. It's just like a different way. There's nothing wrong with it. And, you get to miss, well you get to skip class. And the class you would miss is more stressful than the learning center because you're in a larger group and with the learning center, you're in a smaller group. So like, there's not as much stress.

L: Okay, Edward, so when you were in lower school, what did you like about going to learning center, and what did you dislike? And you can also tell me about your experiences now, if you'd like to. Okay, so let's start with lower school.

E: In elementary school, it was better to go to take a quiz or just like homework or something because like it just wasn't like as hard, and it was easier because we didn't have like as much work as we have now in middle school. So it was easier. It took all the stress off. But now, since we have so much work, I just...it's just hard to pay attention and get your homework done. Once you finish all your class work that you need to finish...and it's hard to know that because it's hard, harder to use your planner now because the teachers give you less time to use it so you, I don't really...I just have to remember what I have to do for homework. Instead of just looking it up in my planner. And, it's harder because my teacher reads out all of the questions, which doesn't help me very much. I think it you just said, once I finish my test, and I say I going back to my classroom to turn in the test, if you just said, have you checked over this. And if I say, no. Then you should say, I think you should check over this just to make sure, double check. And yeah, that's just it.

L: Okay, we're just going to think back to lower school for a minute and Edward is going to tell us about anything he liked about learning center in lower school, and if there was anything he disliked.

E: In lower school, when it was time to read and I would be separated from the class, I didn't like the method that the learning center would use, which was as I said, getting in a small group and reading it in a circle because it just, it just didn't help me very much. I think that she should just tell us that we can go sit down anywhere in the classroom, even on the floor and read, and when you...or when the time is up for learning center you can go back to your classroom. That's the method that helped the most for me.

L: Okay, thank you. So this will be that last question of the evening. Based on your experiences, and what you know about your journey of learning to read, what method would you use for reading support in learning center?

E: The method that I think we should use is when the students come into learning center, the teacher should ask the student more, just say, what are you going to do in class today? And say, I say, read my book. The teacher could say, well you...you should be doing stuff. And then, the student shouldn't have, you know, they should get to sit anywhere they want. And then, the teacher asks another student, what are you going to do today? And say, they say, I'm going to work on my math. And the teacher should say, okay, you should get that done. So you won't have to do it for homework or something like that. And then, I think it's important to like let the students sit wherever that want. Like, if they were reading, they could like lay down on the floor, and read on the floor because it helps the students more because it's more..it's like more

free, or “free-er”. And it let’s the student know that like the teacher isn’t tied up and makes you sit down and like sit down in a chair, and that’s just like really boring...you know, just sitting.

L: Edward, I can’t think you enough for all your thoughtful response, and everything you’ve added to my study and the richness of it. And I just know that what you said will help all of the teachers and the people who make decisions about learning center improve them. So thank you so much.

APPENDIX W

Date: December 10, 2009

Participant: Violet

Lori: Today is December 10th and I am beginning my interview with Violet. I'm just going to begin by introducing myself. My name is Lori Despoux and I am working on my dissertation which centers around reading intervention and students who participate in learning centers.

<phone rings>

So the purpose of this interview is to talk with Violet and Edward. Violet is going to talk with me about her experiences as a parent with children who attend the learning center, and Elliot is going to think back to when he was in elementary school and he was in learning center. We have taken care of the consent forms and we are going to go ahead and start with the interviews.

So we are going to start with Violet and she is going to tell me a little bit about herself as a parent of children who participate in learning center.

Violet: Hi, I'm Violet. I have four children who were participants in the learning center. Um, some of them started in late middle school...4th or 5th grade...and two of them started early on...Pre-K...not Pre-K, K-1 and those that started in 1st and 2nd grade benefitted a great deal from the learning center. They visited with their learning center teacher three times a week for about 4 minutes in a small group setting. They attacked words. I sat in on some of the sessions. My favorite thing they did would was they would um, use shaving cream. They would use it as a chalkboard and write on the desk...spelling words. They would write spelling words on the desk, and I think the children enjoyed that a great deal.

L: Okay, that's good. That actually sort of leads into the next question about your child's experiences...so if you feel like you want to add anything to that you may, but I'm going to move on to the next question. What did your child think about going to the learning center? What did he say about it? What do you think about the experiences he had?

V: Um, the child that went to learning center did not say anything about how he felt about it early on. I think he started in 2nd grade. Um, he didn't have a whole lot to say. He's not a very talkative child to begin with. I think as he got older, when he was in 5th grade, I'm not sure he enjoyed it as much. The set up was a little different. They, uh, learned how to organize themselves and set up a planner and they learned study skills which was something that I thought was very important to learn in learning center because as we all know it catches up with you in middle school.

L: Great, so let's see. This is a long question. Based on your experiences as a parent, can you think of any specific suggestions for ways to improve the learning center? Do you have any recommendations for ways we should keep it the same?

V: One of the ways, or suggestions, that I think the learning center could improve is they could implement a math program in the learning center. I think another way that it could improve is that I think the teachers need a great deal of supplies and materials so that they wouldn't have to

stand at the copy machine for hours on end copying books and other materials for the kids. I think at the school that I was at, we need...I think we needed more supplies. I think that still stands true today. They have a little bit of a different format for the learning center, uh...the teacher now doesn't necessarily pull them out of the classroom. Sometimes she goes into the classroom and teachers a smaller group. Um...

L: Do you have any suggestions for keeping it the same? Can you think of some things that are really effective and working?

