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# What Are The Similiarities And Differences Of Reading Instruction Of Fourth Grade Students With Learning Disabilities Taught In A Co-Taught Classroom, A Resource Classroom And A Single-Taught Teacher Classroom?

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**WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF READING INSTRUCTION  
OF FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES TAUGHT IN A  
CO-TAUGHT CLASSROOM, A RESOURCE CLASSROOM AND A SINGLE-TAUGHT  
TEACHER CLASSROOM?**

by

**DOREEN AVENALL**

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Submitted to the Graduate School

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MAJOR: SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Advisor

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## DEDICATION

*I would like to dedicate this dissertation first and foremost to my family, without their overwhelming support, I could never have accomplished this project. To my parents, Don and Rita Harris, you always taught me to strive to be my best and to pursue my dreams. You have always showed me through example that hard work, dedication, and resilience do pay off. I thank you for always asking about my research and encouraging me to stick with it.*

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Reading and Students with Learning Disabilities**

With the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004, more demands are being placed on schools to provide special education services within the general education classroom. The law states that students with disabilities should only be removed from their general education classroom when the nature and severity of the disability is such that instruction in the regular education classroom can not be achieved satisfactorily, even with the use of supplementary aids and services (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). IDEA also states that students with disabilities will be provided with instruction that meets the student's own specific needs, which will be made available at no cost to parents (IDEA, 2004). In 1975, when special education services were first mandated, schools began to implement programs in which students with learning disabilities in need of specialized instruction were generally "taken out" of their general education classrooms. Students were then provided specialized instruction mostly in a small group setting in a resource room, which was taught by a teacher who was certified in special education. The purpose of these programs was to provide students with disabilities an intensive, individualized program of instruction in the deficit area (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes & Fischer, 2000).

Several service delivery models are utilized by school districts today. Some service models include: single teacher inclusive classrooms, resource rooms, co-taught classrooms, extended resource rooms and categorical classrooms. Students with disabilities assigned to a categorical classroom spend the majority of their school day within a special education classroom. Students with disabilities assigned to a resource room spend the majority of their school day in a general education classroom and are

“pulled out” for instruction in curriculum areas where the student requires specialized instruction. Inclusion can be defined in numerous ways. The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (1995) has outlined the following definition for inclusion, "Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society" (p. 99).

Inclusion can encompass co-taught classrooms or single-teacher taught general education classrooms. In both of these models, the students with learning disabilities are included in general education classrooms for the entire school day. All instruction takes place within the general education classroom, and the students with learning disabilities have their learning needs met within the general education classroom. (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000) The special education teachers can provide the needed support to the students with disabilities within the general education classroom through direct or indirect services.

### **Direct Service Model**

Under the umbrella of the inclusion model, is the direct special education service of co-taught classrooms. In co-taught classrooms, special education teachers and general education teachers work together in the classroom during part of the school day. There are numerous different models of co-teaching, but all of the models of co-teaching involve the special education teacher and the general education teacher working together to provided direct support for students with disabilities within the general education classroom. Students with disabilities may be clustered within these

general education classrooms, making it easier for the special education teachers to provide services.

### **Indirect Service Model**

Special education teachers also may choose to provide indirect special education services to students with learning disabilities who do not require explicit, direct, small group instruction. These indirect services would have been discussed and decided upon at the student's IEP meeting. The team would have agreed that indirect special education services would provide the necessary supports and the Least Restrictive Environment for the student with learning disabilities. Indirect special education services imply that the special education teacher and the general education teacher are meeting outside student instruction times to plan for and make accommodations for the student with disabilities. The special education teacher works indirectly with the student through the general education teacher. The special education teacher becomes a valuable resource for the general education teacher to consult with when the student with disabilities is having difficulties. Zigmond and Baker (1996) concluded that there were many benefits to students with learning disabilities being fully included within the general education classroom. The students with learning disabilities did not miss any instructional time from their general education classroom, and the curriculum was more accessible to these students through the adaptations and accommodations the teachers made.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Because learning to read is such an important factor when predicting how students will perform in school, it is crucial to understand the settings where reading

instruction takes place for students who have a learning disability. Reading can be taught in the general education setting by the general education teacher, or it can be taught in the general education classroom by team teachers, or finally it can be taught in a resource room by a special education teacher.

The study examined the perceptions these students and their reading teachers have regarding reading and reading instruction. The data gathered in this study provided more insight about the perceptions related to learning to read and the three different classroom settings in which reading was taught.

The models, methodologies, and approaches to reading instruction varied from classroom to classroom. This study explored the methods for reading instruction by means of classroom observations. These observations took place across all three classroom settings.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reading instruction and the perceptions of three fourth grade students with learning disabilities in a co-taught classroom, a resource room or a single-teacher taught classroom as well as their teachers. The focus was on the perceived and observed differences and similarities between each of the three classroom settings. Interview protocols (See Appendix F) were used to examine attitudes and perceptions of teachers across three different educational settings. Interview protocols were also used (See Appendix G) with students in order to understand how they perceived themselves as readers, and how they are taught to read. Research questions guided the study and the data was analyzed and reported on consistent with qualitative studies.

This study examined the attitudes and perceptions of the teachers, (both general education and special education), teaching across the three settings. The methodologies these teachers used for reading instruction was examined. Two instruments were used to identify features of the classroom teaching, teacher beliefs and teaching styles. (See Appendix F and G)

The research questions that guided the study are:

1. How do fourth grade students with learning disabilities in a small rural school district perceive themselves as readers across three different classroom settings?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of their students' reading ability? What are the teachers' perceptions of their reading instruction?
3. What are the differences and similarities in reading instruction across the three classroom environments?

### **Location of the Study**

This study was conducted in a small rural school district located in the southeastern area of Michigan. The school district had four elementary schools (Pre-Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade), one intermediate school (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade), one middle school (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade), and one high school (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade). Elementary School 1 had a total of 545 students with 30 teachers, Elementary School 2 housed 373 students and has 23 teachers, Elementary School 3 had 489 students with 22 teachers, and Elementary School 4 had 472 students with 30 teachers. There were a total of 1879 elementary students within the school district which includes both general education students and students with identified special needs. A further breakdown revealed that



there are 389 fourth grade students in the school district. Of these fourth grade students, 6 were diagnosed with learning disabilities within the school district. There were only 3 fourth grade students diagnosed with learning disabilities in the elementary school chosen for the study, and as a result these fourth grade participants were selected based on the limited number.

### **Participants**

Three fourth grade students with learning disabilities participated in the study. One student with learning disabilities was placed in each of the three educational settings. The students were present in their classrooms when the classroom observations were taking place. Each of the three fourth grade students were invited to participate in interviews with the researcher. The researcher was looking to discover the student's attitudes and perceptions during their reading instruction. Given the small and limited number of fourth grade students with learning disabilities in the district, students were chosen for the study through a selective sample.

The second group of participants was the teachers responsible for the education of the three fourth grade students with learning disabilities. One general and one special education teacher who taught in a co-taught classroom were invited to participate. A resource room teacher, as well as a single-teacher from a general education classroom were also invited to participate. The fourth grade teachers were not randomly selected. A teacher who had at least three years of experience teaching in a co-taught classroom, a resource room, or a single-teacher taught general education classroom were chosen, and asked to participate in the study. The teachers had a range of teaching experience, from approximately three years of experience to twenty years of experience.

## **Design and Overview of Study**

### **Interviews and Observations**

Each teacher was asked initially to complete the Theoretical Orientation Reading Profile (TORP) (DeFord, 1979). The TORP is a survey that is used to ascertain which theoretical orientation teachers subscribe to (phonics, skills or whole language). The survey utilized a likert scale and had 28 items on it relating to the teachers' feelings about reading and reading instruction. The survey was concluded by asking the teacher if he or she agreed with the theoretical orientation that the survey placed them in.

Students were administered the Burke Reading Interview in order to obtain their perceptions about reading (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 2005). Both the teachers and the students also participated in face to face interviews with the researcher using the questions found in Appendix A through E. These questions were based on the responses from the inventories.

Following the interviews and completion of the inventories, (TORP & Burke), the researcher observed in each of the fourth grade classroom settings. Each classroom setting was observed on four separate occasions. The researcher observed the strategies and instructional methodologies, teaching styles, and classroom environments that were being used with the students with learning disabilities. The researcher recorded the observations through field notes and the students' interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Field notes were typed up following each of the classroom observations. Data collected through the interviews and the classroom observations was analyzed through qualitative methods.

A second interview with each teacher followed the classroom observations. The researcher asked follow-up and clarifying questions regarding what was observed. The purpose of the second interview with the teachers was to discuss instructional methodologies, teaching styles, and teacher beliefs used when instructing students with learning disabilities in the area of reading. The researcher also explored how the classroom environment supported the reading of the students with learning disabilities.

Interviews consisted of open ended questions based on data collected from the TORP and Burke Reading Interview (See Appendix A through E) that enabled the researcher to identify the student's attitudes and perceptions as it applied to their reading.

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative design. The research data was collected through field notes, inventories, interviews, observations and audio taping. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) define qualitative research as "...research in which the investigator attempts to clarify phenomena through carefully designed and controlled data collection and analysis" (p. G-7). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) write that, "...case studies all use participant observation and various forms of face-to-face in-depth interviewing as principal forms of data collection (p. 85). The natural setting, the classrooms, and the participants, the teachers and the students, became the direct source of data in this study.

**List of Definitions**

Inclusive education – all student with disabilities are included in general education classrooms, special education supports and services are provided within the general education classroom (Peterson and Hittie, 2010)

Resource Room – a classroom where students with identified disabilities come for part of their instructional day to receive special instruction in an individualized or small group setting for a portion of the day. (McNamara, 1989)

Co-taught classroom – two teachers working together in a classroom with all students; the teachers share the planning, organization, delivery and assessment of instruction, as well as the physical space. Both teachers are actively involved and engaged in all aspects of instruction. (Walther-Thomas, et. al, 2000)

Co-teacher – a teacher who works side by side with another teacher in a co-taught classroom (Friend & Cook, 2000)

Perception – Dictionary definition: capacity for comprehension; to attain awareness or understanding of. (search of literature did not yield standard definition but Goodman, Watson and Burke (2005) describe perception as beliefs and understandings.)

Attitude – a mental position with regard to a fact or state (Webster Dictionary definition); the positive or negative degree of affect associated with a certain subject (Zan & Martino, 2007)

Learning disability – The term 'specific learning disability' means a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. (IDEA, 2004)

Least restrictive environment – (LRE) a mandate that students with disabilities are placed in special classes, separate schools or positions other than regular education classrooms only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that even with aids and services education can not be achieved. The placement must also allow the student with disabilities to be with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. (IDEA, 2004)

Special Education - Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including—(i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings (Michigan Administrative Rules For Special Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE\\_Supplemented\\_with\\_IDEA\\_Regs\\_379598\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_379598_7.pdf))

Teaching methodology – a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline (education): a particular procedure or set of procedures for instruction (search of literature did not yield standard definition, but Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, (2005) describe teaching methods as basic way of organizing kids, time, materials, space and help for optimal learning.

It is important to understand the research that has been conducted regarding reading and its instruction prior to this study. The different types of classrooms where reading instruction is delivered was explored as well.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Reading skills can be a strong predictor of how well a student will do in school. When students are identified with a learning disability in the area of reading, it becomes imperative that effective reading instruction takes place. Zigmond, Vallecorsa, and Leinhardt (1980) find that “Underachievement in reading is the most common and most serious academic problem of learning disabled students” (p. 89). This chapter will be organized into six major categories: Types of Classrooms involved in the study, Components of Reading Instruction, Methods of Reading Instruction, Teacher Interactions, Teacher Perceptions and Student Perceptions.

### Classroom Types Involved in the Study

Reading instruction for students with learning disabilities can take place in different settings. For the purpose of this study, three specific settings were selected. First was a resource room, where the student with learning disabilities was sent for direct instruction in reading. Another setting was a co-taught classroom, where a general education teacher and a special education teacher provided reading instruction together within the general education classroom. And third was the general education classroom where only the general education teacher was providing the instruction. While there may be other settings for reading instruction for students with learning disabilities, this study only focused on these three settings. The following is a description of each of the three settings.

**Resource Room** A resource room is a special education classroom, where students with identified disabilities can go to in order to receive direct instruction.

Instruction in the resource room is delivered by a teacher with special education certification. Typically, this type of special education program is referred to as a pull-out program, because the student with disabilities is pulled-out of his or her general education classroom for part of his or her school day in order to receive direct instruction with the special education teacher (McNamara, 1989).

A student identified with a learning disability in the area of reading would visit the resource room for direct reading instruction. Typically, the length of time the student would spend in the resource room is dependent on the severity of the reading disability. The instruction would be provided to a small group of students with similar abilities by a special education teacher (Bentum & Aaron, 2003).

One advantage to this type of program is that the student receives instruction that is designed to meet his or her needs. The student's IEP would have goals written to address the deficit in reading, and the special education teacher would be developing lessons to ensure that the student met his or her reading goals. A disadvantage to a resource room is that the student is segregated from his or her general education peers for a portion of his or her school day. The student is also absent from the general education curriculum while he or she receives instruction in the resource room.

**Co-Taught Classroom** A co-taught classroom is an educational setting within the setting of a general education classroom. A general education teacher and a special education teacher work together to deliver instruction to all students, including those with learning disabilities. By working together, these two teachers can meet the needs of all of the students in the classroom (Magiera, Simmons, Marotta, & Battaglia, 2000). Co-teaching provides the direct and immediate special education support to the



students with disabilities while at the same time allowing the students with disabilities access to the general education classroom (Walsh & Jones, 2004). Co-teaching involves two teachers who share the teaching responsibility. Together these teachers jointly deliver instruction; the general education teacher provides the instructional framework, but the special education teacher may provide curriculum modifications for students with disabilities or others who need accommodations.

Friend and Hurley-Chamberlain (2000), describe co-teaching as a means for providing special education services to students with disabilities within the general education classroom. However, the term co-teaching has been used by many districts "...synonymously with collaboration, teaming, team teaching and inclusion" (p. 1). Friend and Hurley-Chamberlain found that co-teaching includes the following characteristics: Co-teaching is a means through which the students with IEP's can receive special education support, specialized instruction within the general education classroom. Two or more teachers are working together and collaborating in the general education classroom. Students in co-taught classrooms are grouped in a heterogeneous manner. Both the general education teacher and the special education teacher in the co-taught classroom work with all students.

The special education teacher involved in co-teaching does not provide support to only the students with identified disabilities. Both teachers in a co-taught classroom participate fully in the instruction within the general education classroom, while their roles may look different, they both play active roles in the instruction. Most co-teachers teach together during instructional periods when identified students have the most difficulty with the curriculum (Walther-Thomas, Korenik, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).

There are several benefits to co-teaching, it allows the flexibility for teachers to respond to the diverse range of needs of their students, and there is also an improved student to teacher ratio (Friend & Hurley-Chamberlain, 2000). Co-teaching can be implemented when students with identified disabilities have instructional needs that will more likely be met if their supports are moved into the general education classroom (Zigmond, 2001). Co-teaching can provide individualized instruction, that is less fragmented and more in line with the general education curriculum, while in a general education environment. There is reduced stigma for students with disabilities in a co-taught classroom than in a pull-out program. Co-teaching can also help to create positive social interactions for students with disabilities (Friend & Cook, 1996).

One criticism of co-teaching is that the teachers, both general education teachers and special education teachers, do not collaborate with one another. Successful co-teaching requires the teachers to effectively work together to provide instruction for all students. By co-teaching, the general education teacher and the special education teacher can collaborate on an on-going basis in order to provide instruction in the co-taught classroom.

Another issue faced by co-teaching is time. The general education teacher and the special education teacher must make every effort to be able to meet on a regular basis in order to discuss the curriculum, the planning of lessons, and role assignments.

**Single Teacher Taught Classroom** The single teacher taught classroom, is a typical general education classroom where there is only one general education teacher. The general education teacher is responsible for providing reading instruction to all students. The special education services for the student with learning disabilities are

provided indirectly. This requires that the general education teacher and the special education teacher collaborate regularly outside of classroom time to discuss how best to meet the student's needs. The teachers would discuss the student's progress and strategies necessary for reading instruction.

An advantage to this type of program is that the student is fully included in the general education classroom for the entire school day. The student is not missing out on any of the general education curriculum. However, the student would not be receiving direct reading instruction on a daily basis with a special education teacher.

### **Reading Instruction**

**Definition** Zygouris-Coe (2001) defines reading as, "An active and complex process of constructing meaning from the written text in relation to the reader's experiences, knowledge, motivation, and the context of the reading situation" (p.30). It is a cognitive process that involves many skills being employed at the same time. Reading instruction can be characterized as teaching students to attach meaning to the written text. Written text is the symbolic form of the language that is spoken (Decker, 2007). Because written language and oral language are so closely related to one another, it is imperative that reading instruction expand the student's language. While the process of reading instruction can be broken down into several components from the sound-symbol relationship of letters to phonics to fluency, readers must be able to understand what they are reading. Students enter school with varying reading abilities. Reading instruction is necessary for all students to become skillful readers (Adams, 1990).

## **Reading Instruction for All Students**

**Components of Reading** The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in conjunction with the U.S. Office of Education found several components of effective reading instruction for students who are beginning to learn how to read. They found that beginning readers need to develop an awareness of the written word, a consciousness of how language becomes written text, and knowledge of the alphabet, commonly referred to as Concepts About Print. Phonemic awareness (the understanding that words are composed of sounds), phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds) and phonological awareness (the understanding that words have syllables, rimes and phonemes) are also necessary components of reading instruction in order to help students become proficient readers. Finally, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that reading instruction that includes reading fluency is also a key component for effective reading instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 2-1 – 4-69).

Experts concur that reading instruction should include these components, however, the emphasis cannot be solely placed on one of the components. For example, phonics is an important component of learning how to read, yet a reading program should not place an over abundance of focus on phonics. Nonetheless, there would not be an equal focus on each of the components. All of the components of reading are combined. The combination and emphasis on certain components would vary greatly depending on the type of reading method utilized (Adams, 1990; Armbruster, B., 2002; Tompkins, 2006).

The National Reading Panel Report includes five critical areas for reading instruction. First is phonemic awareness, the hearing and recording of sounds and being able to understand the sounds words are made up of. Second is phonics (the letter-sound relationship in words), third is fluency (the rate at which a student reads and the intonation used when reading aloud). The fourth area of necessary instruction is vocabulary (meaning of words). And the final fifth essential component of reading is comprehension. Comprehension is the ability of the reader to understand what is read. These critical areas for reading instruction can be incorporated through many different methodologies. (“A Closer Look at the Five Essential Components”, 2004; National Reading Panel Report, 2000) While the overall objective of reading is comprehension, the other four components play an important role in supporting reading instruction (Neuman, Copple & Bredekamp, 2000). Adams (1990) describes the reading system as having four processors: context, meaning, orthographic (print), and phonological. Each system does not work independent of the other systems. A reader must utilize all four systems in order to be an effective reader.

While the components of reading programs are critical to what should be taught for reading success, the process of delivering reading instruction is significant as well. One purpose of this study is to examine how teachers in the three settings previously described, teach reading and the methods they utilize. The following are common beliefs held by researchers in the field of reading. Neuman, Copple and Bredekamp (2000) write that, “...the ability to read and write does not develop naturally, without careful planning and instruction” (p.6). The American Federation of Teachers report that effective reading instruction for all students should include the following types of

instruction: direct instruction, systematic and explicit instruction of sound-symbol relationships within the written language (AFT, 1999, pp. 7-8, as reported by Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Systematic Instruction is a direct lesson on the skills or concepts that the reader is lacking. Systemic Instruction typically follows a logical order (“The Five Components of Reading Instruction”, 2006; Moats, 1999). Explicit Instruction involves the teacher modeling, followed by guided practice, and then opportunities for independent practice by the student (“The Five Components of Reading Instruction”, 2006).

**Phonemic Awareness** Phonemic awareness is the understanding of the connection between sounds and words, and further that words are composed of sounds. It is the center of language (Diller, 2006). A beginning reader must be able to blend sounds into words and then conversely, separate out the sounds in a word, in essence be able to arrange and manage the smallest parts of language. A reader must be able to use their understanding of these units of sound and language in order to begin reading (Adams, 1990; Cunningham, 1991; National Reading Panel, 2000; Weaver, 2009).

**Phonics** Another important component of reading is the understanding of the sound and symbol relationships, which is known as phonics. Phonics is the relationship between letters, including word families, short vowels, suffixes, prefixes, and the sounds that they represent. Phonics instruction aids the reader in connecting the units of sound (phonemes) with the written symbol (letter). The reader then transfers this sound knowledge to the written word in text. Phonics instruction helps students develop decoding skills, spelling skills and the ability to understand words better. (National

Reading Panel, 2000). When students encounter an unknown word in the text that they are reading, phonics skills can aid the student in solving the unknown word quickly.

**Phonological Awareness** Related to phonics, is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the understanding of words, that words have syllables, rimes, and phonemes. Readers must also be able to find the patterns within words(National Reading Panel, 2000). Readers must have some understanding of spelling. Because reading and writing are so closely connected, knowledge of spelling patterns and rules will help a student read and write words.

**Reading Fluency** Reading fluency is the ability to read the text accurately and smoothly as well as we speak. A fluent reader does not have to stop to decode words. Fluency involves the speed, phrasing, expression, intonation, prosody, and pacing of the reader. How fluently a reader is able to read text is directly correlated to the reader's comprehension of the text (Diller, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

**Vocabulary Instruction** Vocabulary correlates to one's spoken language, it connects oral language to written words or text. Instruction in vocabulary that the student will encounter while reading the text, will greatly impact the students overall ability to comprehend the text. Vocabulary can be taught directly through a lesson or indirectly through speaking or reading of text (National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Comprehension** Comprehension is the level of understanding in which the reader develops meaning from what has been read. Readers must be able to think while they are reading in order to create meaning of the text that they read. Readers

incorporate their prior knowledge in order to construct meaning and understanding of the text (National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Assessment** In order to gauge the reading development of students, teachers utilize a range of assessments. The following describes some of the common assessments implemented. The purpose of reading assessment is for the teacher to develop an understanding of the student's reading abilities, and then use the information to decide how best to support and promote the student's further learning (Grabe & Jiang, 2011). There are four basic principles regarding reading assessment. The reading assessments must aid in student learning, aid in the teacher's instruction, help the teacher understand the student and the student's learning, and the assessment must be efficient (Serafini, 2010).

These on-going assessments are an integral part of instruction as the assessment gives the teacher data of how the student is performing, and allows the teacher to measure the reading growth of the student (Cooper, 1997). Teachers are the most important tool when it comes to assessing students' reading abilities. The teacher develops the assessment strategies, gathers the assessment data, and analyzes the assessment data (Valencia, 1998). The assessment data will help the teacher ascertain what reading skills each student already has acquired, and which skills continue to require direct instruction. Assessment data can be used by the teacher to develop goals for each individual student. Periodic assessment provides data on the student's progress.

When assessing a student's reading skills, the assessments need to occur frequently and be tailored to the individual student. The teacher needs to continually re-



evaluate the student's learning and modify instruction to meet the ever changing needs of the student (Valencia, 1998). The teacher can also use assessment to collaborate with the student. Together the teacher and the student can reflect on what the student is able to do well and set goals for what the student should achieve in the future. These goals will aid the teacher in developing appropriate instruction so the student can make the desired progress (Cooper, 1997).

The National Reading Panel (2000) found that reading assessment in the early grades (K-3) should focus on phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. As these are also the major components of reading instruction, it is crucial to understand a student's performance in each of these areas.

Because fluency is so closely connected to comprehension, this also needs to be assessed on an on-going basis (Grabe & Jiang, 2011; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). Slow and choppy reading may cause confusion with the text for the reader. Fluency assessment should involve three components: accuracy, rate and expression. When assessing fluency, the teacher should use a text at the student's independent reading level (accuracy between 96% and 100%). The teacher should use an approach that yields information regarding the student's vocabulary knowledge, retell of the text (including the main idea and supporting details), ability to draw inferences, and be able to evaluate what was read.

There are several types of informal observational reading assessments. Field notes, anecdotal notes, reading inventories, running records, checklists, the oral reading of leveled passages, and miscue analysis are all quick assessments that provide the teacher with information about a student's reading skills (Serafini, 2010). The running

record allows the teacher to check off words in the text the student reads correctly, it also allows the teacher to keep track of errors that the student makes. Following the assessment the teacher will analyze the errors, which provides a focus for the instruction the student needs (“The Five Components of Reading Instruction”, 2006; Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996).

Using a variety of types of assessments is beneficial in collecting different types of assessment data. The best assessments are real assessments, meaning that these assessments are based on what the student is actually learning. Many times, school districts, or even the state require assessments that do not provide the teacher with much relevant data to the student’s exact learning needs. Assessments should be aligned with the instruction that the student had already had, and lead toward future instruction (Cooper, 1997; Valencia, 1998).

In addition to these components, reading instruction needs to provide an abundance of opportunities for the student to read. Reading is an on-going process and must take place throughout the school day, throughout all subject areas, and across different settings. Reading cannot be a single subject taught one-time during the school day during “reading time” (Raines & Canady, 1990; Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996).

Figure 2.1 describes how the necessary components of reading are utilized (or not utilized) in four different approaches for teaching reading.

**Figure 2.1****Components used in Different Methods of Reading Instruction**

	Concepts about Print & Alphabetic Principle	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Phonological Awareness	Reading Fluency	Vocabulary Instruction	Comprehension Instruction
<b>Phonics</b>	Explicitly taught	Explicitly taught	Explicitly taught	Explicitly taught	phonics will aid in student's fluency	Not taught	Not taught
<b>Whole Language</b>	Students acquire these skills though experience with real texts with teacher guidance	Not explicitly taught, students acquire these skills though experience with real texts with teacher guidance (implicit)	Explicit instruction not required, but can be taught through authentic texts, if needed by the student (implicit)	Not explicitly taught, students acquire these skills though texts with teacher guidance (implicit)	Not required, but can be explicitly taught if needed by the student	Taught through texts being read by student	Taught through texts being read by student
<b>Balanced Instruction</b>	Explicitly taught if needed	Explicitly taught if needed	Explicitly taught if needed	Explicitly taught if needed	Explicitly taught if needed	Taught through shared	Explicitly taught to the student

	by the student	by the student	by the student	by the student	needed by the student	reading	whole group or in strategy groups
Reader's Workshop	Explicitly taught if needed by the student	Explicitly taught if needed by the student	Explicitly taught if needed by the student	Explicitly taught if needed by the student	Explicitly taught if needed to the student whole group or in strategy groups	Explicitly taught to the student whole group or in strategy groups	Explicitly taught to the student whole group or in strategy groups

### Approaches to Reading Instruction

The following section describes common methods used to teach reading. The necessary components of reading are discussed within each methodology.

#### Phonics

**What is it?** In order to become a successful reader, students must be able to independently solve unknown words (Cunningham, 1991). Phonics instruction can add to a student's ability to quickly pronounce these unknown words. The phonics approach to reading instruction is based on the explicit teaching of phonics skills to the student. The student learns basic word parts or sounds. These parts are then put together in order to build whole words. The Nation Reading Panel Report (2000) states that, "An essential part of the process for beginners involves the learning of the alphabetic system, that is, letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, and learning how to

apply this knowledge to their reading” (p. 2-89). This explicit teaching of word parts help students when they encounter unknown words.

When engaging students in phonics instruction, the teacher must provide a purpose. To simply have students memorize rules or complete a worksheet that requires the use of only of specific phonics skill is quite meaningless. Following an explicitly taught phonics lesson, the student must be required to apply the newly learned skills through reading practice that requires the application for those new skills (Cunningham, 1991).

**Concepts about Print & Alphabetic Principle** Phonics requires that students know the names of each letter of the alphabet and the corresponding sound for each letter. If a student does not have all of the letter names and sounds concretely in place, the teacher would begin instruction with these alphabetic principles. The student must also know how to hold a book, where to begin reading, the direction text follows (left to right), what to do at the end of a line of text (return sweep), and one-to-one match (pointing to each word within the text). These pre-reading skills are the necessary foundation on which reading is built.

**Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Phonological Awareness** Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Phonological Awareness are the understandings of the connection between sounds, word parts, and words. When using a phonics approach to reading instruction, the teacher would help a student build upon these skills. Exercises in these reading components would include putting the sounds together in order to build words, and then taking words apart into their corresponding sounds.

All phonics programs focus on instructing students in the alphabetic principle and how to use the sound – symbol relationships to read (Chard & Osborn, 1999; Decker, 2007; National Reading Panel, 2000). This instruction in phonics needs to be real instruction, it is not merely isolated drills, worksheets or rote memorization. Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Phonological Awareness skills taught in isolation have no real meaning for readers. If these skills are only taught with a drill worksheet where the student simply follows the pattern, the student does not have the opportunity to practice utilizing the skill within a text. While many basal programs may include a phonics component, many do not include a planned approach where following the lesson, the student uses the skills taught to decode text (Chard & Osborn, 1999; The role of phonics in reading instruction, 1996-2013; Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996; Starrett, 2006).

**Reading Fluency** To successfully decode words, students need to be able to recognize when a word is unfamiliar and then the student must be able to use their knowledge of words, that we read words from left to right. Students must be able to look at unknown words and think of other words that have similar spelling patterns and recognize the sounds associated with those patterns. Students must then reread the sentence to check their pronunciation of the unknown word and check for meaning. If this was not successful, the student must then break the word into chunks in order to discover what the unknown word is (Cunningham, 1991).

**Vocabulary Instruction** Vocabulary instruction does not take place in a phonics approach to reading. The Phonics based approach to reading instruction focuses only words and the basic parts of words. Breaking words apart, and decoding are the major

focuses of a Phonics based instruction. New words (whole words as opposed to word parts) and their meanings would not be addressed in a Phonics program.

**Comprehension Instruction** Comprehension instruction does not take place in a phonics approach to reading. Since the Phonics based approach to reading instruction focuses on decoding words and the basic parts of words, it does not have a comprehension component. A Phonic approach focuses on correctly naming the unknown word and not on understanding the text being read.

**How this Method Relates to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities** The phonics skills of each student needs to be assessed, so that the teacher can determine what skills the student requires more instruction with. Phonics then can be taught in a systematic (planned) and effective manner. While instructing the student on how to effectively decode words is truly important, so is the teaching of high frequency words. These high frequency words are encountered often in text, and they cannot be decoded; therefore these words need to be memorized (Starrett, 2006).

**Benefits and Drawbacks of this Method** Phonics is just one component of a reading program. It cannot be used as the sole method for teaching reading. The explicit instruction of phonics should be embedded within the program to help students become more fluent readers, as they will be able to quickly decode unknown words. This systematic and explicit instruction can benefit all students, especially students in the early elementary grades who are in the beginning stages of reading instruction. Struggling readers may benefit the most from the explicit teaching of phonics, because the reading process has not come easy to these students. Students who become efficient at using phonics to decode text, also become better at spelling and

comprehending (The role of phonics in reading instruction, 1996-2013; National Reading Panel Findings, 2000; Starrett, 2006).

**Teacher's Role during Instruction** The teacher has most of the control during phonics instructions. There is gradual release of control to the student once the student has mastered the necessary skills. There are very few student interactions, while the teacher remains clearly in charge. In a general education classroom, a teacher would deliver the phonics instruction on a particular phonics rule (for example: beginning blends) to the whole class. The teacher would then ask the students to complete an exercise that would utilize the skill just taught.

### **Whole Language**

**What is it?** Language is a personal means by which we communicate through listening, speaking, reading and writing (Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991; Goodman, K., 2005). Whole language can be viewed as a way of thinking about reading instruction, it is not a method or a reading program. Thus, reading can be described as a social process, that focuses on the building of meaning (Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). The whole language ideology centers on the belief that learning to read should be as effortless as learning to speak, and that reading instruction should be whole and natural with a focus on the function of the text (Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991; Goodman, K., 2005; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Stahl & Miller, 1989; Sukyadi, 2010). Kenneth Goodman (2005) writes, "Literacy is an extension of natural whole language learning: it is functional and relevant" (p. 41).

The guiding principles of reading instruction under the Whole Language ideology include: the purpose of reading is to construct meaning, students need to learn to



predict, select, confirm, self-correct and monitor their own reading, comprehension of meaning is always the end goal of reading, and educators need to understand that readers are limited by their prior knowledge (Goodman, K., 2005).

**Concepts about Print & Alphabetic Principle** Young children, even before school age, are aware of the print surrounding them in the world. Whole Language advocates adhere to the belief that language learning, reading included, is natural and comes about from meaningful experiences with literature (Shelley, 1995; Sukyadi, 2010). It is through these meaning experiences that students learn about the functions of print (text) and the alphabet. Students may require teacher guidance within the text to grow in their understandings about these concepts about print, however, if these demonstrations are necessary, there is no sequential order in which these skills should be taught (Goodman, K., 2005; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

There are four language systems that are utilized while reading: semantics (meaning), syntactic (grammar), pragmatic (word order) and graphophonemic (letter-sound). All readers use these each of these systems while reading in conjunction with visual information. However, over reliance of one system may lead to less effective reading (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984). Errors, also known as miscues, students make when reading are either semantic, syntactic, or graphophonemic in nature. All students make errors when reading, yet too often reading instruction methodologies focus on the graphophonemic cueing system at the expense of the meaning of the text (Newman, 1985).

**Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Phonological Awareness** Educators who believe in the Whole Language approach to reading instruction find that phonemic

awareness, phonics, and phonological awareness can be learned by most students naturally without explicit instruction. When it becomes necessary to teach certain phonemic skills, the skills learned must have a direct correlation to the text and be taught within the context of the current authentic reading that the student is currently doing. Skills taught in isolation are irrelevant and meaningless. Drill worksheets that dissect language into pieces have very little meaning for readers (Goodman, K., 2005; Powell & Hornsby, 1993). Yet, Edelsky, Altwerger and Flores (1991) find that reading cannot be broke down into individual skills and still be considered reading. The reader must be able to put all the components of reading together and be able to construct meaning in order for the act to be considered reading.

The purpose of reading is to gather meaning, therefore; reading is not putting together sounds to form words (Goodman, K., 2005). Teachers who employ the Whole Language approach to reading instruction believe that phonemic awareness, phonics, and phonological awareness can be learned naturally within written text, and that phonics skills should only be taught when necessary. Phonics does not help produce meaning language, phonics is simply "...strings of sounds or letter" (Goodman, K., 2005, p. 39). The drilling of particular phonics skills, possibly through worksheets or workbooks, is unnecessary, especially when taught in isolation. The students are not able to easily transfer a skill taught in isolation to the text they are reading. And because our natural language is not broken up into small pieces, Whole Language adopts the thinking that reading shouldn't be either. The Whole Language philosophy maintains that breaking words into parts, or teaching isolated skills out of context of the text makes reading unnatural and more difficult (Sukyadi, 2010). Reading is not taught

in a sequential order through mastery of explicitly taught skills, the activities involved in a Whole Language reading program are meant to be meaningful to each student (Bowman-Kruhm, 2007; Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991; Goodman, K., 2005).

Students can often gain phonemic awareness, phonics, and phonological awareness through the implicit reading instruction that is embodied in Whole Language. When students require specific phonemic awareness, phonics, and phonological awareness skills necessary for gathering of meaning from the text, the teacher can provide opportunities for learning the skill while in the context of the authentic literature (Powell & Hornsby, 1993). These brief skill lessons can empower the student to use the learned skill to gather meaning from the text. These lessons are individually tailored to meet the specific needs of the individual student (Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991; Weaver, 2009).

**Reading Fluency** Reading fluency can be defined as rate at which text is read. Fluency also includes the expression and intonation with which a reader reads. Yet fluent reading relies much more on a student's prior knowledge than it does on word recall (Newman, 1985; Weaver 2009). A student who simply names words, instead of reading for meaning is not an effective reader even if the accuracy rate at which he or she reads falls in the independent range. However, if a student makes substitutions while reading that make sense, the student is a far more effective reader (Newman, 1985; Weaver 2009). Effective readers rely on their own prior knowledge and the context of what they are reading to construct meaning (Weaver 2009).

Fluency can be taught several different ways in Whole Language. Shared reading is one way teachers can help promote fluency skills with their students (Shelley,

1995). By having students involved with shared reading the students are able to hear good reading by the teacher. The student can then reread the same text that the teacher modeled, with a focus on the fluency. When students practice reading and rereading the same material repeatedly, fluency skills will also be improved.

Other ways that teachers can help build fluency skills are the oral reading of the student's own text through Writer's Chair, and strategies such as Next Page please, which requires multiple readings of text.

**Vocabulary Instruction** The whole language philosophy views a student's "...ability to produce language as a bridge between spoken and written language" (Stahl & Miller, 1989, p. 87). Connections are made between the oral language that we speak and the texts that students read (Shelley, 1995). Thus the vocabulary a student reads in text should correlate to the vocabulary used in the spoken language. A teacher may need to draw the student's attention to the new vocabulary within the text and help the student connect it to the oral language through discussions (Mohr, Nixon, & Vickers, 1991).

**Comprehension Instruction** There is a great emphasis on the meaning (comprehension) of texts throughout the Whole Language approach to reading, as meaning is the purpose for reading. Constructing meaning and purpose should be the main objective for reading (Sukyadi, 2010; Weaver 2009). Decoding may be important tool for students to use when encountering unknown words, but the meaning of the text is by far the most important aspect of reading. Students need to be able to think about the text and understand what is written. Because the student brings his or her own unique prior knowledge to the reading situation, the student will develop his or her own

personal meaning from the text. The more prior knowledge a student is able to bring into their reading, the less the student will have to rely on print cues (Bowman-Kruhm, 2007; Newman, 1985). The teacher supports the reader in growing his or her understandings with comprehension strategies for retelling, recalling inferencing and predicting (Weaver 2009).