V: Well, what I think is effective...what I would like to see is that the child spends more time in the learning center. Two days a week is fine, but three days, even four days, I think you would see a huge jump even a lot quicker than you would now. I think that's true with everything. Seeing a tutor, let's say for one hour a week, is not, you know, a lot of times you have to review what you did last week. So if they saw the, you know, sometimes the kids are distracted even, and so one child's not getting it in a small group, so the teacher spends a little bit of time with the student for 30-45 minutes by the time they sit down and blow their nose and wipe their hands...you know you really only have 30 minutes of instruction time, I think. Maybe adding another day would be beneficial.

L: What advice can you offer to other parents who have children who currently attend or have new news that their child will need the support of the learning center?

V: I would say to the parent that they should be enthusiastic about their child attending learning center. Uh, they should also see it as a different way that their child learns to read, not...there's nothing wrong with their child. They just see and do things that are a little different. There's just something in their brains that's wired a little bit differently and their children need a smaller learning environment to learn and for my children, I have always been a strong believer in the smaller the group, the better off they will be. I think the hands-on in the learning center helps my children learn...and they get that in the learning center, as well as in the classroom, but I think more in the learning center because they are able to do those types of things because it's small environment.

L: Perfect, um...this sort of is a little redundant, so how did you feel about your children receiving learning center support? What did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?

V: I was hesitant at first, I thought, gee—what's going on. Um, once I learned about it and once I learned that my children do better in a smaller environment and they do better with a teacher standing over them and guiding them through. Actually, when you think about it, who wouldn't. Those were the things that I liked about it.

Some of the things that I didn't like about it was that they would get pulled out of class, possibly when they were interested in doing the activity that was going on in the classroom. For example, if they enjoyed art, they might get pulled out in art due to the scheduling issues.

L: Okay, thank you. The final question, based on your experiences of watching and supporting your children in becoming readers, how would you design a model of reading support for young readers?

V: Um, I think that reading in the resource center everyday would be a great start for a model of reading support. Uh, I think that children could learn phonics. I think that we've shied away from that a little bit in today's society. I think helps kids learn words. And I think if they could read out loud to their parents, um...often, as often as possible. I think that helps in setting up a model. Um...I know the children like to read books over and over again. That just helps them with their fluency which is a great idea as well. *<long pause>*

L: Is that it?

V: Yes, um...I think so.

L: Well thank you so much for participating in the interview.

APPENDIX X

Date: December 10, 2009

Participant: Charley, Learning Specialist

Lori: Thank you for agreeing to participate, and what we're going to do first is start with your background. So would you please tell me a little about yourself as a teacher, and how and why you currently work as a learning specialist in the learning center?

Ms. Charley: My undergraduate is from University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, and it was a bachelor of science in speech/language pathology. My master's is from LSU medical center in communication disorders. When I graduated from graduate school, I worked at Dixon Episcopal School, and I wore two hats...I worked in the, in the, learning center, which they called the resource room, and I also did speech/language therapy with kids which overlapped on many occasions. So I had a nice exposure to both. I worked at Dixon for ten years, part time and then I was in private practice for speech therapy, and I started working at Jackson in 1991 in the learning center.

L: So why did you want to be a learning specialist in the learning center?

Ms. C: Well I...it...my experience at Dixon showed me that I loved to work with reading and so, and work with small groups. I found out I did not want to work with large groups. I like small groups, and I enjoy reading. And so, the position at Jackson was to work in the lower school just on reading and writing, and that was where my interests lie...lay.

L: Okay, so, um...in considering roles, would you talk a little bit about how you defined your role at Jackson, how your role was defined to others and by whom, and how you were prepared for this role...and I can go over these questions again if we need to.

Mr. C: I viewed my roles as a reading specialist, and initially I worked with kindergarten and first grade, and third. And later, I worked with third, fourth, and fifth...and my role was to do intervention with students who were struggling when learning to read...and the decoding and the comprehension...so to work with spelling and writing. And that's how I viewed my role. The teachers viewed me as, some teachers, as a resource, not all. Um, some teachers viewed me as help with students who probably didn't know what to do with those students, and so I was a resource for that. So it was like, okay, so you take this student because, because, I can't. And um, diff...different administrations viewed my role differently. There were some that understood and valued the role. Later on, the administration did not understand or value the role so that had a big impact on my time there.

L: So in your preparation for the role of a learning specialist, do you feel like your school did an adequate job of getting you ready for such a role?

Ms. C: I do. When I was in graduate school, it's a little different now, speech therapists had a lot of um, phonological awareness, language, reading classes. I don't know that they have as much now, but I'm finding that things that I learned in graduate school are now being taught by

reading professionals, and at reading conferences. They'll do things that...[phone rings]. Uh oh.

L: We'll just pause for a moment.

L: Okay we're back, and we're going to continue to talk about your preparation for your role as a learning specialist.

Mr. C: When I was in graduate school, there was something called ITA, initial teaching alphabet, which is no longer used, but it was the sound/symbol, and so it did lay a ground work for phonics. It was phonics with a twist. And so, I did that, and we did a lot of phonological awareness, and so I do feel like I was well prepared. I had to have so many, I think 200 hours in therapy being observed by my supervisors, and so that helped me prepare because I had hands-on experience. And um, at the time in graduate school, you either specialized in children or adults, so I was lucky to be able to spend most of my classes working with children.

L: Thank you. The next question is: do you think classroom teachers feel prepared to work with struggling readers? Why do you think that? And can you share some examples from your own experiences?