**How this Method Relates to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities** Too often, the focus for poor readers is on the skills of reading. They do not focus on the meaning of what they are reading and have come to learn that reading is about correctly naming each word. Students with learning disabilities can benefit from this approach to reading in that the teachers can "...adapt and adopt strategies, techniques and plans to meet a child's needs" (Bowman-Kruhm, 2007). As with other reading approaches, in Whole Language the teacher must identify the student's needs and match their instruction to meet the student's needs. The Whole Language approach to reading instruction acknowledges that reading involves the use of many strategies (Bowman-Kruhm, 2007).

Whole language can help create positive attitudes about reading (Shelley, 1995). Often students with reading difficulties have a negative view about reading. The Whole Language approach can aid students with learning disabilities by allowing them choice as to what they read (self-selection) and focusing on their needs as a reader (Goodman, K., 2005; Newman, 1985).

When the Whole Language philosophy is adopted and used in the classroom, the teachers encourages different types of thinking: literal thinking, interpretative thinking, creative thinking and critical thinking. In literal thinking the teacher supports the reader

in recalling and retelling about what was read. In interpretative thinking, the teacher encourages the reader to make inferences about what is being read, and then apply those inferences to real life. In creative thinking, the teacher fosters higher level thinking through drama, storytelling, poetry, plays and discussions. And finally, in critical thinking, the teacher encourages the reader to make judgments and evaluations about what is being read (Mohr, Nixon, & Vickers, 1991).

**Benefits and Drawbacks of this Method** This approach to reading instruction requires that the classroom has a varied and vast amount of literacy resources readily available to all students (Bowman-Kruhm, 2007; Sukyadi, 2010). Not only must each classroom must have an ample supply of books for students to choose from, but the physical classroom itself must have an abundance and a diverse range of print. Goodman, K., (2005), and Sukyadi (2010) find that only real books make for real reading. There is no use for basal readers or artificial text within a Whole Language classroom.

Teachers who utilize the Whole Language philosophy for reading instruction believe in combining speaking and listening skills with reading and writing skills with authentic purposes (Shelley, 1995). Because reading and writing are interconnected, the whole language principles focus on teaching this relationship, so that the students grow to understand this relationship (Bowman-Kruhm, 2007).

The Whole Language approach to reading empowers teachers to think creatively about their instruction. The teacher chooses the books, reads the books, rereads the books, initiates discussions with the books and even engages the students in

dramatization of the books (Shelley, 1995). The teachers also have the freedom to use appropriate materials for each individual student (Sukyadi, 2010).

One drawback of the Whole Language approach to reading instruction is that there is much implicit instruction. Through reading whole texts and using oral language, the student is expected to gain knowledge about concepts of print, phonics, phonological awareness, and phonemic awareness through their own experiences with language, both oral and written. Explicit instruction only takes places when it is necessary for the student to utilize the skill.

**Teacher's Role During Instruction** The teacher's role within the Whole Language paradigm is that of a facilitator, the teacher's goal is to support each student and extend his or her knowledge and reading skills (Newman, 1985). Risk taking a necessary part of reading (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984). In order to grow as a reader, students must take risks with the thoughtful guidance of the teacher. The teacher of Whole Language also empowers students to take an active role in their own learning (Newman, 1985).

In the Whole Language philosophy, comprehension is the purpose of reading. The teacher is constantly evaluating the reading skills of the students in order to support the discovery of the meaning of the literature they read. This on-going evaluation is "...planned, supported and implemented" (Goodman, K., Goodman, Y., & Hood, 1989, p. 45). These teacher driven evaluations could take place in a large group setting, small group setting, in pairs or even individually during reading. It is not a separate assessment given a particular time of the day outside the literacy time. It is a teacher guiding students within the reading. Within the Whole Language paradigm, students

are also expected to self-monitor their own reading (Goodman, K., Goodman, Y., & Hood, 1989).

In order to become an effective reader, each student needs to spend time actually reading. This means sustained time engaged in the act of thoughtful reading. While students are engaged in reading, the teacher can meet individually with students to monitor progress also. The teacher can demonstrate a new strategy or teach a new skill that will aid the student in gathering meaning from what is being read (Goodman, K., 2005). Through explicit teachings, the teacher is able to facilitate the student's understanding of the text. Yet the teacher only guides the student through the necessary skills needed for understanding (Powers & Hornsby, 1993).

### **Balanced Reading Instruction**

**What is it?** Balanced Reading is a comprehensive integrated approach to reading. It requires that teachers have a great understanding about emergent reading instruction (A Balanced Approach to Reading, 2003; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

As with the Whole Language approach to reading instruction, the Balanced Reading approach to reading instruction strives to give students the tools to effectively understand the structure of oral language and gather meaning from text (Bennett, n.d.; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Balanced Reading instruction is a comprehensive language arts program, which includes: reading aloud to students, reading with students (shared reading), guided reading, reading by students (independent reading), and writing (modeled, interactive and independent) (Holdaway, 1980 as cited by Zygouris-Coe, 2001; Johnson, 1999; Williams, 1996). The teacher establishes a purpose for reading (Williams, 1996). She reads aloud to the class everyday, and the teacher also meets



with students in whole groups, small groups and independently in order to do some shared reading, as well as provide individualized instruction (Williams, 1996). The students are also required to read independently daily as well. Oral discussions regarding the literature read by students is also a component of this instructional method (Decker, 2007).

**Concepts about Print & Alphabetic Principle** Balanced Reading Instruction includes instruction in reading, writing, spelling and phonics (Cassidy & Cassidy 1999/2000, as cited by Zygouris-Coe, 2001). These instructional activities should be meaningful activities while at the same time teaching the student new skills (Bennett, n.d.). The skills should be applicable. Worksheet and drill activities are often meaningless if there is no real practice using the newly learned skill. The alphabetic principle requires that students understand that each letter has a corresponding sound. This understanding is a necessary component of a Balanced Reading program (Cowen, 2003; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

**Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Phonological Awareness** Because phonemic awareness, phonics, phonological awareness are such powerful influences in reading achievement, they are essential components of a Balanced Reading Instruction program (Johnson, 1999; Cowen, 2003; Tompkins, 2006). Balanced Reading Instruction requires the explicit teaching of the letter/sound relationship (Decker, 2007; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

The letter/sound relationships, decoding, and encoding are taught so that students are able to create meaning from the text that they read (Cowen, 2003; Bennett, n.d.; Decker, 2007). Phonemic awareness, phonics, phonological awareness are taught

to the students as the skill becomes needed. Students use the skills associated with phonemic awareness, phonics, phonological awareness to be able to put sounds together in order to decode unknown words (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). As with other reading programs, it is important that the phonics skills not be taught in isolation. The student must be able to practice the newly acquired skill within a real text. In Balanced Reading, the amount of time spent on teaching these phonological skills would depend on the student's need (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). The student's need for specific skills would dictate what is taught. There would be no reason to address phonemic, awareness, phonics, or phonological awareness whole group. The teacher would need to assess each student's skills and then deliver instruction to those students who still require it.

Phonemic Awareness, phonics and phonological awareness can be addressed by creating a language rich environment. Through songs, chants, read alouds and games, the teacher can help promote these skills with the students. Through meaningful activities that involve direct instruction and application, the teacher can ensure that these necessary reading skills are attained by all students (Thompkins, 2006).

**Reading Fluency** A sight word (high frequency words) vocabulary will aid students in becoming fluent readers. These are words the student can automatically name without having to decode the word. New sight words must be continually taught to students (Cowen, 2003; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Students also need to practice fluency, speed and accuracy everyday when they read (Cowen, 2003). Readers must be able to practice fluent reading daily, this can be done by having students reread familiar texts repeatedly. Increasing fluency can be accomplished easily with decodable

and predictable texts (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). To be considered a fluent reader, a third grade student should be orally reading 100 words per minute (Tompkins, 2006).

Fluency can be taught through practice with high frequency words. Teachers can have a word wall in their classroom that students can refer to. The teacher can also support fluency skills through activities, such as introducing new vocabulary the students will encounter within the text, teaching word identification strategies and chunking techniques (Tompkins, 2006).

**Vocabulary Instruction** Vocabulary and achievement in reading are closely related, therefore instruction to aid in vocabulary development is critical to all readers (Tompkins, 2006). Vocabulary development and instruction is necessary to expand the student's knowledge and continue growth (Cowen, 2003; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). In Balanced Reading, vocabulary instruction can take place during shared reading. While the teacher does most of the reading during this time, the teacher can show students how to understand text being read. Vocabulary instruction can also take place through activities such as word maps, word posters, word sorts, word chains, and semantic word analysis (Tompkins, 2006).

**Comprehension Instruction** Reading comprehension instruction is also included as a part of the Balanced Reading approach to reading instruction (Cowen, 2003; Bennett, n.d.). Balanced Reading Instruction requires the explicit instruction in comprehension (Decker, 2007). Students are taught direct strategies for comprehension, such as predicting, connecting, visualizing, questioning, identifying the main ideas, summarizing and monitoring (Tompkins, 2006). These strategies are important to readers so that not only can they retell and recall details from what they

read, but they will also be able to evaluate, analyze, reflect and interpret what was read (Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

**How this Method Relates to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities** The Balanced Reading Approach to reading instruction involves direct and indirect instruction. Direct instruction may take place in small groups, or may be taught to the whole class. Depending on students' needs, direct instruction may also occur on an individual basis (Bennett, n.d.; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Balanced Reading includes guided reading as one of its components. During guided reading, the teacher meets with a small group of students who may require additional practice on a certain skill or strategy. The teacher explicitly teaches the skill or strategy to the students and then gives them the opportunity to practice using the skill or strategy, most often within text (Cowen, 2003).

This component of the Balanced Reading Approach is significant to students with learning disabilities, because their specific learning needs can be met. Because the teacher addresses the individual needs of each student through direct and indirect instruction, the student is able to grow in his or her own reading skills.

The Balanced Reading Approach requires that teachers continually assess student reading progress and then base instruction on the results of the assessments (Cowen, 2003; Bennett, n.d.). The teacher is then able to provide the exact instruction that the student requires to move forward in his or her reading (Cowen, 2003; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Teachers scaffold learning activities within the Balanced Reading program so that students can continually grow their reading skills (Bennett, n.d.). The teacher

continually comes back to a concept previously taught and has the student apply the learned skills at a higher level. Students with learning disabilities can greatly benefit from the scaffolding of reading skills that are taught. The new skill can be initially modeled and taught, and then the students could be given opportunities to practice the new skill. With further instruction, possibly in a small group or even individually, the student can continue to use the new skill to a larger extent (Tompkins, 2006).

**Benefits and Drawbacks of this Method** A large amount and a variety of different texts need to be available to all of the students in a classroom where balanced instruction takes place (Decker, 2007). The texts are also authentic texts (Cowen, 2003). This could mean a substantial number of books in each classroom. In order to have enough reading material to sustain a student's reading throughout the reading time, each student would likely require no less than 5 texts at his or her independent level. If there are 30 students in a classroom, at a bare minimum the classroom would need to have 150 available books. However, in order for students to have choice about the texts that they read, and great many more books would be necessary in the leveled classroom library. A great expense would be occurred by the teacher and possibly the school district in order to outfit each classroom with the necessary books. In using real texts, students can begin to appreciate good literature when the teacher utilizes the Balanced Reading approach for reading instruction (Bennett ,n.d.).

The teacher using the Balanced Reading approach must be able to select the appropriate leveled texts for their students (Cowen, position statement 2003). By using a simple assessment, such as a running record, the teacher can ascertain what the instruction and independent reading level is for the student, then provide many texts at

the desired level for the student. When reading on their own, students should be reading at an independent reading level with an accuracy rate of at least 95%.

**Teacher's Role during Instruction** During the start of reading time, the teacher would deliver reading instruction to the whole class. Following the instruction, the students would be given time to go and read. While students are actively engaged in their reading, the teacher would meet with students in small groups or individually in order to address the individual needs of each student. The teacher would also meet with students on an individual basis to assess the student's growth as a reader. During these meetings, the teacher would discover what skills the student has mastered, and which skills still require more instruction and practice. The teacher would plan lessons to address the strategies and skills still needed by each student (Tompkins, 2006).

### **Reader's Workshop**

**What is it?** Reader's Workshop is a method of reading instruction that concentrates on the independent reading levels of each student and utilizes authentic texts. There are seven principles that guide Reader's Workshop. They are: (1) Readers must have time to read just right books (at their independent reading level) every day. (2) Readers have the opportunity to select their own reading material at their independent reading level (95% accuracy). (3) Readers take care of books. (4) Readers need to respect their own reading time and that of others. (5) Readers need to have genuine opportunities every day to discuss their books. (6) Readers understand that reading for meaning is crucial for the reader. (7) Reader's can utilize their reading skills learned at school in other environments (Collin, 2004, p. 19).

All students can benefit from reading instruction delivered through the Reader's Workshop model. This model of instruction involves a mini-lesson, independent reading and small group instruction. In the mini-lesson, the teacher provides instruction on a reading strategy or skill to the whole class. Perhaps a mini-lesson could focus on how reading would sound when the student encounters a character speaking. The teacher would teach the students voice inflection and intonation strategies. Following the mini-lesson, the students are expected to engage in independent reading. The students are given choice as to the books that they read. Independent reading is where the majority of time is spent during Reader's Workshop. As students are reading independently, the teacher meets with students individually. During this conference, the teacher may ask the student to practice the skill taught in the mini-lesson. The teacher may also use this time to work on the student's individual goals as well. In addition, small group instruction can take place when a teacher finds that a small group of students have similar learning needs and require more direct instruction. If the teacher finds that three or four students are struggling with breaking unknown words apart, she may pull these students into a small group to work on that strategy. Partner reading (where two students read aloud together), shared reading (where the teacher and the students read aloud together), and read alouds (where the teacher reads aloud to the students) can all be included as components of Reader's Workshop (Atwell, 1987; Collins, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004). The teacher is the one who puts books into the hands of students (Lause, 2004).

**Concepts about Print & Alphabetic Principle** Emergent literary skills are the necessary building block for students to become readers. Readers must also have an

understanding of what a word is (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). If students do not have these skills in place, the skills must be explicitly taught to the student. After assessing each student's alphabetic skills, the teacher would develop a lesson to address the necessary skills that a particular student or group of students was lacking. However, these skills would only be taught if the teacher found that these skills were necessary for reading and gathering meaning.

**Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Phonological Awareness** In order for students to become successful readers, students need concrete phonemic awareness, phonics, and phonological awareness skills. Students need to have an understanding of how to count words, clap syllables, blend and segment sounds of a word, and recognize rhyming words. As with concepts about print and the alphabetic principle, if the student does not yet have phonemic awareness, phonics, and phonological awareness, those skills would need to be explicitly taught.

“Learning to read requires children have considerable awareness of the sound structure of the spoken language” (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000, p. 80). Students need to be able to connect letters to their corresponding sounds in order to be able to decode unknown words. Many students require strategies for decoding unknown words. Sounding out simple three letter words, for the purpose of decoding, may be one strategy for solving those unknown words. Also knowledge of beginning blends, ending blends, and vowel teams can aid a student in solving unknown words. If students are able to locate and identify chunks and/or syllables within a word, it may make the task of decoding a little easier. These strategies can be taught individually or



in small groups, depending on the needs of the students (Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

In Reader's Workshop, the teacher would be constantly assessing each student's skills as a reader. When the teacher discovers that a student is lacking a particular phonemic awareness, phonics, or phonological awareness skill necessary for future reading success, they would directly teach the skill. The skills could be taught individually to the student or in a small group of students. The reader would be required to use the newly learned skill within context. Worksheets and drills have no place within a Reader's Workshop classroom.

**Reading Fluency** Reader's develop fluency skills by reading at their independent reading level through Reader's Workshop (Wright, 2006). Constant practice with a familiar text at a student's independent reading level will aid in building fluency skills. Having a vast amount of high frequency words in a student's repertoire is crucial to a student's fluency (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). If a student is lacking in the number of high frequency words that are automatically recalled, the teacher would provide instruction and strategies for the students to add more high frequency words to their memory. The teacher can also have the student do repeated reading of a familiar text. By building the bank of high frequency words in the students' memory and the repeated reading of familiar texts, the students will grow their fluency skills and rates.

**Vocabulary Instruction** Students learn vocabulary through the texts that they are reading. It is important that the teacher chooses texts with a rich vocabulary in order to enhance the student's own vocabulary. Reader's Workshop does not use skill worksheets that have little carry over meaning for students (Lause, 2004). The teacher

can introduce new words that will be read within the text. By discussing the meaning of the new words, and then reading the new word within the context of the book, students can grow their vocabularies.

**Comprehension Instruction** Reader's Workshop does focus on comprehension (Wright, 2006). The teacher provides activities that help the students construct meaning from what was read (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). Discussions regarding the meaning of the author's message occur regularly during Reader's Workshop. These discussions can occur whole group during the mini-lesson, or during the individual conference with a student (Lause, 2004). Before asking a student to respond orally to what was read, the teacher first gives the student the opportunity to read the material silently. The material should also be at an independent reading level (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). Through the mini-lessons and individual conferences, the teacher helps students connect the lessons to what they have read (Atwell, 1987).

Comprehension strategies help students to build meaning and understanding of the text. The teacher will provide instruction so that the student can learn strategies within the text that the student is reading. Comprehension instruction also focuses on helping the reader build connections. Readers need to be able to connect the text (that they are reading-to-self (student's own experiences), text (that they are reading)-to-text (a text previously read), and text (that they are reading)-to-world (the world around them) (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).

Think Alouds aid students in building skills for predicting, summarizing, questioning, imagining, inferring, evaluating and forming opinions. By utilizing Think

Alouds whole group or even individually, the teacher can aid the students in transferring these skills into independent texts (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).

In order to help build information text comprehension, teachers can use graphic organizers, and KWL charts (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).

**How this Method Relates to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities** Reader's Workshop can be more effective for struggling readers than instruction provided solely through guided reading (Wright, 2006). As the teacher continually assesses the student's reading, he or she is able to make informed decisions regarding future instruction. This instruction based on the student's skills could take place during an individual conference with the student or in a strategy group. Yet, the teacher can choose to do a guided reading lesson with struggling readers during Reader's Workshop (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).

Because Reader's Workshop focuses on the needs of each individual student, it can be a very effective method of reading instruction for students with learning disabilities. By regularly meeting with the student with learning disabilities on an independent level, the teacher can discover what skills and strategies the student has in places and utilizes independently. The teacher can also discover the skills and strategies that the student still needs to learn in order to become a more effective reader. The teacher develops lessons to address the still needed skills or strategies and then gives the student ample opportunities to practice the skills and strategies with an authentic text.

**Benefits and Drawbacks of this Method** Reader's Workshop allows students to choose the texts that they would prefer to read. By providing students the opportunity

to choose their own reading texts, the teacher is increasing the student's motivation to read (Wright, 2006). Reader's Workshop also fosters the love for reading for students by combining instruction in literature that builds reading skills with student's own book choice for independent reading (Lause, 2004; Wright, 2006). By helping students discover purposes for reading, such as entertainment, learning new information, and helping one to make decisions, teachers can aid students in reading a variety of text from several different genres (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).

On-going assessment is an integral component of Reader's Workshop. Assessments can provide the teacher information on what the students already know and in which areas they still continue to require support (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). It is imperative that students be working at their independent reading level, which equates to reading with 95% accuracy and comprehending at 75%. Assessment should take place in several different forms. By using the same data collections methods, the same type of data would be yielded over and over again. Data gathered from the assessments should be used to support the learning needs and reading development of the student (Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Assessments benefit the teacher in understanding what the student can do and where the student still requires more guidance and direct instruction.

**Teacher's Role During Instruction** During Reader's Workshop, the teacher begins by meeting with the class whole for a mini lesson. This mini lesson only last for 10-15 minutes, where the teacher demonstrates a new strategy or skill that students can use within their reading. Once the mini lesson is complete, the students engage in

their own individual reading where they are reading texts that are at their own independent level and of their own interest. During this independent reading time the teacher meets with students, either individually or in small groups. When meeting individually with students the teacher is constantly assessing the student's skills, and checking on the student's growth as a reader. The teacher, with input for the student, develops goals for the student to work on until the next meeting. When several students require additional instruction on a particular skill or strategy, the teacher can meet with the student within a small group. The teacher develops a lesson that would address the skill necessary for the students to become more efficient readers, and then gives the students opportunities to practice the new skill or strategy within.

### **Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities**

While there may be no one best reading methodology to teach all students how to learn to read, a combination of reading instruction methods can provide the best outcomes for students learning to read. All students will need direct reading instruction in order to advance their reading skills (Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Reading instruction for students who struggle with reading can look different than it does for their general education peers. Students with learning disabilities require reading instruction that is evidence-based, meaning there is research behind the strategies that are being taught to the student. Allington and Johnston (2001, as cited by Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004) find that because no one reading methodology works with every student every time, it is imperative that the teacher employ strategies that match the student's learning needs.

**Assessment For Students with Learning Disabilities** As with general education students, there is a need for on-going assessment with students with learning disabilities. The information derived from the assessment shows the teacher where the student's needs lie. The teacher then develops a plan for instruction. The teacher sets attainable short term goals for the student with learning disabilities, and continues to monitor the student's progress on a regular basis. Goals are continually observed and updated (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). Running records may be one tool used to check for decoding skills, fluency and comprehension (Allington, 2006). Running records can give the teacher a great deal of data regarding what the student can do and where the student still requires more instruction. Students with learning disabilities, as with all students, need praise and encouragement but need it to a much higher degree. At a young age, students with learning disabilities become aware that they are not performing at the same level as their peers. It is vital to encourage them, and celebrate their successes (Lyons, 2003).

The students with learning disabilities must be reading fluently, both orally and silently. During a reading conference, the teacher can check on the fluency (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). When students have poor fluency, their comprehension is also impacted. Students may have to read a text several times over before becoming fluent with that text, or the teacher may choose to have the student read a simpler text in order to improve fluency skills (Allington, 2006). Fluency must be assessed with independently leveled text. Because automaticity in word recall aids a student's fluency and comprehension, sight word practice for struggling readers may be a necessary

component of any reading program used with students with learning disabilities (Grabe & Jiang, 2011; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

Poor readers often have great difficulty with applying phonics skills in order to solve unknown words (Cunningham, 1991). If this is so, the teacher would need to assess the student's skills, and then provide instruction to meet their needs.

**Elements of Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities** The four elements for reading instruction for students with learning disabilities needs to include: The Read Aloud (where the teacher reads to the student), Shared Reading between the teacher and the student, Independent reading by the student, and the teacher explicitly teaching the student how to read more effectively through the explicit teaching of necessary skills (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). More so than their general education peers, students with learning disabilities require "...frequent, intensive, explicit and individualized support" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004). Students with learning disabilities may also benefit from reading with a partner.

**Structure** Many students require a structured classroom environment for optimal learning. Routines and schedules are very important for students who have learning disabilities, it is imperative that these schedules be posted in the classroom, so that students can reference them often. Limiting distractions and disruptions during reading time allows the students to remain focused and on-task. An organized and supportive classroom would be an ideal placement for a student with learning disabilities (Lyons, 2003).

Allington (2006) finds that special education services can be too fragmented for students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities require longer

periods of time for reading, and more volume than do the general education peers. In a study completed in 1988, Anderson, Wilson and Fielding found that fifth grade students achieving in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile spent an average of 40.4 minutes per day reading, which equates to 2,357,000 words read per year. Conversely, fifth grade students achieving in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile only spent an average of 1.6 minutes per day reading, which equates to dismal 51,000 words read per year. The poorest readers spent the least amount of time actually reading, when in fact, they need to spend more time reading than their general education peers in order to become more proficient readers (Allington, 2006). Too often, the focus is on isolated reading skills for the lowest readers. Time needs to be spent within text and not on worksheets that have no direct correlation to what is being read.

Betts (1946, as reported by Allington, 2006) finds that students need to spend their reading time reading “just right” books. This means that the text can be read independently with greater than 95% accuracy and 90% comprehension. A teacher may provide instruction to students in books that fall into their “instructional range”, which the student can read with 90% to 94% accuracy with 75% comprehension. Any reading material that falls below the 90% accuracy level is too difficult for the student and is considered their “frustrational level”.

**Purpose** Pre-reading takes place before the actually reading of the text. During pre-reading, the teacher must establish a purpose for reading. In addition, the student must come to understand the purpose of reading is to understand the written text. Reading for enjoyment can be a lofty goal for students with learning disabilities who have struggled to read. The teacher needs to find texts, fiction and non-fiction, that are



of interest for the student and establish the purpose for reading the text (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996).

Giving the student with learning disabilities choices of the text they will read, can be very powerful and also aid in establishing the purpose for reading (Allington, 2006). In both Balanced Reading Instruction and Reader's Workshop, much emphasis is placed on allowing students the freedom to choose what they want to read, at their independent level. This can be very motivating.

### **Teacher Perceptions**

**Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Reading for Students** Teacher's have a vast knowledge base, and they put enormous effort into the thought and planning of their reading instruction (Mills, 1999). However, each teacher also needs to consider how his or her perceptions affect his or her instruction. A teacher's thinking and instructional behaviors are guided by a systematic set of beliefs which influence reading instruction (Deford, 1985; Gove, 1981). Teacher perceptions and beliefs regarding reading instruction are highly related to the teacher's mental life, personal experiences, and his or her background factors (Lenski, Wham & Griffey, 1997; Prawat, 1979). How a teacher regards what effective reading instruction entails for his or her students originates from the training he or she has received and on classroom experiences. While curriculum, administration, textbooks, and other teachers can have some impact on a teacher's decision making, ultimately, the teacher's own experiences, professional and personal, have the greatest impact on a teacher's reading instruction and his or her classroom interactions with his or her students (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981; Lenski, Wham & Griffey, 1997). A teacher's beliefs can be situational and, in turn, relate to the needs

of the individual student and the instruction delivery (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981). Teachers need to be reflective, critical and analytical about their own teaching behaviors within the classroom (Kitchens & Stevens, 2008).

A teacher of reading has a concrete understanding of the language learning process, the teacher uses this information to develop lessons and responses to the inquires of the students (Mills, O'keefe, & Stephens, 1992). The reading instruction teachers deliver is closely tied to their beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge about effective instruction (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981; Olson & Singer, 1994, as reported by Lenski, Wham & Griffey, 1997). In most classrooms, there is an alignment between the teacher's beliefs and how they deliver reading instruction (Lenski, Wham & Griffey, 1997).

Teachers have a tendency to group themselves in one of two groups – content centered teacher or student centered teacher (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981). A teacher that is content centered focuses his or her attention on delivering the reading curriculum to the students, while a teacher that is student centered focuses on delivering the instruction so the individual student can grow and develop as a reader over time.

Through reflection of his or her own teaching practices, a teacher can learn from the instruction that he or she have already provided, modify the instruction, and create more effect future instruction (Mills, Stephens, O'Keefe, & Waugh, 2004). The teacher can decide what absolutely worked in the lesson, what kind of worked, and what didn't work at all. From this knowledge the teacher can develop a new lesson that utilizes the activities that provided the most learning, and modify elements that were not as effective.

**Teacher Perceptions of Oral Reading Instruction** Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) found that many assumptions still exist regarding oral language learning. One assumption is that oral language must be well established before the student can benefit from instruction in reading or writing. A second assumption is that literacy instruction begins with teaching of the letter sound/symbol relationship. Because these early childhood education teachers were unaware of their assumptions or theoretical beliefs toward reading instruction, the teachers were allowing their students to lose out on significant opportunities to engage with print (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984, p. 62).

A teacher's instructional practices can also be based on their beliefs regarding (1) oral reading instruction, (2) a student's oral reading performance, (3) miscue analysis and instruction derived from the miscues, and (4) how to correct errors that a student makes. Oral reading instruction, the common element within any reading program, has clear and well defined task characteristics. By observing a teacher's interactions with a reader, especially focusing on how the teacher deals with a reader's miscues and errors, provides insight into a teacher's theoretical orientation (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981). Within a student's oral reading performance lies a wealth of information. How the teacher uses this information leads to his or her theoretical orientation on reading instruction.

Another way to discover how a teacher's beliefs can drive the reading curriculum is to administer the TORP. (See p. 9) The TORP yields three theoretical models that support a teacher's beliefs about teaching reading. The three areas are: (1) Phonics based instruction. (2) Reading skills instruction and (3) Whole Language based

instruction. However, DeFord (1985) recommends that interviews or observations be used in combination with the TORP to confirm a teacher's reading instruction orientation. Teachers who fall into the whole language category on the TORP have a tendency to ignore more reader miscues, wait longer to respond to the reader, respond to the reader's miscues instead of focusing on the letter-sound relationship at the word level. A teacher's beliefs directly relate to the reader's needs, and how the teacher responds to the reader and then provides instruction (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981). When a teacher attends to what the students are learning, and how the instruction is either enhancing or subtracting from the learning, the teacher applies his or her beliefs about reading instruction (Mills, O'keefe, & Stephens, 1992, p.20).

The teacher's beliefs about the potential of a reader may have an impact on the student's growth (Levine & Wang, 1983). This belief system could possibly negatively or positively affect reading instruction. If a teacher believes that some students have little potential to become an effective reader, the teacher may not engage in meaningful learning activities with the student. Conversely, if a teacher believes that all students have the potential to become effective readers, this will be reflected in their reading instruction.

Through open-ended interviews with pre-service teachers, Kitchens and Stevens (2008) uncovered many insights. The teachers who reflected on their instruction felt that they (1) had an enhanced sense of themselves as a teacher, (2) had a deeper understanding of individual learning, and (3) had a heightened awareness of the intricacies of teaching in classrooms (Kitchen & Stevens, 2008).

Buike and Duffy (1979, as reported by DeFord, 1985) found teacher's beliefs about reading instruction do change over time. Possible reasons for the changes in teacher's beliefs include classrooms experiences, life experiences, university coursework, workshops, district curriculum changes, and administrative directives (DeFord, 1985).

**Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Reading for Students with Learning Disabilities** Students with a learning disability in the area of reading are struggling readers. These students may not be proficient with applying phonics skills, using spelling rules, or have a vast sight word vocabulary. They may not be effectively using reading strategies. They may not be able to predict, visualize or connect to the text. The purpose for reading often eludes students with a reading disability. Because these students have such a great difficult with learning to read, motivation for reading is frequently an issue.

The identification of a learning disability in the area of reading is dependent on the assessments used to measure achievement and intelligence, state guidelines and how the school psychologist interprets the results of the assessments (Lyons, 2003). Four factors are evaluated to determine if a student has a learning disability in the area of reading. Those factors are the (1) physical development of the student, (2) the cognitive development of the student, (3) the language development of the student, and (4) the social and emotional development of the student (Lyons, 2003). If the student is behind in just one of these factors, the student could be considered at-risk for school failure (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Once the student is identified with a learning disability, an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) is developed for the student. The IEP would identify the student's strengths, as well as deficit areas that require more intensive instruction. Students with learning disabilities require "...frequent, intense, explicit and individualized instruction" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004, p. vii). Annual goals are written for the deficit areas into the IEP. Lyons (2003) finds that many times when a student is diagnosed with learning disabilities in reading, the student has a reading deficit for life. Yet, if the teacher engages in routine and on-going assessment of the student's reading skills and development, he or she is able to reflect upon which instruction strategies are having the most impact. This careful reflection followed by the necessary modifications to the reading instruction will result in the student making better growth in his or her reading skills (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004).

Students with learning disabilities need an educator in the school environment who understands how to address the social and emotional areas as well as the academic deficit areas of student development (Bano, Dogar, & Azeem, 2012, p. 117). Students with learning disabilities require individualized and specialized instruction daily by a highly trained teacher (Lyons, 2003). In some cases, this may be a special education teacher providing instruction within a resource room setting. In other cases, the general education teacher may provide instruction within the general education classroom. A special education teacher may advise the general education teacher on how to teach (approaches or methods) the student with learning disabilities. Effective teachers (special education or general education) offer students with learning disabilities support and direction that they require (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004).

The teacher who instructs the student with a learning disability in the area of reading must first assess the student to find out exactly where the problem areas lie (Lyons, 2003). Through careful routine assessment, the teacher can identify what the reader already knows about language and literature, this information will serve as the foundation from which the teacher alongside the student will create reading goals. The teacher's lessons will help the student achieve the set goals (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004).

However, the teacher's own perceptions could determine the reading instruction for the student with learning disabilities. Knowledge and awareness of these perceptions will help teachers' understanding. These understandings can help focus instruction (Telfer, Jennings, McNinch, Mottley, 1993, p. 51). Teachers are unique individuals and they differ from one another in their beliefs and practices. The way a teacher provides instruction coincides "...with their beliefs and understanding about teaching, learning, and reading and writing" (Allington, 2006, p. 34).

Teachers who have taught students with a learning disability to read at the level of their peers have similar attitudes and expectations for their students. These teachers are responsive to the individual needs of their students (Lyons, 2003). In their study, Bano, Dogar, and Azeem (2012) found that special education teachers perceive students with learning disabilities better than do the general education teachers. Telfer, Jennings, McNinch and Mottley (1993) found that teachers perceived the student's attitude and attendance as important predictors of academic success. They also found that teachers feel that providing programs and instruction that motivate and builds success are critical factors for students with learning disabilities.

Teachers are accountable for the reading growth of their students as well as their own performance as a teacher (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004). “Teachers must provide concrete evidence to parents and supervisors that they made appropriate instructional decisions based on on-going assessments that pushed students as far as they could go as a reader” (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004, p. viii). By providing instruction based to the student’s needs as evidenced by the assessments, teachers have continual records of the student’s growth as well as direction for future instruction.

Educators need to be well informed and critical of the claims of education effects (Allington, 2006, p. 33). Programs that claim to be research based cannot meet the needs of every student, as each student has a unique set of attributes when it comes to reading ability. The reading instruction teachers utilize will be shaped and reshaped when new insights are discovered and new questions are raised regarding reading instruction (Mills, O’keefe, & Stephens, 1992, p.20).

While the teacher’s perceptions are important to the reading instruction for students with learning disabilities, so are the student’s own perceptions regarding learning to read.

### **Student Perceptions**

**Student Perceptions about Learning to Read** A student’s attitude is defined by Briggs (1987) as “...a tendency to react specifically towards an object, situation or value; usually accompanied by feelings and emotions” (p. 202). What students believe about their reading abilities and learning to read greatly impacts their own learning (Goodman, Y., Watson, & Burke, 2005). The attitudes students develop towards reading may guide their reading behavior and also affect their progress as a reader



(Briggs, 1987). A student's attitude is derived from the student's beliefs regarding the purposes of reading, the want to achieve the outcomes of reading, the desire to meet the goals and expectations of the educator setting the reading goals, and also the student's past reading experiences (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). While a positive attitude toward reading can aid in motivating the student and promoting learning, conversely a negative attitude can hinder a student's motivation and reading progress (Briggs, 1987).

Many students have perceptions about learning to read that differ greatly from adult perceptions about learning to read (Johns, 1984). Adults may perceive reading as a lifelong skill necessary for all students to learn. However, some students may not understand the purpose of reading, and view it as a difficult and laborious task to perform only while in school. Students develop their perceptions based on their own reading ability. And students who struggle with learning to read may develop a negative attitude toward reading as they have not yet been successful at it. The way a student feels about his or her reading skills is highly correlated with his or her level of success (Briggs, 1987). They may even avoid reading altogether (Levine & Wang, 1983; Parker, 2004). A negative attitude toward reading can greatly impact the student's motivation, attention, and comprehension (Briggs, 1987).

The negative perceptions about reading that students develop may actually negatively impact their progress as a reader (Johns, 1984). Students who do not believe in their abilities as a reader will tend to give up very quickly when facing challenging reading situations (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997 as reported by Seitz, 2010). By providing the student with challenging tasks that can be completed

successfully by the student, the teacher can help improve the student's motivation and attitude toward reading (Setiz, 2010). The teacher can also encourage students to set reading goals for themselves and in turn take responsibility for their own learning (Parker, 2004; Seitz, 2010).

There are several factors that may impact a student's motivation and their attitudes toward reading. These factors include the student's interest, achievement, self-concept, the student's preference for challenges, the home environment, instruction that they have received in the past, and their social interactions (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Briggs, 1987). Exploring a reader's interest may be more important than choosing books solely based on the student's appropriate reading level (Parker, 2004; Seitz, 2010). Older students do not want to be seen reading children's books when their peers are reading chapter books. The teacher must pay close attention to find books that the struggling reader is interested in, but also can be read successfully by the student at an independent reading level. By selecting high interest materials at the optimal reading level, the teacher can aid in promoting successful reading for the struggling reader (Briggs, 1987).

**Inventories, Interviews and Observations** Teachers can become aware of a student's attitude toward reading by observing the student during an active reading time and also by administering an attitude survey on inventory (Parker, 2004). One type of inventory is the BRI (Burke Reading Interview). The BRI is used to explore the views and attitudes that students have about reading and reading instruction, as well as how their perceptions influence the way they think of themselves as readers (Goodman, Y., Watson, & Burke, 2005, p. 179). The BRI helps the teacher to examine the student's

views, and understand why readers use particular strategies. The BRI can help identify strategies that readers use, however students with learning disabilities often believe that they cannot read (Moore & Gilles, 2005).

One limitation of using the BRI, is that students may want to please the interviewer and respond to the questions in the way that the student perceives that interview would want to hear (Goodman, Y., Watson, & Burke, 2005). By observing the student oral reading, the interviewer can determine which reading strategies the student relies on. The reader's responses to the interview questions will often correspond to the models of reading instruction used in the classroom, for example Whole Language (Goodman, Y., Watson, and Burke, 2005, p. 180).

Watching students, both intensively and extensively, is essential to making decisions regarding the student's attitude toward reading and in turn drives the reading instruction (Mills, 1999). Once aware of a student's attitude toward reading, the teacher can develop lessons and activities that help the student to promote a more positive attitude. In addition to focusing on reading skills, reading instruction for readers who struggle needs to focus on fostering self-esteem and self-confidence. Teachers can encourage positive attitudes toward reading by building in a lot of successes (Briggs, 1987; Parker, 2004; Seitz, 2010). Providing reading instruction that meets the student's needs, the teacher can also aid in building self-confidence (Briggs, 1987). "Learning from students as we watch them is important not only for planning of curriculum and instruction, but also for constantly expanding our own knowledge about teaching and learning" (Goodman, Y., 1996, p. 603).