Ms. C: I think that they feel more prepared than they actually are...I think that they are very ill prepared. From what I understand, teachers have one class in reading, and that does not begin to prepare them. So I think that they don't realize how much they don't know [laughing]. Which is unfortunate...um...and so I think that made them really look to me as a resource. I think that teachers really need to understand why they're teaching what they're teaching, and the skills that come before. So if you have a student who is not performing at the level you want them to, you have to know how to go back and re-teach those skills...and I don't feel teachers know the, the background of the developmental milestones or skills and how one thing build on the other. And so they teach a skill, but don't know what came before it, or what comes after it, or why when the student has a breakdown, they have no knowledge to fall back on to build that skill. So I think it's very unfortunate that are teachers are very unprepared.

L: Can you think of any examples in your experiences? And you can take a moment if you need to, of just sort of witnessing this with a teacher?

Ms. C: One thing that comes to mind is first grade teachers teaching skills that were developmentally much more difficult skills than ones they didn't teach. And so the students didn't have the background for it. They didn't have anything to attach it to. It was just this nebulous skill because one of the students in the class needed that so they would teach as skills came up, and it wasn't a developmental trend. Also, Pre-K teachers feeling that there was no need to teach any phonological awareness...that that was taking the place of fun when it is important to start teaching the skills early in Pre-K...and let's see. And with, with older kids, um specifically with fourth grade teachers, and I would ask what skills are you teaching, it was really the book they were teaching, and getting through a book rather than certain skills they were trying to accomplish through that book. The goal was finishing the book, not teaching skills through that book. And so when we discussed the skills, they would um, get lost and they couldn't really verbalize why they were teaching using that book, or what skills they were covering. Instead they could say, it seemed like a good book.

Oh, and just another thought about a previous question. I think an answer or solution to our problem would be to have reading specialists teach reading, and math specialists teach math, and not have a teacher with one class in both and crowd control skills to be teaching these subjects that are so important. Until we have teachers that are well trained we will continue to see a downward trend in our scores nationally.

L: Okay, so this actually kind of goes along with that question nicely. Based on your experiences as a specialist, what is your philosophy of teaching and learning? Is this philosophy the same for students who struggle? How does your philosophy inform your teaching?

Mrs. C: My philosophy of teaching is that you have got to know...that you should be able to teach at all grades. That you shouldn't just be a fourth grade teacher, that you should be a reader teacher and that you should know the skills that come before and after so that you can help the weaker students and challenge the ones who are strong. I do believe, and I don't think everybody agrees with this, that there are certain skills you should know as a first grader, and there are certain skills that are developmentally appropriate at that level, and a child may see those, but there are certain skills that you are working towards. If you have 21 kids in the class, you shouldn't have 21 different curriculums. You can't accomplish that...and teachers try to individualize, individualize. Well, if you group students based on their needs and give them some small group support, that's individualizing. You can't have every kid on a different book. And so I think teacher knowledge, efficient teaching, and I think that teachers should have a goal of what they're teaching, know what they're teaching...teach those skills, baseline before, to see where the students are, how many students need support, teach the skills, systematically and structured, and then assess those skills to see who needs...and not assess those skills three times a year. Assess on a daily or weekly basis, and continue teaching those skills to see if you need to back up, if you need to teach it another way, and always monitor and examine and test yourself to see if what you're doing is effective and efficient.

L: Do you have this same philosophy for students who struggle when learning to read?

Mrs. C: I do. I feel that when you struggle...I, I feel that you can learn to read and I've seen students with very low IQ, and I think the language aspect and the comprehension is more difficult, but I think that the systematic, structured approach is even more important for struggling readers. And um, I think the assessment part as well, to make sure they have the building blocks to continue to learn and expand their reading. And I think that with students who are younger, you focus more on them learning to read and less on comprehension, and I think as the decoding skills improve then you focus more on the comprehension, and so I think if you have a language rich environment in kindergarten and you're not focusing as much on comprehension. You're focusing on the language, and the language rich environment, and reading to the student in that way, but the goal of the book in kindergarten isn't to facilitate all this difficult language, um, it's for the child to learn to read. And so, I don't think, I think teachers try and get books that there are these difficult language, language rich, but then they can't decode it. So what is your goal, and you can have a language rich environment, and the child flourish and that, but they can also be taught to learn to read. So to pick the materials to meet your goals.

L: Okay, so how does your philosophy inform your teaching?

Mrs. C: Well my philosophy of direct instruction, systematic instruction, and developmentally based instruction...I use materials and I set my goals based on the students needs. My goals are developmental in nature, and my materials fit those needs or those skills that I am teaching, and so the teaching is very dependent on my philosophy.

L: Okay, what does a typical day or week look like for students in your program? What kinds of activities do you do?

Ms. C: A typical week, it changed the last year of teaching. The years before that I would take students four times a week and last year I took them only three and it made a significant difference. The material covered the four times a week made so much more sense and we got so much more accomplished. So a typical a week for what I'd like it to look like is four 50 minute sessions a week and like I said, I just had three 45 minutes, and we would...in third grade, we worked more time on decoding, decoding multisyllabic words, and um sound/symbol relationships, and um we did the decoding and the reading and we would answer questions. In fourth grade, it was some multisyllabic words as needed and it was all based on based lined measure, and the seven different syllable types and breaking words down, and we would review sound/symbol, but it wasn't as much. We focused more on the comprehension and less on the decoding unless it was warranted and we did comprehension measures of self-monitoring, summarizing, well we moved to the self-monitoring later in the year. We would summarize, talk about what an inference was, and work on inferencing, self-monitoring, repairing any errors, using the context for vocabulary, and um, visualizing. So in fourth grade we did more comprehension strategies, and we did limited writing with only three sessions, so we weren't able to do much writing. We did writing in response to the reading. We did literature questions, summarizing, so um we did very little um, creative writing. It was about the reading.

L: How do you think children feel about receiving learning center support? How do you think their parents feel? How do you feel? Can you think of any examples to support your thoughts?

Ms. C: Well, it's in my experience, that children have felt very secure in the small group. They are thrilled to be learning to read...to have the small group. Unfortunately, administration and people who don't understand view it as...oh, the child might not want to go, and I would say that 98% of the students I've had in the last 20 years were very happy. There are some kids who just aren't happy about anything and I think that's more in fifth grade. It's the age...adolescents. But the students in kindergarten through fourth grade really appreciate the help, and could notice the difference. We would often talk about have you noticed any difference in class, what do you think, what's been difficult, what can we do about this? And the students were very happy to be able to participate in class and read better, and um...I feel it's much more of a stigma to not understand and to be in class, and not be able to participate, then having small group instruction that strengthens all your skills that throughout the day in history, in science, you can tell that the reading instruction makes a difference. And so, I have found it to be a positive experience. The students have felt it to be positive. The parents are thrilled. I have parents ask how much, you know, I'd like to pay for this. And we're just thrilled to know that it was offered at no charge. People over the years, um, in the beginning people didn't even know we were there unless their child needed it. I remember an admissions person walking around, and when I asked her why she didn't introduce me, she said, "Oh, we don't want parents to know that some of students have difficulties." And I was just floored. Over time given there was a new admissions person who was in the learning center herself and so she had a little more respect for our department and

so she did share it with the parents, but I think there were many parents who did not know that the school offered help and they were thrilled when they found out and they saw their child feeling better and doing better, they just couldn't be happier. So it was very positive. I think it's a misperception that it's a stigma, or that children don't want to go because that's not been my experience. And I don't think I'd continue to work day in and day out in this profession if most of the children or many, or even some of them didn't want to come or I didn't feel like it was a positive thing. So I think that overall it's been positive for everyone that's been involved.

L: What do you think kids like about coming to learning center? Dislike? How about the teachers?

Ms. C: Well I think the younger students like...you know you get stickers, and I don't think they can verbalize, you know, I can read better. I think once they get in second grade they can start evaluating that, okay, I like this because I feel better in class. I like coming because I'm a better reader. I like coming because I feel safe and secure and I have someone who is supporting me and helping me do better. Umm...

Lori: Dislike? Is there something that they've disliked?

Ms. C: I've had a couple of kids of who have had a really bad attitude not just with me, but they've had a hard time accepting their weaknesses. And, so um, in the eight years I've had at Jackson I've had one kid who has discontinued coming. Over eight years with nine or ten classes, I think that's a very small percentage having one child.

To add to that, that was my older students, 3rd and 4th grade, but when I worked with younger students, they enjoyed coming, but the teacher didn't always, when it was reading time, and they were supposed to be doing reading and I was doing reading, they wouldn't always follow the schedule, so when I would show up, they were often cooking, painting...And on those days, it was hard for the student to leave that fun activity and that's understandable. So it's better if the teacher is following the schedule and everyone is doing reading. It helps. If the teacher is doing art projects, and you're taking the student, it really does negatively impact because the student feels like they're missing something. So I think a lot of it boils down to does the teacher but into following the schedule with you. So everyone is doing reading and they are doing they're reading at the same time and they are not missing out on a fun activity.

Lori: Thank you. Okay, last question here. Based on your experiences of watching and supporting your students in becoming readers, how would you/have you designed a model of reading support for young readers?

Ms. C: I would start with...I think it's two fold. One is to work with the teachers and so to have the reading that's going on in the classroom and the instruction they are having in the classroom be developmentally based. And so I would try to work with the teacher to have a good program in the classroom, but the students I would take to the learning center, I would start by screening...getting base line measures on students, grouping them appropriately. I'd never have more, I'd like to not have more than four, but I know we sometimes had five in a group and six in a group. But, given no time restrictions, small group...and based on the needs, develop a plan that is small goals, attainable goals for the students and are um, step-by-step developmentally systematic and have assessments built in. And have goals for each student. Know where you are

and where you want that student to be at the end of the year. Not that you always achieve those goals, but you have to make a road map to know how to get there and the younger the student, like I had said before, more phonological awareness, learning how to read, sound symbol, and as that improve decrease the decoding and increase the time spent on comprehension.

Lori: Well thank you so much for your time this evening, and this will conclude the interview.

APPENDIX Y

Story Map of Jonathan's Narrative

Main Idea Theme/Moral	The learning center provides support but it is not as effective as it could be. Teachers don't seem to have a plan and sometimes kids just sit there and do not do much.
Characters	Jonathan, his father, his mother, his teachers, his learning specialists, his tutors
Setting	The setting of Jonathan's story begins in an independent school in New Orleans in first grade when he found out that he had dyslexia. Also included is the time he spent at home working on his reading as well as the time he spent in November 2008 in Texas with the Family Literacy Network. Currently, Jonathan is in the second semester of his eighth grade year.
Plot Problem/Climax/Conclusion	Jonathan begins his story by recalling his diagnosis of dyslexia and ADHD when he was in first grade. He admits that he doesn't really remember much from his early elementary days. Jonathan is best at science and social studies and finds language arts challenging. Extra time is needed for Jonathan to complete most of his assignments because he is a very slow reader. Jonathan likes the fact that resource gives him support and the extra time he needs to get things done, but he feels like overall the program has not been very effective. In fact, he and his parents participated in another program outside of school resource called the "Family Literacy Network" where he worked intensively to increase his understanding of language and his fluency rate. Jonathan felt like this program was very effective because it made sense to him. Language suddenly was not as abstract as it had been in the past. Jonathan recommends to his learning specialists to have a plan for the day and more specifically, a plan for learning. He also suggests to other learning center students to keep trying and just figure out how they learn and what they need. At this point, Jonathan is applying to high schools and hopes to get into a math and science school here in New Orleans.