Informal reading inventories can also be used to determine the student's reading level and explore the reading strategies used by the student. The informal reading inventories can aid the teacher in assessing oral reading skills, fluency, miscues, and comprehension. From this information, the teacher can develop lessons to meet the student's individual needs (Harris & Niles, 1982). Harris and Niles (1982) state that informal reading inventories may not match the student's interests or instruction that the student has received.

**The Role of Phonics** The models discussed in this chapter view the roles of phonics from different perspectives. From a systematic model, phonics instruction helps students recognize words and comprehend text (Ehri, 2003). Because students are able to decode the words within the text, they are also able to build meaning from what they read. Systematic phonics instruction leads to better achievement in reading, especially for students with learning disabilities in reading. Poor readers often have great difficulty decoding words (Ehri, 2003).

Ehri (2003) examined 38 studies involving the use of phonics instruction. Ehri concluded that systematic phonics instruction was more effective than non-systematic instruction or no phonics instruction at all. And that phonics instruction has a significantly greater impact on the reading skills of students in the primary grades.

Chall (1996) found that there has been a decline in student achievement in reading since reading instruction shifted from a code based emphasis to a meaning based emphasis. While meaning based reading programs improved reading comprehension by focusing on "reading for meaning", decoding skills were often ignored or only taught indirectly. Many students require the explicit teaching of phonics

in order to improve their reading ability. Students require different instructional emphases at different stages of their reading development. All students are at different stages in their reading abilities, thus the teacher needs to pay careful attention to each student's individual needs (Chall, 1996).

In her research, Jeanne Chall (1997) found that instruction focused on decoding produced better results than meaning based approaches, especially for students who struggle learning to read. Chall believes that there is a great need for direct teaching of phonics and other beginning reading skills; however, decoding instruction needs to be connected to text. Skills cannot be taught in isolation, worksheets cannot be the primary way of teaching phonics. Phonics instruction must be combined with other forms of instruction in order to create a comprehensive reading program (Ehri, 2003, p. 14). When code emphasis instruction is taught within good literature, and students read for meaning, reading progress can be significant (Chall, 1997).

A study conducted by Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, and Verhoeven (2009) examined the phonics instruction received by kindergarten students. One group of student received systematic phonics instruction, while another group received non-systematic instruction. The group of kindergarteners that received the systematic phonics instruction progressed more in the areas of phonemic awareness, spelling and reading skills (Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009).

Chall (1997) believes that beginning reading instruction has a great deal to do with phonology and letter/word perception. As reading develops, reading instruction has more to do with language and reasoning. Readers in kindergarten through third

grades may require a much greater emphasis on decoding, vocabulary building, and word recognition than they have previously been receiving.

**The Role of Phonics in Whole Language** Whole Language is a philosophy, not really an approach to reading instruction for students with learning disabilities. It is student centered, allowing the student to take control and ownership over his or her learning (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995). Whole Language approach to reading shifts the emphasis from a deficit approach to a focus on the student's strengths and abilities (Zucker, 1993). A more individualized approach is utilized in order to promote student success. Students are immersed in literature and given opportunities to communicate through print and they are provided supportive feedback (Zucker, 1993). The Whole Language approach can help students develop a positive mind-set, and the curriculum is based on the student's interests (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995).

When Whole Language instruction is used, the lines are blurred between the students with disabilities and the more abled students. Because Whole Language focuses on teaching all students the strategies that they individually need to become better readers, struggling students are not singled out, and they come to feel more accepted. All students are given choices during Whole Language instruction. Instruction is based on the student's needs and interests, which increases the likelihood that the student with learning disabilities will be able to relate reading instruction to his or her experiences and knowledge (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995).

Students with learning disabilities are participating in the same curriculum as their general education peers when the Whole Language approach is used in the general education classroom. In the Whole Language approach, every student is

provided instruction at their own level, so each student can be successful, and develop a positive attitude toward reading (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995). Special education teachers and general education teachers can easily collaborate when using a Whole Language approach to reading instruction (Scala, 1993). Team teaching prompts greater curriculum alignment between regular and special education classrooms (Zucker, 1993).

What readers do when they read directly relates to their knowledge of the world, what they know about language, and what they believe about reading and reading instructions (Goodman, Y., 1996, p.602). Matching student's interest to text is key to promoting successful reading experiences. Students are encouraged to experiment and take risks in their own learning, which fosters independence (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995).

### **Systems and Reading**

Systems of language serve as a basis for learning to read. The communication systems, reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, visual representations work in conjunction with the four cueing systems: semantics, syntax, pragmatics, and graphophonemics. Semantics involves constructing meaning, in which the reader uses his or her prior knowledge in order to do so. Pragmatics is the way students use language in social settings. While pragmatics do included meaning, it also takes into consideration the social and cultural context. Syntax is the grammar of the language. This helps in the flow of the language, such things like word order, tenses connecting phrases and gender play a significant role in syntax. Graphophonemics is the relationship between letters and sounds, also known as phonics (Oglan, 2003, p. 20).

Any instance of language involves all four cueing systems when the focus of language is meaning. All four of these curing systems are open, in that they do not operate independently of each other (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984, p. 199).

When students are reading, they make decisions on how to solve unknown words and discover meaning based on the text. For example, the student may choose to employ graphophonemic strategies, and sound out the unknown word (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984). Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) state that no two language events are the same (p. 199). The reader is constantly making decisions about his or her reading. These decisions may be based on the content of the text being read, the structure of the text, and the student's own prior experiences with text. The purpose of all of these decisions is to be successful at reading the text and create meaning.

Within the Whole Language approach, students are taught reading skills or parts of language as they are needed. There is no set hierarchy of skills that need to be taught in a specific order. This is critical for students with learning disabilities, as they require more direct and explicit instruction (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995). As the student develops reading skills and strategies, he or she can use this knowledge in his or her writing too. Ken Goodman stated to a panel that invented spelling is perhaps the best evidence of students developing control of the phonics system (Aaron, Chall, Durkin, Goodman, K., & Strickland, 1990).

The Whole Language approach to reading instruction, especially for students with learning disabilities can help improve the student's self-esteem and attitude. Because social interactions are important to the Whole Language approach to reading



instruction, there is also a strong social benefit for students (Zucker, 1993; MacInnis & Hemming, 1995).

### **Student with Learning Disabilities Perceptions about Learning to Read**

Students with learning disabilities have an average intelligence, yet there is a neurological disorder that prevents the student from learning to read with the same ease as non-disabled students (Silver, 2004). Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) found that one to one instruction for the student with learning disabilities with a highly qualified teacher had the greatest impact on reading achievement.

Students with learning disabilities who are fully included in their general education classroom may experience fear of embarrassment or standing out. This fear may cause the student stress (Dickerson, 2008). Negative social interactions can also cause the student to act out behaviorally (Dickerson, 2008). Students with learning disabilities require support from teachers when it comes to social interactions as well as instruction (Dickerson, 2008). Cooperative learning and structured phonetic instruction have the greatest impact on the reading ability for struggling readers (Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011).

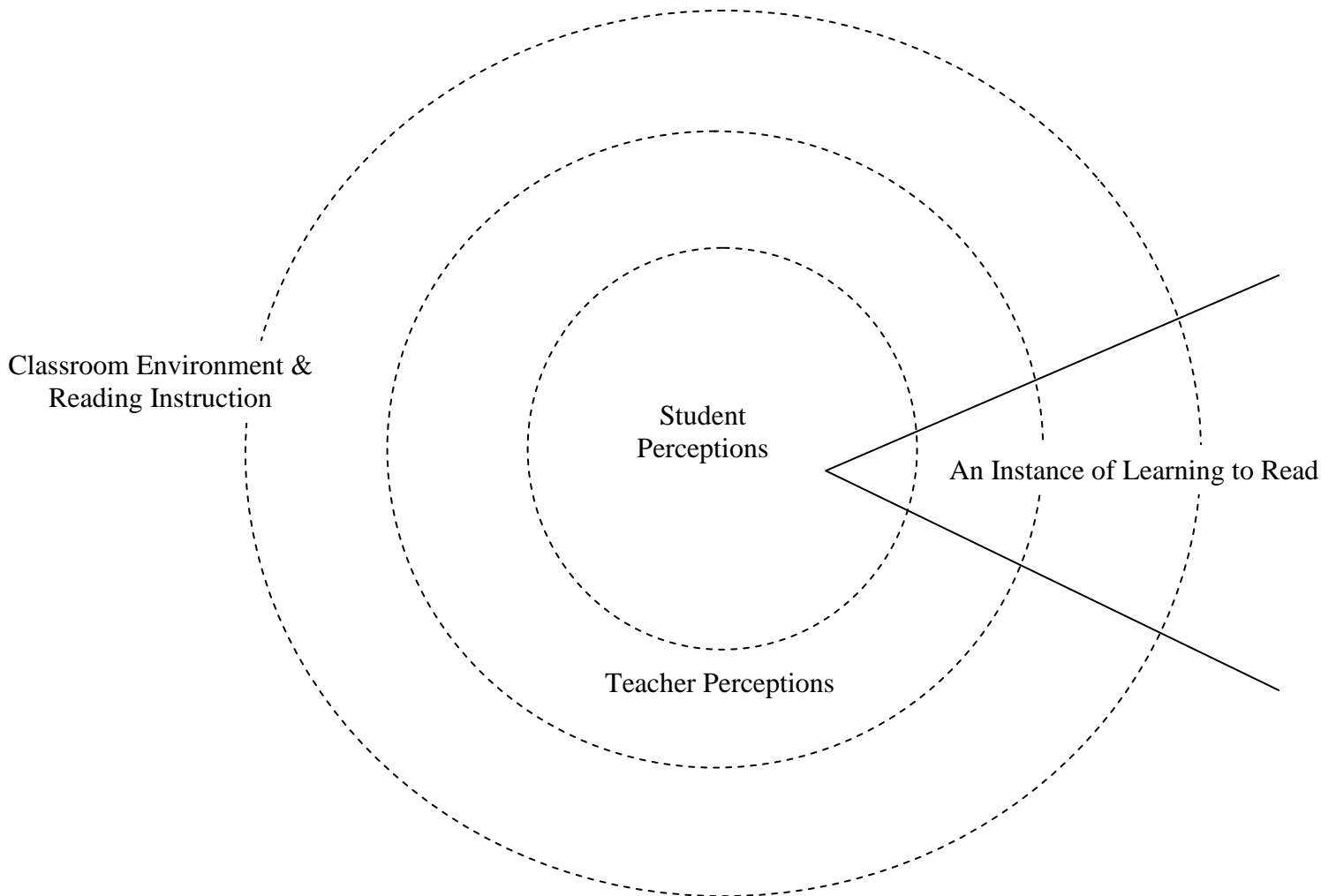
Swanson (2008) found a disconnect between reading instruction that occurred for a student with learning disabilities and what components actually support effective reading instruction. The study found that students with learning disabilities received very little instruction in phonics, and often the instruction was delivered to the whole group. Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) found that small group instruction was found to be effective; however it was not as effective as instruction involving one

student and one teacher. Students with learning disabilities require instruction in small groups or individually, which is necessary to address the student's individual needs.

Swanson (2008) also found that students with learning disabilities spent very little time engaged with phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary instruction. When comprehension instruction did occur it was mostly related to retelling the story and comprised of literal questions. While the ability to retell a story or the facts within a text is important; so is the comprehension that goes beyond the text and requires more thinking than just recall. Students need to be able to make inferences about what they read, make predictions, and relate the text to themselves, another text or to the world. Students with learning disabilities actually spent very little time engaged in the act of reading. Because the student with learning disabilities is reading behind the grade level of his or her peers, it is imperative that the student with learning disabilities actually spend more time engaged in reading than his or her peers in order to make up the deficit (Swanson, 2008).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the components of reading as well as four approaches (Phonics, Whole Language, Balanced Reading Instruction and Reader's Workshop) related to the teaching and learning of reading to both students with learning disabilities and general education classrooms. (Figure 2.1)

**Figure 2.1****Diagram of Learning to Read**

Building on the Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) Whole Language model, this diagram reflects how teacher perceptions, student perceptions, and reading instruction interrelate. This model demonstrates how teacher perceptions, student perceptions, and reading instruction along with the classroom environment support the research questions. (See Chapter 1)

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a description of the methods that were used to obtain the data needed to address the research questions guiding the study. The topics that are included are: restatement of the research problem, research design, setting for the study, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Each of these topics is included separately.

### **Restatement of the Problem**

The goal of this study was to examine the perceptions of students with learning disabilities and their teachers regarding reading and reading instruction. The data gathered in this study provided more insight about the perceptions related to learning to read and the three different classroom settings in which reading is taught. There was a need to understand the teachers' perceptions regarding student growth and achievement. Through the interview process, the researcher obtained data that provided a better sense of the perceptions and attitudes of both the teachers and the students.

Because learning to read is such an important factor when predicting how students will perform in school, it is crucial to understand the settings where reading instruction takes place for students who have a learning disability. Reading can be taught in the general education setting by the general education teacher, or it can be taught in the general education classroom by team teachers, and it can be taught in a resource room by a special education teacher. These classroom settings were explored through classrooms observations and interviews.

The models, methodologies, and approaches to reading instruction may vary from classroom to classroom. This study explored the methods for reading instruction by means of classroom observations. These observations took place across all three classroom settings. Following the classroom observations, teachers were interviewed for clarification purposes.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative method was used to guide this study. A qualitative design is a systematic subject approach used to collect data in order to describe school phenomena and give them meaning. The goal of qualitative research is to gain insight, and explore the depths and complexities of the phenomena. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to learn about the school environment, specifically the teaching and learning of reading with students with learning disabilities, through interviews, observations, field notes, inventories, and audio taping (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The students with learning disabilities and their teachers were a direct source of data for this study.

One characteristic of qualitative design is that it relies on data collected from multiple sources. This study involved the collection of data through interviews with a special education teacher and a general education teacher, who were co-teaching fourth grade; interviews with a resource room teacher; and interviews with a single-teacher taught general education classroom teacher to obtain information on instructional methodologies used in their teaching of reading. The interviews also provided information pertaining to the teachers' perceptions on reading achievement of the student with learning disabilities in each of the three settings. An initial interview was

conducted with each participating teacher, during which each teacher was informed and given an overview of the study. During the second interview, each teacher was asked to complete the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP). Once the teachers had completed the TORP, they were asked open-ended questions pertaining to the teacher's perceptions of reading instruction and the reading methodologies the teacher utilized within the classroom. Following the second interview, the researcher conducted classroom observations. Subsequently, the researcher met with each teacher for a third interview. The researcher asked follow up and clarifying questions regarding what was observed during the classroom observations. The researcher also discussed the instructional methodologies used, the teaching style of the teacher, and the teacher's beliefs regarding the reading instruction of the student with learning disabilities. Once all of the data sets were collected, the researcher conducted a fourth, and final, exit interview with each teacher. Each of the interviews was audio taped. This data was collected over a period of four months.

This study involved naturalistic inquiry in that real world situations, as they unfolded naturally within the classroom observed. The research took place in the natural setting with human instruments as a primary source of data (Glaser, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Classroom observations of the three classroom settings provided information regarding the educational strategies and methodologies used in each setting with the students with learning disabilities. These observations were not manipulated or controlled.

A qualitative analysis took place to ensure the researcher acquired a complete understanding of the educational setting for fourth grade students with learning disabilities. This data was collected over a period of four months.

The researcher also conducted interviews with three fourth grade students, one student from each of the classrooms represented. An initial interview was conducted with each student, during which each student was informed about the study and given an overview of the study. During the second interview, each student completed the Burke Reading Interview (BRI). (See Appendix G) Following the second interview, the researcher developed interview questions based on the data provided by the BRI. The open ended questions were asked during the third interview. Through the use of the inventory and the interviews, the researcher identified the student's attitudes and perceptions as they apply to their reading. Once all of the data sets were collected, the researcher will conducted a fourth, and final, exit interview with each student. These interviews were also audio taped. This data was collected over a period of four months.

Table 3.1 provides an outline of data collection for the interviews and the classroom observations.

**Table 3.1****The Collection of Observation and Interview Data**

<u>Co-Taught Classroom</u>	<u>Resource Room</u>	<u>Single-Teacher General Education Classroom</u>
3 Staggered Observations (See Figure 3.3)	3 Staggered Observations (See Figure 3.3)	3 Staggered Observations (See Figure 3.3)
Initial Interview with General Education Teacher (to provide overview of study)	Initial Interview with Special Education Teacher (to provide overview of study)	Initial Interview with General Education Teacher (to provide overview of study)
Initial Interview with Special Education Teacher (to provide overview of study)		
Second Interview: Administer the TORP with General Education Teacher and open-ended questions pertaining to the teacher's perceptions of reading instruction and the reading methodologies utilized		Second Interview: Administer the TORP with General Education Teacher and open-ended questions pertaining to the teacher's perceptions of reading instruction and the reading methodologies utilized
Second Interview: Administer the TORP with Special Education Teacher and open-ended questions pertaining to the teacher's perceptions of reading instruction and the reading methodologies utilized	Second Interview: Administer the TORP with Special Education Teacher and open-ended questions pertaining to the teacher's perceptions of reading instruction and the reading methodologies utilized	
Third Interview with General Education Teacher: Open ended questions based on data from TORP and classrooms observations		Third Interview with General Education Teacher: Open ended questions based on data from TORP and classrooms observations
Third Interview with Special Education Teacher: Open ended questions based on data from TORP and classrooms observations	Third Interview with Special Education Teacher: Open ended questions based on data from TORP and classrooms observations	
Fourth Interview with General Education Teacher: Exit Interview	Fourth Interview with Special Education Teacher: Exit Interview	Fourth Interview with General Education Teacher: Exit Interview
Fourth Interview with Special Education Teacher: Exit Interview		
Initial Interview with LD student (to provide overview of study)	Initial Interview with LD student (to provide overview of study)	Initial Interview with LD student (to provide overview of study)
Second Interview: Administer the Burke with a LD student with learning disabilities in a co-taught classroom	Second Interview: Administer the Burke with a LD student with learning disabilities in a resource room	Second Interview: Administer the Burke with a LD student with learning disabilities in a single-teacher general education classroom
Third Interview: Post Burke	Third Interview: Post Burke	Third Interview: Post Burke



Student Interview based on Open Ended Questions developed from the Burke	Student Interview based on Open Ended Questions developed from the Burke	Student Interview based on Open Ended Questions developed from the Burke
Fourth Interview with LD student: Exit Interview	Fourth Interview with LD student: Exit Interview	Fourth Interview with LD student: Exit Interview

## **Research Methods**

### **Setting for the Study**

This study was conducted in a small rural school district located in the southeastern area of Michigan. The school district had four elementary schools (Pre-Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade), one intermediate school (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade), one middle school (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade), and one high school (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade). Elementary School 1 has a total of 545 students with 30 teachers, Elementary School 2 houses 373 students and has 23 teachers, Elementary School 3 has 489 students with 22 teachers, and Elementary School 4 has 472 students with 30 teachers. There were a total of 1879 elementary students within the school district which includes both general education students and students with identified special needs. A further breakdown revealed that there were 389 fourth grade students in the school district. Of these students, 9 were diagnosed as learning disabled. A selected sampling was used based on the limited number.

### **Participants**

Since there were only 3 fourth grade students diagnosed with learning disabilities in the elementary school chosen for the study, these students were selected based on the limited number. One student with learning disabilities was placed in each of the three educational settings. Each student was between nine and eleven years of age. Each student had had interventions put in place before being referred for special education testing. Each student had been diagnosed with a learning disability in the second or

third grade. More details regarding the student demographics are provided in chapter 4. The students were present in their classrooms when the classroom observations took place. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, consent was obtained for each student in the study. Each of the three fourth grade students was involved in four interviews that included the administering of the Burke Reading Interview, and face-to-face interviews with the researcher.

Annually, approximately 9 fourth grade students with learning disabilities (across all four elementary schools) receive English Language Arts (ELA) instruction in co-taught classrooms, resource rooms or single-teacher taught general education classrooms. The study examined the perceptions and attitudes of four teachers and three students with learning disabilities regarding reading.

The second group of participants was the teachers responsible for the reading instruction of the three fourth grade students. One general and one special education teacher who taught in a co-taught classroom were invited to participate. A resource room teacher, as well as a single-teacher from a general education classroom were also invited to participate. The fourth grade teachers were selected based on the limited number of teachers across the three settings.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection began during the winter of 2014. All data collected from each of the students with learning disabilities and participating teachers was collected after obtaining permission from each of the participants, including parents, teachers, building administrators and the superintendent of the school district, in full compliance with HIC guidelines.

Following approval from the IRB, the researcher sent letters to the homes of all three students with learning disabilities in the fourth grade in order to obtain permission to conduct the Burke Reading Interview (BRI) and face-to-face interviews with each of the students. The BRI was used to explore views and attitudes that students have about reading and reading instruction. The inventory also explored the students' perceptions and the ways they think of themselves as readers (Goodman, Y., Watson, & Burke, 2005).

The students were present in their classrooms when the researcher observed the fourth grade classrooms. During the classroom observations, the researcher was observing what the teacher is doing, what materials were being used during instruction, the interactions the teacher had with the students with learning disabilities, and also the peer-to-peer interactions.

The researcher conducted a face-to-face initial interview with each student to provide an overview of the study. During the second interview, each student completed the Burke Reading Interview (BRI). Following the completion of the BRI, the researcher conducted a third interview with each of the three fourth grade students. The interview questions for this third interview were developed based on information obtained from the BRI in order to learn about the students' attitudes and perceptions regarding reading. Interview templates in Appendixes A-E, serve as a guide to develop the open ended questions and were revised based on teacher/student responses. The third interview was comprised of ten questions, five of those questions were related to the student's attitude about reading while the remaining five question dealt with the

student's perceptions about reading. A fourth interview, the exit interview was conducted with each student following the collection of all of the data sets.

The researcher investigated the characteristics of a co-taught classroom, a resource room, and a single-teacher taught general education classroom in the school district by conducting short face-to-face structured interviews with teachers across the three settings. An initial interview for the purpose of providing an overview of the study was conducted with each teacher. During the second interview, each teacher completed the TORP (Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile). Following the completion of the TORP, the researcher again interviewed each teacher. Interview templates in Appendixes A-E, served as a guide to develop the open ended questions and were revised based on teacher/student responses. The purpose of the third interview was to find out how reading instruction (the methodologies and teaching style) was implemented within and across the three classroom settings. The information gathered from the administering of the TORP rendered which methodologies teachers support. A fourth exit interview was conducted following the collection of all of the data sets.

The TORP is a survey that utilized a likert scale, where the teacher read the statements and then circled one of the responses that correlated the relationship of the statement to the teacher's feelings regarding reading and reading instruction. The TORP was proven to be a valid and reliable instrument for determining a teacher's theoretical orientation to reading through the use of descriptive data, factor analysis and discriminant analysis (DeFord, 1985).

Observations were conducted in each of the three settings on three separate occasions. (See Figure 3.1) During the observations, the researcher kept field notes. Field notes were compiled following each of the classroom observations for analysis purposes.

Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompete (1999) describe open ended interviewing as, "...the most technically challenging and, at the same time the most innovative and exciting form of ethnographic interviewing" (p. 121). The data from the interviews, were explored through a domain analysis. The interviews conducted with the teachers and students across all three settings were audio taped and transcribed. The interview protocols for each teacher can be found in Appendix A, B, C and D. Follow-up interviews were conducted with each teacher following classroom observations. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was for clarification of what was observed.

### **Data Analysis**

An analysis of the Burke Reading Interview (administered to the students during the second interview) as well as the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (administered to the teachers during the second interview) provided additional questions for the third interview. An analysis of the TORP took place after each of the four teachers had completed it. The responses from the TORP guided the questions used in the third interviews. An analysis of the BRI took place after each of the three students had completed it. The student responses from the BRI guided the questions used in the third interviews.

A domain analysis was used to examine data from classroom observations. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) define a domain analysis as a strategy for identifying

and differentiating classes of items in a culture (p.70). This identification of the components was gathered through systematic data collection. Domains are classes of objects, things, ideas or even events as classified by the researcher (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The analysis of the observations included a compilation of the field notes taken throughout the observations. The field observation notes were typed up following each of the classroom observations. The researcher was looking for patterns within and across all the data sets. Following the observations, the researcher searched the field notes to discover patterns. The data analysis of the observations continued following the completion of a domain analysis. Once a domain analysis was completed for each of the observations, the researcher completed a systematic examination of the observations in order to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole. The researcher went through and searched the field notes in order to discover cultural domains, or the relationships that existed among the items or things within the structure (Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, & Borgatti, 1999).

Following the completion of the domain analysis, the researcher completed a taxonomic analysis. In the process of completing the taxonomic analysis, the researcher sorted out all of the domains to develop categories or taxonomies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A taxonomic analysis is defined as creating a classification system that categorizes the domains into a flowchart. This helped the researcher understand the relationship between the domains (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). After completing a chart with all of the activities and the participants for those activities, the researcher wrote up a characterization of the activities.

Table 3.2, Collection/Overview of Data Sets, highlights the collection of the data sets.

Table 3.2 Collection/Overview of Data Sets

<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>
Initial interview with each teacher (to inform about the study, including an overview)	Second Interview: Administer TORP to each teacher, teacher will also be asked open-ended questions pertaining to the teacher's perceptions of reading instruction and the reading methodologies used	Third Interview: Face-to-face interview with each teacher based on responses from the TORP and classroom observations	Fourth Interview: Exit interview with each teacher
Audiotape each teacher interview	Audiotape each teacher interview	Audiotape each teacher interview	Audiotape each teacher interview
Initial interview with each student (to inform about the study, including an overview)	Second Interview: Administer the Burke Reading Interview (BRI) to each student	Third Interview: Face-to-face interview with each student based on responses from the BRI	Fourth Interview: Exit interview with each student
Audiotape each student interview	Audiotape each student interview	Audiotape each student interview	
Classroom observation in each of the three classroom settings	Classroom observation in each of the three classroom settings	Classroom observation in each of the three classroom settings	
Field Notes taken in	Field Notes taken in	Field Notes taken in	

each setting	each setting	each setting	
Member Debriefing will take place approximately every two weeks via email, telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings	Member Debriefing will take place approximately every two weeks via email, telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings	Member Debriefing will take place approximately every two weeks via email, telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings	Member Debriefing will take place approximately every two weeks via email, telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The school district in which the research was conducted was not selected randomly. Students were chosen based on a selected sample of students assessed as having learning disabilities. There was a selected sample for teachers based on the limited number of student and teachers in the school district.

### **Rigor**

This research study involved a qualitative analysis. Rigor was established in this study through member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation and trustworthiness, which included credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

### **Trustworthiness**

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest that four factors be considered when establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Those factors are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to one of the key criteria of internal validity. The researcher sought to ensure that her study measured what it is actually intended to measure. Credibility in this study was established though



triangulation, where several sources and methods were used for gathering data. The triangulation of this study was established through the analysis of the data sets.

Transferability means that another researcher can use the findings from this study and apply them to their own. Merriam (1998) states that transferability “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 39). The researcher needs to be concerned that the results of the research can be applied to a wider population. This study provided a thorough description of the methods used for gathering data as well as a detailed report of the methods used to analyze the data to ensure transferability.

Dependability means the stability of the research over time. To ensure dependability of this study, the researcher looked to see if any mistakes in conceptualizing the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings and reporting results took place. Consistency was important to the dependability of this study. One technique for assessing dependability is the audit trail (Shenton, 2004). An audit trail was maintained throughout the study.

Confirmability was also established through an audit trail. The audit trail allows any observer to understand and follow the path of the research step-by-step through the decisions made and procedures defined (Shenton, 2004). For this study, the researcher had a Ph.D. graduate, who had an understanding of the research process, from another university follow and monitor the audit trail.

### **Member Checking**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking the single most important condition that can be made to ensure a study's credibility. These checks relating to the

accuracy of the data took place during the interviews, at the end of the interviews, or following the data collection. The study's participants were asked to read the transcripts to support or ensure member checking. Member checking took place approximately every two weeks via email, telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings.

### **Peer Debriefing**

In this study, peer debriefing took place with the major advisor, other dissertation committee members, and other school district personnel. Through these discussions, ideas of the researcher were expanded. Peer debriefing drew attention to potential flaws in the research and then focused on the consideration for a course of action to correct the flaws. The meetings also provided a sounding board for the researcher to assess her ideas and interpretations. Having these conversations also aided the researcher to recognize her own biases and preferences (Shenton, 2004). Debriefing occurred at least once every two weeks through email, telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability is the extent to which a study can be duplicated under a similar methodology and attain the same results (Golafshani, 2003). Validity refers to how truthful the results of the study actually are and whether the research actually measures what it was intended to measure (Golafshani, 2003). The data with this study was collected through interviews, observations, surveys, and audio taping. By using multiple types of data from several sources, this study retained validity and reliability.

Following the data analysis, the findings are discussed in chapter 4. In chapter 5, the research questions are revisited, along with the summary and conclusion.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

### Introduction

This research study examined the perceptions and attitudes regarding reading instruction of four fourth grade teachers and three fourth grade students with learning disabilities. This chapter describes in depth the data collected during the study. The data was collected through surveys, interviews, and observations. A theory regarding the similarities and the differences of reading instruction of fourth grade students with learning disabilities who received reading instruction in a co-taught classroom, a resource room, and a single-teacher taught classroom was developed.

The data collected in this study was led by the following research questions:

1. How do fourth grade students with learning disabilities in a small rural school district perceive themselves as readers across three different classroom settings?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of their students' reading ability? What are the teachers' perceptions of their reading instruction?
3. What are the differences and similarities in reading instruction across the three classroom environments?

### Background of Student Participants

The students who participated in this study were fourth graders who all attended the same elementary school. There were two male students and one female student involved in the study. Each student was diagnosed with a learning disability in the area of reading. The students involved in this study were chosen as participants based on their diagnosis and placement in one of the following classroom settings for reading

instruction: a co-taught classroom, a resource room, or a single-teacher taught classroom. Parent permission was obtained for each of the students to participate in the study. All students were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. Table 4.1 provides a description of each student who participated.

**Table 4.1: Student Participant Summary**

Student	Gender	Classroom setting where student receives reading instruction	Teacher who provides the reading instruction	Number of years receiving special education services
Student A	F	Resource Room	Teacher O	3
Student M	M	Single-teacher Taught Classroom	Teacher F	2
Student Z	M	Co-taught classroom	Teacher K & Teacher S	3

### **Background of Teacher Participants**

There were four teachers who participated in this study, two special education teachers and two general education teachers. One of the special education teachers taught in a resource room, while the other special education teacher taught in the co-taught classroom. A general education teacher taught in the co-taught classroom, while the other general education teacher taught in the single-teacher general education classroom. The teachers involved in this study were chosen based on the classroom environment in which they teach as well as the placement of the students with learning disabilities in their classrooms. The teachers were given pseudonyms to ensure their identities were kept confidential.

**Table 4.2: Teacher Participant Summary**

Teacher	Gender	Classroom setting where teacher provides reading instruction	Student with LD who receives the reading instruction in this setting	Number of years teaching
Teacher F	M	Single-teacher Taught Classroom	Student M	16
Teacher K	F	Co-taught classroom	Student Z	5
Teacher O	F	Resource Room	Student A	18
Teacher S	F	Co-taught classroom	Student Z	12

## Data Analysis

### Analysis Procedures

Data collected included surveys, formal interviews, and informal interviews with the students and teachers, as well as classroom observations in all three classroom settings. The researcher began the analysis process by implementing the domain and taxonomic coding procedure. Domain and taxonomic coding is used for uncovering the cultural knowledge of participants, and is used to organize their behaviors and aid in interpreting their experiences (Saldana, 2013). A domain analysis was completed for each data set, where a semantic relationship was applied and then a cover term discovered. Once the initial domain analysis was completed, the researcher conducted a second domain analysis to determine patterns in the domains.

Following the domain analysis, a taxonomic analysis was initiated. The data from each data set (interviews, observations, surveys) was analyzed separately and then compared to other data within the same data set. The related cover terms were organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship in order to create a taxonomy. This taxonomy shows the relationship between all of the terms in a domain (Saldana, 2013, p. 158). Three separate taxonomies emerged from the domain analysis: student perceptions regarding reading, teacher perceptions regarding reading and classroom observations.

The data analysis is described in three sections: analysis of student data, analysis of teacher data, and analysis of classroom observations.

### **Analysis of Student Data**

During the formal interview with students, the students were asked eight questions from the Burke Reading Interview (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 2005). (See Appendix G) From this interview, three main domains emerged: strategies used for reading, learning to read, and the student's reading goals. Some of the questions from the Burke, as well as the informal interview, appeared difficult for the students to answer. The ethnographic design of this study whereas the researcher was a participant observer as well as a member of the culture appeared to be an asset during the study as well as a hindrance. During the interviews, the students seemed comfortable; however, it appeared as though they may have been concerned about possibly giving the wrong answer. Some of the students required the questions to be repeated or rephrased before answering. At times, students did not reply at all.

## Strategies Used for Reading

When a student is reading, he or she needs to have ways to deal with unknown words. The student also needs strategies for when he or she does not understand what is being read. The reading strategies that students employ when reading are part of the students' overall success as a reader.

The included terms that supported the cover term are underlined (see responses below). The following experts from the formal student interviews demonstrate the domain analysis based on the cover term, "Strategies used for reading".

Questions from the Burke Reading Interview that attributed to domain:

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do? Do you ever do anything else?
2. Do you think your teacher is a good reader? Why do you think that?
3. Do you think teachers ever come across something they don't know when they read? What do you think good readers do when they come across something they don't understand?
4. If you knew that someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?
5. What would your teacher do to help that person?

### Domain: to strategies used for reading domain

#### Student A

*Researcher: The first question says, when you are reading, and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?*

*Student A: Sometimes I sound it out or I skip the word.*

*Researcher: Okay, sometimes you try to sound out a word or skip the word. What do you do when you skip the word?*

*Student A: I read to the end of the sentence and then I go back, umm, and then I say what I think makes sense.*

*Researcher: Okay, that's great. The next question says, Do you ever try anything else? Now you said that you try to sound it out and you try to skip. Now you're talking*

*about a word you don't understand, but what if you don't understand what that sentence meant? What would you do?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: Any ideas?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: That's okay. Do you think your teacher is a good reader?*

*Student A: Umm, yes.*

*Researcher: You do? Why do you think that?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: Any ideas?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: Okay. Let's try this one. Do you think teachers ever come across something they don't know when they read?*

*Student A: Yea.*

*Researcher: What do you think good readers do when they come across something they don't understand?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: What do you think they do when they don't understand?*

*Student A: Sometimes they can, like, ask somebody.*

*Researcher: Yea. If you knew that somebody was having difficulty reading, would you help that person?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: Would you help somebody if they were having difficulty reading?*

*Student A: Yea.*

*Researcher: Yea? What would your teacher do to help that person?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: What do you think your teacher would do to help somebody who was having a difficult time reading?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: What do teachers do?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

*Researcher: Can you think of anything they do?*

*Student A: They help you, like sound it out?*

*Researcher: Okay, anything else?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

## **Student M**

*Researcher: Here's the first question, when you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?*

*Student M: Umm, I usually sometimes try to sound the word out.*

*Researcher: Okay, is there anything else you ever try to do?*

*Student M: Umm, if I can't then I usually get to my other book.*



Researcher: So if you get to a word you don't know ...

Student M: And I can't sound it out or do anything...

Researcher: You go to another book? Okay, do you think your teacher is a good reader?

Student M: Yea.

Researcher: Why do you think that?

Student M: Umm, because he's never messed up on reading.

Researcher: He doesn't mess up when he reads?

Student M: No.

Researcher: Okay. Do you think teachers ever come across something they don't know how to read?

Student M: Yeah, sometimes they can.

Researcher: What you think good readers do when they come across something they don't understand?

Student M: Sound it out or ask someone what is says.

Researcher: Okay. If you knew someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?

Student M: Umm, either get a teacher or help them.

Researcher: How could you help them?

Student M: Umm, by sounding the word out.

Researcher: Okay. What would your teacher do to help a person?

Student M: He would usually cover one word, then cover the other so they can read it.

## Student Z

Researcher: Okay, here is your first question, when you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what you do?

Student Z: Ummm...kind of sound it out.

Researcher: Okay, is there anything else you do?

Student Z: Umm, no.

Researcher: No? Ok. Do you think your teacher is a good reader?

Student Z: Yea.

Researcher: Why do you think that?

Student Z: Because when I am stuck on this really long word, she says that to me.

Researcher: She tells you the word?

Student Z: Umm, hmm.

Researcher: Okay, do you think that teachers ever come across something they don't know how to read?

Student Z: Yes.

Researcher: Ok. What do you think good readers do when they come across something they don't understand?

Student Z: Ummm, I don't know.

Researcher: You don't know what they would do?

Student Z: No.

Researcher: If you knew someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?

Student Z: Umm...help them sound it out.

Researcher: You would help them sound it out? Okay.

Student Z: Ummm....like....okay.

Researcher: What would your teacher do to help that person?

Student Z: She would give them notecards with the different words on them.

Researcher: She would give them notecards with the different words on them? Tell me a little bit more about what notecards are?

Student Z: Like, if you're on this long word, I didn't know this word, my teacher has to read it to me.

Researcher: Okay.

Student Z: And once she gave me three notecards with the different sounds on them.

Researcher: Okay.

Student Z: Like, umm...threatened.

Researcher: Okay.

Student Z: And I didn't know how to spell that so I sounded it out. I put a threat and ed. Wait that's two. But, umm...I lost my thought.

Researcher: So maybe it was like threat...en...ed?

Student Z: Yea.

Researcher: So she put them on three different cards and then put them together?

Student Z: Yea.