APPENDIX Z

Story Map of Jenna's Narrative

Main Idea Theme/Moral	Jenna receives learning center support to help her manage her dyslexia. As a younger student, she did not like being away from her friends to go to resource. Now that she is older, she says that she knows she needs the extra support, and she thinks that it did help her in the long run.
Characters	Jenna, resource teachers, friends and classmates
Setting	Jenna attends an independent school in New Orleans where she participates in learning center support. She is finishing the first semester of her eighth grade year.
Plot Problem/Climax/Conclusion	<p>Jenna begins her story by telling us that she likes math, but she does not like reading very much, especially in front of people. She is also aware of the fact that typing her work helps her learn it better. Jenna recalls her time as a resource student in lower school and admits that she did not like it very much because she was separated from her friends. Though she felt more comfortable and safe in the smaller group, she says that the stories they read were boring and she did not like answering the questions at the end of them. Though she had to miss either PE and art, attending resource twice a week was just enough for Jenna. She feels like she did not need any more time or any less.</p> <p>Jenna prefers that her schedule indicate when she should go to resource rather than being embarrassed by a teacher picking her up or coming into the classroom to help her.</p> <p>As a middle school student, Jenna still does not like reading the passages, but she does like the set up of the learning center. She likes the small group and she likes learning study techniques and how to get organized.</p> <p>Jenna suggests that students should be provided with more interesting things to read because when she reads boring things she has to read it more slowly compared to when she is reading something interesting. She recommends that students be able to pick their own books.</p>

APPENDIX AA

Story Map of Aaron's Narrative

Main Idea Theme/Moral	Although a slow reader, Aaron enjoyed reading with his mother when he was younger. Once deadlines and assigned books became a reality, Aaron began to hate reading. Aaron received learning support all throughout lower school and recalls both negative and positive experiences.
Characters	Aaron, his mother, his resource teachers, other students
Setting	Aaron's story begins with his experiences as a lower school student in an independent school in New Orleans. He shares experiences all throughout lower school.
Plot Problem/Climax/Conclusion	<p>Aaron has hated reading since first grade. As a small child, Aaron remembers reading <i>Harry Potter</i> with his mother, but quickly grew to hate reading once he was under the pressure of deadlines and teacher-selected books.</p> <p>Aaron began receiving extra support in reading through the learning center at his school. While in resource, he would read leveled books, work on vocabulary, and write sentences. He also did a little math. He did not like resource, though he admits that it probably helped him.</p> <p>The real problem Aaron had with the learning center was that he had to go during recess or free play while his friends were outside playing. He did also did not like the extra work he had to do. Moreover, dismissal to learning center was problematic because Aaron did not like how it was so obvious that he needed the extra help. What's more, Aaron felt like he missed out of some things because he was not in class.</p> <p>On the bright side, Aaron recalls some positive experiences, and especially enjoyed writing and producing a play with is classmates when he was in fourth grade. He felt like his teacher was helping him and also making it fun at the same time.</p> <p>Finally, Aaron cautions teachers to be more thoughtful about their reward systems and mostly, to allow students to pick their own books.</p>

APPENDIX BB

Story Map of Andie's Narrative

Main Idea Theme/Moral	Andie's dyslexia makes school work difficult for her. She has been receiving learning center support in reading since lower school, and has grown to appreciate it much more as a middle schooler. She is very grateful to the teachers and specialists who helped her along the way.
Characters	Andie, her teachers, her specialists, her friends, and other students
Setting	The setting of this story takes place in an independent school in New Orleans. Andie reflects on her time in resource as a lower school student, and also shares her experiences as a middle school student.
Plot Problem/Climax/Conclusion	<p>Andie has dyslexia and her disability makes school very difficult for her. Her least favorite subject is life science because the words are really hard to read. She enjoys LA history because she likes listening to stories and she has a good memorization.</p> <p>Andie received extra help in reading through the learning center at her school. She felt like her teachers wanted her to do well and she recalls the activities she did in resource as helpful. However, when reading aloud, even in the small group, Andie was often embarrassed because she couldn't always read the words. She was also always embarrassed when her teacher would come to pick her up for resource because she was the only girl in the whole grade that went. She says that it would be even more embarrassing if the teacher came into the classroom to provide support. Andie remembers very vividly being called, "stupid" and recounts that experience as very hurtful.</p> <p>In retrospect, Andie realizes that if she did not receive the extra help when she was in lower school, she would not be the person she is today. Andie gives special thanks to the teachers and reading specialists who help students like her.</p>