#### Chart 4.3: Domain Analysis from Formal Interview

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Pronounce Words/Sound it out	is a way to	read something unknown (reading strategies)
Look for chunks		
Skip the word		
Reread		
Write word and divide into chunks(with notecards)		
Ask for help (teacher/another student)		
Focus		
Get another book		

During the formal interview, the students were administered the Burke Reading Interview. The questions focused on the perceptions the student held regarding reading. Based on the data collected from the formal interviews, the researcher

developed interview questions that would allow for further clarification and more details concerning the domains already uncovered. These informal interviews continued to focus on the perceptions of the students by asking opened ended questions.

## **Informal Interview**

### **Student Perceptions about Reading**

Two themes emerged from the informal interviews conducted with the fourth grade students with learning disabilities. These domains include: how teachers support their reading, feelings about reading, and the purpose of reading. How students perceive their teachers supporting their reading is noteworthy. These informal interviews took place following the classroom observations, which was critical for being able to prompt students. Often, the student could not think of more than one answer and had to be prompted for more details.

The following excerpts from the informal student interviews demonstrate the domain analysis based on the cover term, "Teacher Support for Reading". The included terms that supported the cover term and are underlined.

#### **Student A**

*Researcher: Okay, now I want you to think about yourself, in the resource room how does your teacher help you read?*

*Student A: She helps me with like umm, he tries to like umm, get me to say it and sound it out.*

*Researcher: Okay.*

*Student A: Umm... (Silence)*

*Researcher: Does your teacher help you pick out books that are at your level?*

*Student A: Yea.*

*Researcher: Does she give you some choices to books your read?*

*Student A: Yeah.*

*Researcher: Okay, one of the other questions I have is, okay we talked about you, but how do you think your teacher helps other students read?*

*Researcher: She helps them like, umm, she gives them the book like they read, and she, umm, he lets them read in their level.*

Researcher: Okay. Does she give you books to read?

Student A: Yes...(Silence)

Researcher: Does she meet with students individually, like one at a time?

Student A: Yea.

Researcher: Does she also meet with students together in groups during reading time?

Student A: Yea.

Researcher: Does she meet with you individually? By yourself?

Student A: Yes.

Researcher: Okay. Do you meet as a group?

Student A: We sit at the reading table. She reads with us one at a time.

Researcher: Okay, do you read together?

Student A: Yeah.

### Student M

Researcher: Okay, what does your teacher do to help you become a better reader?

Student M: Hmm, he says we have to focus and get to higher reading levels.

Researcher: Okay, so does he help you focus?

Student M: Yes.

Researcher: Does...let me give you an example, does your teacher ever give you, does he pick out books for you to read?

Student M: umm, no.

Researcher: How do you choose the books that you read?

Student M: Well, I just look through them, and then I try to decide.

Researcher: Okay, so you look through it. Do you have a certain, like, can you pick any book out of your teacher's library to read? Or do you have a certain basket or bin that you have to pick out of?

Student M: We can pick any book.

Researcher: You can pick any book? Does he ask you to do like a five finger test or anything like that when you're choosing new books?

Student M: No.

Researcher: No? Does your teacher have you read out loud to him?

Student M: Umm, yea, just like sometimes and umm, he just wants to know what the book is about.

Researcher: Okay.

Student M: And he asks if they (other students) could read a little to him.

Researcher: Okay, now, he does that during Reader's Workshop, right? He comes around and meets with you guys?

Student M: Umm, he asks what is going on in my book. And, umm, I just tell him what's going on, and (coughing) I just read a little to him.

Researcher: Okay, how does a person become a good reader?

Student M: Umm, when they get focused. Focused and stopping at periods.

Researcher: Okay, so they're focused on their reading and they stop at the periods. What else would you have to do to become a good reader?

Student M: Get to the higher-level in books.

**Student Z**

Researcher: How does your teacher support your reading? How does she help you become a better reader?

Student Z: She, umm, gives us, like, these easy books, like people that are really hard for people to read.

Researcher: She gives you books that are easy and hard to read?

Student Z: Yea.

Researcher: Okay, now does she just give you a hard book and expect that you just read it all by yourself?

Student Z: No.

Researcher: What does she do?

Student Z: Umm, she...

Researcher: Either your teacher Mrs. K or Mrs. S. What do they do when they are in your classroom.

Researcher: Umm, Mrs. K, she comes and reads with our group if it's a hard book, every day. But if it's an easy book, she meets with us once and then we read alone.

Researcher: So she, either Mrs. S or Mrs. K comes and works with your group?

Student Z: Yea.

Researcher: Okay, we're talking specifically about Book Clubs right now, right? Do either one of your teachers work with just you on your reading?

Student Z: Mrs. K, and I think Mrs. S. They have someone else that comes with me too. (Referring to another student)

Researcher: So you work on your reading skills with Mrs. S too? Right?

Student Z: Yep.

Researcher: Does she give you different kinds of books to read then?

Student Z: I haven't got a book yet. We just gave her all of our books.

Researcher: Okay, but you're not reading your book club book with Mrs. S are you?

Student Z: No, she gives us a different book.

Researcher: Are they...When your teachers work with you, are you working on a specific skill?

Student Z: Yea, to get better at reading.

Researcher: Okay, do you work on fluency? Do you know what that is?

Student Z: No.

Researcher: It's like how fast you read. Do you work on that?

Student Z: Yes.

Researcher: You do? You work on that with your teachers? Do you work on, like, phonics skills, that is like, these three letters put together say this.

Student Z: Sometimes.

Researcher: So sometimes you do that with your reading teacher? Do you do writing with your reading teacher too?

Student Z: Yea, we have these little packets that we have to do sometimes. And you have to write some things about what you about.

Researcher: Oh, okay. So you have to write about what you read.

Student Z: Yes.

**Table 4.4: Domain Analysis from Informal Interview**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Gets me to sound it out	is a way to	Support a student's reading (from a teacher)
Helps me pick out books		
Let's me choose my own books		
Gives students a book at their own level		
Meets with students individually		
Meets with students in groups		
Gives easy and hard books		
Helps get better at reading		
Teaches how to sound out words		
Writes with students		

Subsequent domain analyses can be found in Appendix H, I, and J.

### Student Feelings about Reading

Throughout both the formal and the formal interview, the students' feeling about reading and reading instruction emerged. These feelings are outlined in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Student Feelings Regarding Reading**

Student A	Student M	Student Z
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like to read in school when its quiet</li> <li>• Doesn't like books that are too hard</li> <li>• Likes nonfiction</li> <li>• Doesn't like long words</li> <li>• Likes small words, small paragraphs, and small sections of books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likes reading</li> <li>• Likes to choose own books</li> <li>• Likes when it doesn't involve writing</li> <li>• Dislikes long chapters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading is good</li> <li>• Get distracted a lot</li> <li>• Like Book Clubs</li> <li>• Likes adventure books</li> <li>• Doesn't like when reading is over</li> <li>• It can be too loud to read at home</li> <li>• Sad gets a new book</li> </ul>

### Poetic Representation

Poetic representation is another way to analyze and interpret the data. A poetic representation creates a third voice that is neither the interviewee's nor the researcher's, but is actually a combination of both (Richardson, 2002). Through poetic representation, the emotion of the interviewees is able to come through. In this poem,

the researcher chose the words of the students. The researcher utilized phrases from the interviews that carried meaning about learning to read. The following is a poetic representation of what fourth grade students felt were important attributes of learning to read:

### **Poetic Representation: Learning to Read**

Focus  
 Pick a book  
 Read out loud  
 Read silently  
 Sound it out  
 Look for chunks  
 Skip the word  
 Reread  
 Ask for help  
 Get another book

### **Taxonomic Analysis of Student Data**

A taxonomic analysis is defined as creating a classification system that categorizes the domains into a flowchart. This helps the researcher understand the relationship between the domains (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). After completing the domain analysis for each data set, a taxonomy could be developed. In the process of completing the taxonomic analysis, the researcher sorted out all of the domains to develop the taxonomies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A flowchart with all of the activities and the participants for those activities was then completed. Table 4.6 shows a taxonomy developed based on the student perspectives regarding reading and reading instruction.

### **Table 4.6: Taxonomy of Student Perceptions Regarding Reading Instruction**

- I. Student Perceptions of Reading
  - A. Purpose of reading
    1. To get to higher levels

2. To get into another book
3. To read more
- B. Teacher Support
  1. Helps me sound out words
  2. Books
    - a. Gives books at student's reading level
    - b. Chooses own book
    - c. Helps me choose books
  3. Meets with student one-on-one
  4. Meets with student in small group
  5. Helps student get better at reading
  6. Guides writing
- C. Reading Strategies
  1. Sound out words
  2. Look for chunks in words
    - a. Write word and divide it into chunks
  3. Skip the word
  4. Reread
  5. Ask for help
    - a. teacher or student
  6. Focus
- D. When to read
  1. At school
    - a. During Reader's Workshop
    - b. Science
    - c. Social Studies
  2. In the car
  3. At home
    - a. on tablet
    - b. my mom makes me
- E. Who reads with Student
  1. Teachers
  2. People
  3. My family
    - a. Mom

### **Analysis of Teacher Data**

The teachers involved in this study were active participants in the reading instruction for these students with learning disabilities. During the formal interview, each of the four teachers were administered the TORP (Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile), from which an orientation for reading instruction could be discovered.



Following the administering of the TORP, the researcher developed probing open-ended questions that could provide clarifying answers into the teacher's perspectives on reading instruction for students with learning disabilities.

The interviews with the teachers ranged from 20 minutes to 45 minutes in length. Once again, because the researcher was a part of the culture, a rapport with each of the participating teachers had already been established. This seemed to aid the teacher in responding openly to the interview questions.

Following the teacher's completion of the likert scale portion of the TORP, the teacher's score was added up and an orientation was assigned. A score of 0-65 correlated to a phonics orientation, a score of 65-110 correlated to a skill based orientation, and a score of 110-140 equated to a whole language approach orientation. Once an orientation was discovered, the researcher asked the following question:

- Do you agree with your Theoretical Orientation?

### **Teacher F**

*Researcher: We're going to add them up and see where your Theoretical Orientation lies. (Adds up numbers aloud) 80.*

*Teacher F: (Randomly tosses out numbers to distract counting) (Laughter)*

*Researcher: You kind of fall in the middle. You fall here. (Pointing to the Skills orientation)*

*Teacher F: I would have guessed that. I had a lot of 2's and 4's. I have a hard time strongly agreeing with anything in education.*

*Researcher: So the lower end of the scale would've been like a phonics approach. You don't necessarily subscribe to that philosophy where reading instruction should be phonics based. And you don't necessarily subscribe to whole language philosophy...*

*Teacher F: Right. I was taught Whole Language. That was the hot sauce back then.*

*Researcher: Yea, I was too. You fall right in the middle where the kids need skills to become readers. Well, that's where your orientation fell. Would you agree with that?*

*Teacher F: Yea. Very much so. Student need skills to become better readers.*

## Teacher K

Researcher: So where you fell is right on the edge of the phonics based approach. Let me double check my adding...

13:09 – 13:33 (Silence)

Researcher: Oops. 66. Now I've got to add it a third time just to make sure. Ok, let's say you are right on the threshold hold, you're right about... There's three different orientations. There's phonics, skills based, and whole language. So, you fall right in between the phonics and the skills based approach, those orientations to reading instruction. Would you agree with that?

Teacher K: Umm, I guess I didn't think about what my, umm, I mean, I think all three are important to me. I have a passion for phonics because I wasn't taught phonics.

Researcher: Sure.

Teacher K: And when I realized that, I definitely focused on that in college, you know, learning phonics instruction even though I wasn't really taught it.

## Teacher O

Researcher: I'm going to tally these up. (Researcher is adding up the numbers.) 79. This is where this is where your Theoretical Orientation Lies. This was your total score.

Teacher O: Okay.

Researcher: So this means, this range would be phonics, (pointing to the scale on the TORP) where you would expect them to rely heavily on the phonics skills. And you know, these upper end scores would fall in the Whole Language approach. You kind of fell right exactly in the middle.

Teacher O: Yep, I did.

Doreen: At a 79, which is a skills based approach. So do you agree with that placement?

Teacher O: Umm, yea, I do. I do. Skills are imperative to struggling readers.

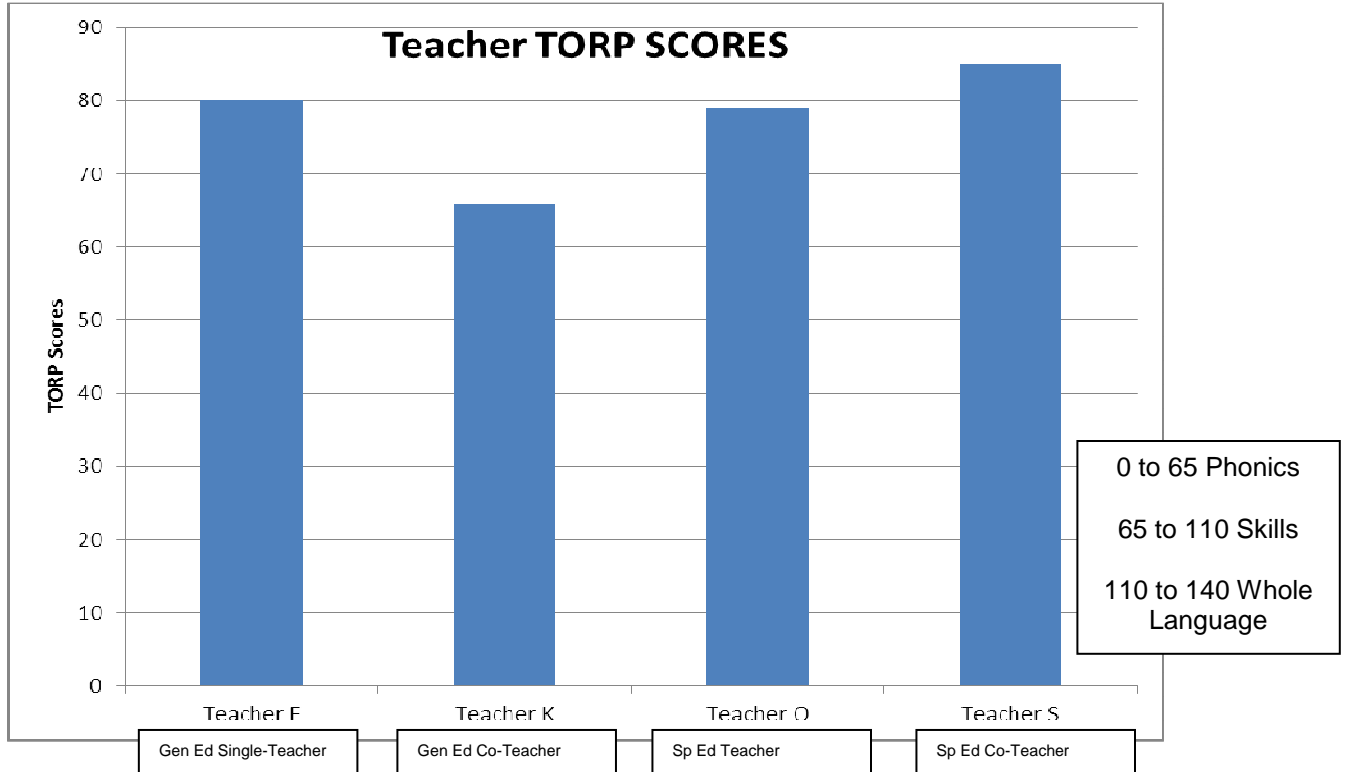
## Teacher S

Researcher: Now I am going to add up you responses to see where your orientation lies. (Silence)

Researcher: 85. So you kind of fall... This is your theoretical orientation lies. (Pointing to the scale on the TORP) If you scored from 0 to 65 points, then you'd fall in the phonics range, where you would've believe that phonics was the best approach to teaching reading. And the higher range is the whole language approach. And you fell right in the middle, with skill based instruction. Would you agree with that?

Teacher S: Yeah, probably. I think skills are important to readers, but so are strategies.

Table 4.7 shows each of the teacher's scores from the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile.

**Table 4.7: Teacher Scores from the TORP****Informal Interview****Teacher Perceptions about Reading Instruction**

Five themes emerged from the informal interviews conducted with the fourth grade teachers who provide reading instruction for students with learning disabilities. These domains include: the skills reader's need, philosophies toward reading, co-teaching traits, benefits of each classroom and reading instruction. These informal interviews took place following the classroom observations. The skills the teachers perceived as necessary for reading was significant as it has an impact on reading instruction they provide for their students.

The following experts from the informal teacher interviews demonstrate the domain analysis based on the cover term, "Skills Reader's Need". The included terms that supported the cover term are underlined.

**Teacher F**

Researcher: At any time during those conferences do you teach a skill?

Teacher F: I'd like to think I do. But I can't think of a specific instance.

Researcher: Would it be something that was not planned ahead of time? It would be more like on the spot.

Teacher F: Oh, yeah, quite often I would say, you know you can, plan conferences all you want, but as you know plans require certain ability to predict a little bit about the future really, but, no a lot of our conferences are not planned. I would say most of our conferences are not here. More like I'm going to meet with those two kids, kind of thing.

**Teacher K**

Researcher: Okay, when I had you fill out the TORP, you came out right on the bubble. You scored a 66, which a 65 to 110 would be the skills based, and I told you at that time that we would talk about it a little bit more. So your orientation, your philosophy towards reading, is kind of like, that the kids need skills in order to learn to read better and at the time I asked if you agreed with that, and you weren't quite sure because the other category below that would've been a Phonic based philosophy towards reading instruction, and above that skills based would've been the Whole Language approach towards reading. So have you thought about that anymore?

Teacher K: I think that, I just I think that they're both good, umm, of course I think learning phonics is important, you know, and they need to have that. I feel like it's a separate, it's like a separate skill on its own. I think that being able to sound out words and all that is important. I think I notice that a lot when I work with those lower readers who can't sound out a word, you know, it is frustrating and I think that they should be able to do that. But, yeah, and I think they're both important the skills and phonics.

Researcher: Okay, umm a couple of questions that you had trouble answering was, one question was, an increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension? So meaning the more errors that they had orally reading, that the comprehension would decrease.

Teacher K: Mmm, hmm. I think I had trouble with that one because I have one particular student that can fake her way through reading even though they're not the words on the page, but then she can summarize and she knows what she read so it's kind of confusing for me.

Researcher: So even though the accuracy is poor, the comprehension is still there?

Teacher K: Yeah, yeah. So, umm...

Researcher: If you thought in general...

Teacher K: In general, I think, yeah I think that errors can definitely affect your comprehension, for sure. And comprehension, it so very important to reading.

**Teacher O**

Researcher: So as far as the interventions that you would provide here in the resource room, are they skill based?

Teacher O: Yeah, I would think so.

Researcher: Okay, do you still teach phonics?

Teacher O: I don't. My whole, my lessons aren't focused all on just teaching phonics. I think there's more things that come into play in my teaching of reading. I think some phonics is in there, but I also think that bigger concepts are taught also within my lessons. So yes, some is taught.

Researcher: Umm, when I observed you I specifically remember you asking each child what they were working on as a reader. So do each of the students have a different goal as a reader?