APPENDIX CC

Story Map of Samantha's Narrative

<p>Main Idea</p> <p>Theme/Moral</p>	<p>Samantha has difficulty reading and she has been receiving extra support through the learning center at her school since she was in lower school. She had the same teacher throughout, and is unsure of other methods that could have been used to support her reading development. Although, sometimes embarrassed, Samantha liked going to learning center because it really helped her.</p>
<p>Characters</p>	<p>Samantha, other students, her learning specialist</p>
<p>Setting</p>	<p>Samantha's story begins when she was in lower school at an independent school in New Orleans. She talks about her experiences in the resource room.</p>
<p>Plot</p> <p>Problem/Climax/Conclusion</p>	<p>Samantha always thought she had a lot of trouble with reading when she was in lower school. She does not think she is the best reader, and admits that it takes her a long time to read something. In fact, she reads out loud as a strategy because if she reads in her head, she does not understand what she has read.</p> <p>Samantha does not like to read aloud when she is with the whole class because she is scared that she is going to mess up on something easy. She felt more comfortable reading in the context of the resource room because the other students in there also had reading problems.</p> <p>Samantha received support in reading all throughout lower school and says that she really liked it, especially the sticker incentives. She would read books in learning center, and recalls an immigrant project that she presented to older students. She also remembers a really difficult book about the Holocaust.</p> <p>Samantha had the same learning specialist all throughout lower school and suggests that it might be a good idea to have someone different maybe for a year or so. She also advises other learning center students not to put themselves down if people look at them funny because they go to learning center. Now that she is older, Samantha is fine with going to learning center, but in 3rd in 4th grade, she says that it was sometimes embarrassing.</p> <p>The program also seemed to change when Samantha was in 4th grade because she stayed in class during reading time. She says that she did not like this because she had never done it before. She preferred to work at her own pace and not feel left behind.</p>

APPENDIX DD

Story Map of Edward's Narrative

<p>Main Idea Theme/Moral</p>	<p>Edward started receiving extra support in reading through the learning center when he was in lower school. Edward's comments center around taking stress off of students. He makes specific suggestions for teachers on how to provide the best environment for students in learning center.</p>
<p>Characters</p>	<p>Edward, other students, his learning specialist</p>
<p>Setting</p>	<p>Edward's story begins with his experiences as a lower school student in an independent school in New Orleans. He also discusses some of his current experiences, as a middle school student, with the learning center at his school.</p>
<p>Plot Problem/Climax/Conclusion</p>	<p>Edward felt like the learning center got the job done. It helped him learn in a better way.</p> <p>He recalls reading books out loud in a circle and working on his homework in learning center. Reading aloud was an awkward experience because some people were slow readers and some people were fast readers, and Edward was aggravated when he had to wait for the slow readers. He feels like this method did not work well for him, and instead would rather have more freedom concerning his reading.</p> <p>The physical environment also seemed to have quite an impact on Edward. He fondly remembers the comfortable chairs and looking out the windows. He describes the experience as very relaxing and stress relieving. He suggests that the learning center consider expanding the privilege of sitting in those chairs. He also recommends that students be allowed to bring in a drink and a snack.</p> <p>For Edward, the positive reinforcement of stickers adding up to a treasure chest was a motivator and he suggests that that continue.</p> <p>Edward feels like learning center is not a big deal, and shares that it is actually pretty fun. He considers getting to miss class a plus because being in learning center is less stressful than being in the general classroom.</p> <p>Edward recommends that students should have more choice about what they do and where they sit.</p>

APPENDIX EE

Date: December 10, 2009

Participant: Lori Despoux (self interview)

Interviewer: So Lori, tell me about your study.

Lori: Okay, so at the heart of my study is learning about the experiences of the struggling reader. I am interested in actually hearing from the child who participates in the intervention. A lot of what I have read is from the adult perspective, and what I'd like to hear is what the child has to say about their experiences.

I: What is your major research question?

Lori: Okay, well I have a lot of guiding questions that I will talk about in a moment, but the omnibus question is this, "What are the experiences of students, more specifically, struggling reader, who participate in reading intervention in learning centers in independent schools."

I: What else are you interesting in finding out?

Lori: This is actually where my guiding questions come along. I suspect that I will find out some of the following: what do students think about participating in learning center support, how does it make them feel, what do they think about the activities in which they participate, what do children think about what their teachers think about them, um...how does being identified as needing extra support affect learning to read, how do children perceive reading teacher effectiveness...if they think that their teacher does a good job of teaching reading. Um, and actually I think that would be the last little guiding question there.

I: Great. Tell me about your methodology and theoretical framework.

Lori: Well, this was actually really difficult for me. It took a long time for me to figure this out because I um...through a lot of reading, learned that theoretically, um...your methodology needs to match what you're doing. There need to be some sort of substansive theory behind what you do, so um...in my reading I have come to identify myself as a constructivist in the case of this study and I am viewing the study through a lens of advocacy for the child. So in this case, this case, the researcher and the participants are joined together in the co-construction of reality. So therefore, my constructivist paradigm fits nicely...the narrative...I'm messing that part up. Alright...take two.

Therefore the story metaphor and narrative inquiry fits nicely under the constructivist paradigm. So as a constructivist, I basically believe that adults and children can construct reality together,

and so in hearing the child's story, in being an active listener, I will construct...reconstruct their stories and experiences with them.

I: What measure will you take...oops, wrong question. Tell me about your theoretical framework and your methodology.

Lori: Okay, so um, again in coming to figure out theoretically where I stand on this study, I think I knew it, you know...subconsciously, but to be able to verbalize it was...that part was difficult for me.

I: Okay, will you tell me more about your methodology?

Lori: To share more about my methodology specifically, I have included three independent schools. All schools will have fictitious names and all participants will remain anonymous. At each independent school, I would like an array of two students, hopefully one boy and one girl, as well as one parent, and one learning specialist. I plan to get all of my data from interviews, informal interviews. Um, and those interviews will be arranged around the convenience of the participants. Also, um, I will need to observe the setting of the learning center at two of the schools. At one school, an observation will not be necessary because that was the school in which I worked, and also because observing that phenomenon is impossible because it no longer exists. Um, the interviews will be transcribed and coded and I will use the direction provided by Miles and Huberman, Tesch, and Creswell to deal with the raw data. After that, Goetz and Lecompte's description of typological analysis will be employed. I will go through all of the data marking the entries for different typologies. And after that, the data will be considered for polyvocal analysis because I think multiple voices will be represented in the children. I think that not only will they be speaking from their experiences, but they will also be speaking from what they hear their parents say, they will be speaking from what they think their friends think, from what they think their teachers think of them. So I think multiple voices will be represented in just one participant. So in consideration of that, polyvocal analysis will be used.

So following the coding process, I developed two tools to help organize all of this data after it is coded. I have a story map, which makes sense to me because the story metaphor is going to be used here to understand and make meaning of all of the data. So the typical elements in a story obviously include the characters, the setting, problem/solution, beginning, middle, end. And then I also developed a table to um, sort of identify the multiple voices that may be represented or may not be represented in the interviews. Um, as a final piece to the data analysis...so it'll be represented there graphically in charts, and then what I'd like to do is remove from the interviews my questions, and piece together the responses of the participants so hopefully I will end up with a story. And it would be their story. So that's what I have in mind for my methodology.

I: What measures will you take to ensure the trustworthiness of your study?

Lori: Well I do think trustworthiness and credibility are definitely important components to any study. So over the summer I had the opportunity to take a course with Dr. Bedford and in some of her class notes, she referenced a lot of authors, and what I did was I went to the library and pulled the original works of the authors who include: Lincoln and Guba, Merriam, Miles and Huberman, Litchman, and Glesne. And all of these authors write about qualitative work. There are certain components to qualitative work that make it strong, and the components enhance the trustworthiness of my study include: um, what most researchers call triangulation, and what that means for my study is that multiple layers of informants are providing the data. So I am not getting all of my information from a single participant, in a single interview. There will be different participants from different schools providing the information, as well as parents, and learning specialists. So I hope I have that covered there.

Next, I have peer debriefing which adds credibility because I am having regular discussions with you—my peer debriefer about the progress of my work and I certainly appreciate that.

Um, another piece of trustworthiness is referential adequacy and this was originally coined by Eisner, Lincoln and Guba later talked about this. And um, if you would do this as suggested by them they say that you should take data and set it aside and not even use it for your study and that would allow somebody later to come along and look at that data, transcribe it, code it, analyze it, and it should match the results of what you transcribed, coded, and analyzed. However, in reality, that would be difficult for me because the data that I collect I intend to use. So instead of setting aside raw data and not touching it, what I am going to do is keep clean copies of the data at all phases of the um study. So I'll have clean copies of the transcriptions, of the coded copies of the transcripts, and then all of the cut up bits and pieces.

The next piece of trustworthiness includes member checking and that is just simply me bringing the stories back to the participants who provided them. I will remove the questions, I will piece together their responses and I will bring them back to them to ensure that what I recorded and wrote is what they intended to say.

Uh, transferability talks about..uh...it's to see if your study has any larger import to other studies. So what I've found and discovered is to see if my study applies to other situations and contexts...and the only way to provide transferability is to write long, rich descriptions of what is happening about the context in a way that someone could almost feel like they are there so that they can decide if the context applies to them.

And lastly, dependability and confirmability. This just has a lot to do with the consistency in the methods that I use and the conclusions that I draw. So in order to do that, I will again, just keep clean copies of all of the documents should someone want to conduct what they call an audit.

I: And the last question, why is your study worth conducting?

Lori: Okay, again at the heart of this, I really want to hear what the children have to say and I wrote a note here, that I don't intend to give voice to the students, but rather to represent their voices through my research. I think I read that in Lightfoot and Davis's book, but I'm not sure and I can't site them exactly but the job of a qualitative researcher, especially in narrative inquiry is not to give voice, but to represent voice.

I: Okay, let's see. This looks like the last question. What will your findings contribute to the field of reading and to the students who participate?

Lori: Well, what I think I'll discover is that children need different things during different phases of their education, and that one size does not fits all in this case—and finally that children are not “packageable” and that you cannot buy good reading instruction of the shelf...as Allington would say, but rather know that it comes from the head and it comes from heart. And I hope my contribution to the students who participate will be to use what they say to me to inform our teaching, and our reading, and our planning, and our research and the way that we do things. And hopefully it will cause us to think about things that we wouldn't have otherwise even considered. You know they may say to me, I love it when you come and pick me up for reading group because I don't want to be in the room with other kids who know how to read...or I really get embarrassed when you come, or I wish we could stay in the room, or we keep doing this decoding activity and it doesn't make sense to me, or like today in a conference, I realized that a lot of problems that might be identified as phonological problems really are just language problems that have more to do with the teacher not explaining what it is she expects the children to be able to do...and providing the definitions for the terminology associated with the task. So I hope that from listening to the students, it will really open at least my eyes to how to provide the best reading instruction possible. That's what I hope to contribute.

APPENDIX FF

Location: Dixon

Date: January 29, 2010

Time: 7:45 arrival

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
<p>Models: Small group, direct instruction, one-on-one</p> <p>Resources: Project Read, Language, Bonnie Kline Stories, SRA (Open Court)</p> <p>Strategies: Multi-sensory—alphabet/sound cards, recite letter, picture, sound, and action</p> <p>Positive feedback and reinforcement</p> <p>Duration: 45 minutes</p> <p>Group Size: 3 boys, 1st grade</p> <p>Other observations: lowest readers in class, lots of energy spent on redirecting behavior</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Next, I describe here the schedule of events for my visit to Tall Oaks. 7:45-8:15 met Bonnie (director of the learning center) and helped with carpool 8:15-8:30 tour of the school 8:30-9:00 meeting with middle school head (former resource teacher). She talked about Kurzweil (text to speech assistive technology), the importance of providing support and assessing its effectiveness, she also talked about her special connection with the resource children despite her administrative position</p>	<p>Three boys come in wild and excited. They are rocking in their chairs. This scene is very familiar to me.</p> <p>The teacher starts by settling them down and reminds them of the class rules. She then points to the schedule on the board for what they were going to accomplish today. I like this idea. Here’s what she wrote:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. rules 2. sounds/letters 3. quizzes 4. project read 5. bonus <p>Every time something was accomplished she erased it from the list.</p> <p>Next it was time to start the spelling test. I noticed how she had the test papers already prepared for each student with names, dates, and numbers. I can understand why she wouldn’t waist time for setting up headings and such. Here are the spelling words: ill, mass, bass, gas, pill, fill, fizz, pal). She reminds the students of the rule breakers and encourages them to check over their work and she re-reads every word again. Some children scurry to change what they wrote.</p> <p>Next, she goes over the phonics pages in that correspond to the sounds that they are working on in Project Read. After instructions are given, students are to begin work independently while she calls them over one at a time to work on their pack of sight words. Each student has a different pack.</p>

<p>9:00-9:30 visit and observe in middle school. Here there was a young teacher working with two boys and one girl. She was calling out sight words (against, every, always, said, etc.) to them. Students were writing words and taking turns sharing them in sentences. The teacher had a very positive attitude and the students seemed extremely comfortable with her. She was using terminology correctly (parts of speech, homophone, homonym, synonym, helping verbs, etc.) to make important connections and distinctions.</p> <p>Looking around the room, I see posters of starter words, a white board, three computers, a printer, a scanner, a bookshelf with a lot of books and student binders, two file cabinets, a teacher made study techniques poster, flashcards, and other resource books.</p>	<p>I can tell that this teacher is really organized. I loved her post-it note behavior system in which each boy had a post-it with his name on it in front of him. Every time he did something well, she would praise him for the behavior and give him a check. Five checks earned him a sticker. These stickers accumulate on a chart for shopping in the treat box.</p>
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APPENDIX GG

Location: Tall Oaks

Date: January 22, 2010

Time: 7:35 arrival

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
<p>Models: one-on-one instruction, separate classroom</p> <p>Strategies: multi-sensory—color coded grammar, cutting squares to represent parts of sentences to construct sentences</p> <p>Direct modeling, scaffolding</p> <p>Duration: 30 minutes</p> <p>Group size: 1</p> <p>Other observations: very supportive and encouraging teacher disposition, lots of personal praise and references to growth over time</p> <p>-----</p> <p>What follows next is the schedule I followed during my visit at Tall Oaks.</p> <p>7:35 arrival and quick tour</p> <p>8:10-8:40 Chapel</p> <p>8:50-9:20 observation of kindergarten Dibels (4 students)</p> <p>9:20-9:30 informal chat with lower school head</p> <p>9:30-11:00 talk and sharing with lower school learning specialist, interview</p> <p>11:00-11:30 observation of activity described above</p>	<p>Teacher waits in classroom for student to come to her. It seems like kids much prefer this over being picked up in front of their classmates. The teacher works next to students as he prints sentences in his journal on color-coded squares. Each different color square represents a different part of speech. The idea is to start with two word sentences and build up to much more complex sentences. I really like what I observed in the student’s notebook about how this works. It seems to make the structure of language very concrete to small children.</p> <p>Lots of practice over time is involved in this process. The teacher provides a lot of support and very detailed feedback and praise. She uses questioning as a strategy for redirecting. I see that the student responds well to her feedback. From talking to children, it is so important for them to have a positive relationship with their teachers.</p> <p>Although the student seems to have done a good job, he doesn’t seem very interested in the activity today. It’s probably because of all the excitement surrounding the Saints games this weekend. He’s quiet and shy...maybe because I am here.</p> <p>I notice that the student watched the clock anxiously and the teacher reminds him that she’ll let him know when it’s time to go to library. She promises him that he won’t miss library. This makes me think that he misses fun activities when he’s in resource.</p>

APPENDIX HH

University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Richard Speaker

Co-Investigator: Lori Despaux

Date: November 18, 2009

Protocol Title: "What are the experiences of students who participate in learning center support?"

IRB#: 14Dec09

Your proposal was reviewed by the full IRB. The proposal is considered to be minimal risk. You adequately addressed all of the issues raised by the committee. Your research proposal is now approved.

Please remember that approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best of luck with your project!
Sincerely,

Robert Laird, Ph.D., Chair
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

VITA

Lori Juhas Despaux graduated *magna cum laude* with a B.S. in elementary education from Loyola University New Orleans. In 2003, she received an M.S. in reading from Loyola University, and then an M.S.+30 from the University of New Orleans in 2007.

Dr. Despaux served as a learning specialist for six years at Isidore Newman School, and currently works as a reading specialist at Trinity Episcopal School in New Orleans, Louisiana. Lori resides in Marrero.