Teacher O: Yes, each student has their own focus their own goal. As a reader, they are aware of it. I ask them often, so I would hope that most of the students know what their goal is, if somebody else would ask them what their goal is. But, yes, as a reader they all have a focus. And does it change? Yes, it could change depending on what is happening. But usually they hold on to that goal and it's theirs to work on for a while.

Later in interview:

Researcher: No, no, no. I was just wondering when you're doing reading instruction and they get stuck on a word, what do you do?

Teacher O: Well, we have lots of things that we have taught them prior to that point. So yes we want them to either reread the sentence to see what make sense or yes even try to stretch out that word. I have one student who doesn't do anything, so even get him to attempt to do something is, I think, where I'm at with this one kids. So umm...

Researcher: So would it be fair to say that this is a strategy, but it might not be the only strategy?

Teacher O: Correct and this is where it got confusing for me, they should be instructed. You know, I think, I want them to own that, and kind of take that on themselves because they do know what to do, instead of me always telling them what to do when they get stuck.

## Teacher S

Researcher: Okay, the last time we met you filled out the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile, and your overall score came out at an 85 which was in the skills based. And you felt at that time that you agreed with that result that that's kind of where your philosophy lied. You thought that students needed to have skills. I made a note of the questions that were difficult for you to answer. One of them said, "It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words or phrases are repeated." But you ended up, disagreeing with this statement. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Teacher S: Hmm, well, I don't know if I was just looking at that as they were just repeating for meaning, or for the fluency, like maybe they got stuck on a word, so they went back and reread that part, so maybe I was thinking, that's kind of an effective skill to reread. I'm just going to have to say that's what I was thinking.

Researcher: Okay, well I think with the population of students especially if we're talking about student with learning disabilities that could be one possible scenario for rereading is that they're checking for meaning. How would you describe your philosophy of

reading? Without even looking at all of this stuff. Especially, in regards to reading with students who are having difficulties with reading. What do you think the most important thing?

Teacher S: I think the most important thing when working with kids that really struggle with reading is really being reflective on what they can do and building from what their strengths are and knowing what their weaknesses are too, but building from their strengths and really taking the time to reflect back to what's happening in the lessons and what you're teaching point is going be on, so that you're picking one thing instead of worrying about 10 things that they are struggling with. And focusing on one area at a time, and getting them through that. And a lot of text.

Researcher: A lot of text? What kind of text?

Teacher S: Text that they can read pretty comfortably, so at the higher end of the instructional range. Because I find that with these kids, they need some confidence.

Researcher: Would you be looking for them to be reading with a high rate of accuracy in the text that you give them?

Teacher S: Yes.

Researcher: About what percentage would you prefer them to be reading at?

Teacher S: I guess like 95 to 97%, I mean which is right in that instructional band, but more close to independent. Because I'm really noticing that this year, if they're little bit more successful and there's less work they have to do in the text, it's more manageable for both the student and myself.

Researcher: Okay, so according to this you came out in the skills based. Do you teach skills to the students with learning disabilities?

Teacher S: Yes and no, like not specific, I don't know, if I'm even thinking of it right, but I'm thinking of like teaching different patterns and words, like the word level, and it's more just, which is kind of interesting, because when you said that I was thinking, I just teach skills. I feel like I'm strategy based, that's the word I'm looking for. I feel like I work on teaching the kids strategies when reading, that's going to help them build their skills, but they need strategies not skills, so I'm not sure.

Researcher: I think with this, there were only three different levels and the first one was Phonics, so...

Teacher S: Right.

Researcher: That would be like, you know, all the words and breaking apart and putting them back together and then the highest level, well the one with the most points was the Whole Language approach. So do you feel that you fell into either of those philosophies?

Teacher S: I would think more towards Whole Language because it seems more working in text, and those strategies.

## Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews

Table 4.8 demonstrates one domain analysis from the informal teacher interviews in the study.

**Table 4.8: Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Learning phonics, being able to sound out words	is a kind of	Skill reader's need
Accuracy rate (95/97%)		
Summarize		
Comprehension		
Focus on bigger concepts than just phonics		
Fluency		
Rereading		
Strategies		
Regular conferences, where student receive more instruction		
Progress toward grade level expectations		
Each student has their own goal -a focus to work on -rr students carry goal back to gen ed classroom		

Subsequent domain analyses can be found in Appendix K, I, M, and N.

### **Taxonomic Analysis of Teacher Data**

After completing the domain analysis and finding patterns across the data sets, a taxonomy was developed. The taxonomic analysis shown in Table 4.8 illustrates the relationship between the domain and the included terms.

### **Table 4.9: Taxonomy of Teacher Perceptions Regarding Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities**

- I. Reading Instruction
  - A. Guided Reading groups
  - B. Rereading familiar reads
  - C. Reader's Workshop
    1. Mini-lesson
    2. Independent reading
    3. Teacher(s) confer with students
  - D. Leveled Literacy Intervention
    1. intro new book
    2. discussions
    3. id unknown words

4. activate prior knowledge
5. read aloud
6. check for comprehension
7. rereading

## II. Skills Reader's Needs

- A. Learning Phonics
- B. Accuracy (95%-97%)
- C. Summarize
- D. Comprehension
- E. Bigger concepts than just phonics
- F. Fluency
- G. Rereading
- H. Strategies
- I. Regular conferences, where student receive more instruction
- J. Progress toward grade level expectations
- K. Each student has their own goal
  1. a focus to work on
  2. rr students carry goal back to gen ed classroom

## III. Goals for Students with LD

- A. Focus for each individual student with LD
  1. Skills
  2. Phonics
  3. Comprehension

## IV. Classroom Benefits

- A. Co-taught
  1. Students with LD get conferred with everyday
  2. Students with LD get more attention
  3. Help close the gap
  4. All students benefit
  5. Collaborative partnership between two teachers
- B. Resource Room
  1. Small group lessons
  2. Lessons targeted for students with LD
  3. Ensure that students with LD are reading books at their level
  4. Students who are drastically behind grade level benefit
  5. Can help close the gap
- C. Single Teacher
  1. Least restrictive environment
  2. Student with LD do not struggle in all areas
  3. Builds patience, tolerance and understanding

## V. Views about Achievement

- A. Phonics instruction is important
- B. Any child would benefit from co-taught classroom
- C. More co-teaching time would have greater impact
- D. Consistency is imperative to classroom success
- E. Reflective on student strengths and building upon them



- F. Making gains/close to 4<sup>th</sup> grade level/closing the gap
- G. Student working on own goals

### Analysis of Classroom Observations

The students with learning disabilities along with their teachers were observed during their reading instruction on three separate occasions. These observations ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. Because the researcher was a part of the school culture, the observations were unobtrusive. The researcher was able to observe the naturalistic learning environments with causing any disruptions. Field notes were taken on the details of the classroom environment, the reading instruction, and the actions of the students and the teachers. The observations were arranged ahead of time, so each teacher was aware of when the researcher would be observing. Table 4.10 lists the components of the reading instruction observed in each classroom.

**Table 4.10: Components of Reading Instruction from Classroom Observations**

Resource Room	Co-Taught Classroom	Single-Teacher Taught Classroom
Teacher O	Teacher K & Teacher S	Teacher F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group instruction</li> <li>• Utilized Leveled Literacy Instruction</li> <li>• Introduced new book</li> <li>• Discussed new book</li> <li>• Activated prior knowledge</li> <li>• Identified unknown words</li> <li>• Talk about concepts presented in new book</li> <li>• Discussed main idea</li> <li>• Read aloud</li> <li>• Discuss Author's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reader's Workshop Model</li> <li>• Utilized Lucy Caulkin's Method</li> <li>• Brought students to carpet</li> <li>• Present mini lesson</li> <li>• Independent reading</li> <li>• Special Ed teacher enters room</li> <li>• Both teachers confer with students</li> <li>• Special Ed teacher meets with students with LD first</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reader's Workshop Model</li> <li>• Utilized Lucy Caulkin's Method</li> <li>• Brought students to carpet</li> <li>• Present mini lesson</li> <li>• Meets with students who do not understand daily task</li> <li>• Independent reading</li> <li>• Teacher confers with students</li> <li>• Guided Reading lessons</li> </ul>

<p>purpose, deeper thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check for fluency</li> <li>• Rereading</li> </ul>		
<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller groups</li> <li>• Get to know student's needs very well</li> <li>• Able to focus on those needs</li> <li>• Less distractions</li> <li>• Can help close the gap</li> </ul>	<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students are included in the classroom (Least Restrictive Environment)</li> <li>• Two teacher who work together (&amp; plan together)</li> <li>• Determine what the class needs are</li> <li>• High needs students are met with frequently</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• All students benefit</li> <li>• Can help close the gap</li> </ul>	<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students are included in the classroom (Least Restrictive Environment)</li> <li>• Builds patience, tolerance and understanding</li> <li>• Students make progress in general ed curriculum</li> <li>• Can help close the gap</li> </ul>

Subsequent domain analyses can be found in Appendix O and P.

**Taxonomic Analysis of Classroom Observation Data**

After identifying the traits of each classroom and finding patterns across the data sets, a taxonomy was developed. The taxonomic analysis shown in Table 4.11 illustrates the relationship between the domain and the included terms.

**Table 4.11: Taxonomy of Classroom Observations of Reading Instruction**

- I. Components of Reading Lessons
  - A. Independent Reading Time
  - B. Students get ready for Reader's Workshop
  - C. Mini-lesson
    - 1. SmartBoard slides
    - 2. Compliment students on previous day's work
    - 3. Demonstrate what to record
    - 4. Models focus of lesson
    - 5. Read aloud
    - 6. Turn and talk to partner
      - a. teacher joins partners

- 7. Students begin reading on their own
- D. Teacher(s) confer with students
  - 1. individually/partners/groups
  - 2. Checks for understanding of expectations
  - 3. Checks for understanding of what is being read
  - 4. Reminds student of task to be completed
  - 5. Listens to student read aloud
  - 6. Reminds student of their reading goal
- E. Shares work from one group
- F. Corral Reading
- G. Assigns readers into groups
- H. Leveled Literacy Instruction
  - 1. new Book Intro
  - 2. reads synopsis on back cover
  - 3. search for unknown words
  - 4. looks up unknown words in glossary
  - 5. helps student decode unfamiliar word
  - 6. brief overview of chapters
  - 7. assigns chapters to be read aloud
  - 8. discusses what is read (check for understanding)
- II. Reading Goals for Students
  - B. Focus for each individual student with LD
- III. Behaviors
  - D. On Task
  - E. Off Task

### **Establishing Rigor**

Because this research study involved a qualitative analysis, it was important to establish rigor. Rigor was established through member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation and trustworthiness. Credibility in this study was established through triangulation, where several sources and methods were used for gathering data. The triangulation of this study was established through the analysis of the data sets.

Transferability refers to another researcher using the findings from this study and applying them to their own. Merriam (1998) states that transferability “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 39). This study provides a thorough description of the methods used for gathering data as well as a detailed report of the methods used to analyze the data to ensure

transferability. To ensure dependability of this study, the researcher analyzed the conceptualization of the study, the collection of the data, the interpretations of the findings and the results. Consistency was important to the dependability of this study. One technique for assessing dependability is the audit trail (Shenton, 2004). An audit trail was maintained throughout the study. Confirmability was established through an audit trail. The audit trail allows any observer to understand and follow the path of the research step-by-step through the decisions made and procedures defined (Shenton, 2004).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking the single most important condition that can be made to ensure a study's credibility. These checks related to the accuracy of the data took place during the teacher and student interviews, following the end of the interviews, and following the data collection. Other colleagues were asked to read the transcripts to support or ensure member checking. The informal interviews following the classroom observations served as a member check. Both the teachers and the students were asked to describe a reading lesson in their respective classrooms. The researcher also asked clarifying questions based on the responses given during the formal interviews. Peer debriefing took place with the major advisor, other dissertation committee members, and other school district personnel. Through these discussions, ideas of the researcher were expanded. The peers used to strengthen the rigor of this study included a school psychologist, a third grade general education teacher and a special education resource room teacher. These peers were provided with domain analysis from the student interviews, the teacher interviews, and the classroom observations and asked were asked to describe the common theme that

they noticed. All of the debriefers came to the same conclusions as the researcher regarding the included terms.

### **Summary**

This chapter laid out a detailed summary of the analysis of the data that was collected throughout the research study. It outlined how each of the data sets were analyzed through a domain analysis and a taxonomic analysis. The findings were compared across data sets to gather understand regarding the perceptions of reading and reading instruction held by the teachers and the students with learning disabilities. In chapter 5, an in depth examination of the research findings based on the data analysis will be presented.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of reading and reading instruction of fourth grade students with learning disabilities and their teachers. This study utilized qualitative methodologies. The data collected through several means was analyzed and thus provided important answers to the research questions posed. The data analysis present in chapter four will be further explored in relation to the research questions that guided this study in this chapter.

### **Methods and Procedures**

This study was a qualitative study in nature, thus several methods were utilized. Three fourth grade students with learning disabilities and four fourth grade reading teachers participated in the study. The students with learning disabilities were taught in one of the three educational settings (co-taught classroom, single-teacher taught classroom, and resource room). Each of the three fourth grade students were involved in four interviews that include the administering of the Burke Reading Interview, and informal face-to-face interviews with the researcher. Each of the teachers complete four interviews that including the completion of the TORP, as well as informal face-to-face interviews with the researcher. The researcher also completed three classroom observations in each of the three classroom settings.

After completing an analysis of the Burke Reading Interview (administered to the students during the second interview) as well as the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (administered to the teachers during the second interview), the researcher

conducted informal interviews to ask clarifying questions based on the answers from the previous interviews.

A domain analysis was used to examine data from the student interviews, the teacher interviews and the classroom observations. This analysis identified the patterns within each data set, which then lead to the cover term. After a domain analysis was completed for each of the data sets, the researcher completed a taxonomic analysis. In the process of completing the taxonomic analysis, the researcher sorted out all of the domains to develop categories or taxonomies.

## **Discussion**

The research questions that drove this study included:

1. How do fourth grade students with learning disabilities in a small rural school district perceive themselves as readers across three different classroom settings?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of their students' reading ability? What are the teachers' perceptions of their reading instruction?
3. What are the differences and similarities in reading instruction across the three classroom environments?

Several topics were explored within each research question. A plethora of data was collected from the formal and informal interviews, as well as the classroom observations. Each research question will be addressed separately and will include the researcher's response to the question, supporting data from the analysis, supporting data from the literature, and suggestions for future research.

## **Student Perceptions**

Student data included their perceptions regarding the reading support the student's received, the purpose of reading, reading strategies they used, when they read, and who reads with the student. The fourth grade students with learning disabilities who participated in this study, in general perceive themselves as good readers, even though they were behind the grade level expectations of their same grade peers. These students also believed that the goal of reading was to: 1. Get to higher reading levels 2. To get to (read) the next book 3. To read more. As a teacher of reading, who was also the researcher of this study, I was saddened that these students felt the goal of reading was to read at the next level of books. Not one student felt the goal of reading should be to gather meaning from the text they read or for their own enjoyment.

### **Supporting Data from Analysis**

Each student was asked during the first formal interview, "Do you think that you are a good reader?" That question was followed with, "What would you like to do better as a reader?" The following excerpts demonstrate the student's perceptions.

#### **Student A**

*Researcher: Okay. Are you a good reader?*

*Student A: Yea.*

*Researcher: Yea? Ok. What would you like to do better as a reader? What would you like to learn to do better?*

*Student A: Read in like higher levels.*

*Researcher: Okay, read higher level books. Anything else you want to learn to do better?*

*Student A: (Silence)*

#### **Student M**

*Researcher: Okay, they help you sound it out. Do you think you're a Good Reader?*

*Student M: Yea.*

*Researcher: What would you like to do better as a reader?*



*Student M: Umm, get on to higher levels in books.*

*Researcher: Okay, wonderful.*

### **Student Z**

*Researcher: Okay. Do you think you are a good reader?*

*Student Z: Umm, hmm.*

*Researcher: Awesome. What would you like to do to be...What would you like to do blah...What would you like to do better as a reader?*

*Student Z: Like, umm, try to get up to a Z.*

*Researcher: So read at a higher level?*

*Student Z: Yea.*

In the subsequent follow up interview, the researcher asked questions further regarding the student's perceptions of what good reading was and the goals that they felt readers should have. To which the students reiterated the reading at a higher level was a main purpose for reading, as was reading in the next book, and reading more would help the students become better readers.

When asked the question, "When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?" each student quickly responded that they would sound the word out. The students were each able to name several strategies that they employ when encountering a word within text that they did not know. However, not one of the three students interpreted the question as a reading for meaning question. When the researcher probed further, asking what they would do if they knew all of the words, but didn't understand what they had read, the students in general have difficulty describing what they would do. Each of the students ultimately answered that they would ask for help from either a teacher or another student.

### **Supporting Data from Literature**

Students with learning disabilities have an average intelligence, yet there is a neurological disorder that prevents the student from learning to read with the same ease

as non-disabled students (Silver, 2004). Thus, schools districts have utilized different classroom environments to provide reading instruction for students with learning disabilities in the area of reading. Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) found that one to one instruction for the student with learning disabilities with a highly qualified teacher had the greatest impact on reading achievement. However, this type of instruction can be very costly. The district where this study was completed offered the following classroom settings: co-taught classroom, single-teacher taught classroom, and a resource room.

Swanson (2008) found a disconnect between reading instruction that occurred for a student with learning disabilities and what components actually support effective reading instruction (p. 130). His study found that students with learning disabilities received very little instruction in phonics, and often the instruction was delivered to the whole group. Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) found that small group instruction was found to be effective; however it was not as effective as instruction involving one student and one teacher. Students with learning disabilities require instruction in small groups or individually, which is necessary to address the student's individual needs.

Swanson (2008) finds that students with learning disabilities actually spent very little time engaged in the act of reading. Because the student with learning disabilities is reading behind the grade level of his or her peers, it is imperative that the student with learning disabilities actually spend more time engaged in reading than his or her peers in order to make up the deficit (Swanson, 2008).

The students involved in this study received their reading instruction in small groups, large groups and individually though conferring. Each student was engaged in reading in all three settings. At times, this reading was out loud. In the general education setting, the students were to spend most of their time reading independently. The students all perceived themselves as good readers, who rely heavily on phonics when they encounter unknown words. As readers, collectively their goal was to set to higher reading levels.

There are several factors that may impact a student's motivation and their attitudes toward reading. These factors include the student's interest, achievement, self-concept, the student's preference for challenges, the home environment, instruction that they have received in the past, and their social interactions (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Briggs, 1987). Exploring a reader's interest may be more important than choosing books solely based on the student's appropriate reading level (Parker, 2004; Seitz, 2010). Older students do not want to be seen reading children's books when their peers are reading chapter books. The teacher must pay close attention to find books that the struggling reader is interested in, but also can be read successfully by the student at an independent reading level. By selecting high interest materials at the optimal reading level, the teacher can aid in promoting successful reading for the struggling reader (Briggs, 1987).

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study has led to other research questions that could be explored. Each of these three fourth grade students with learning disabilities received their reading instruction in a different type of classroom setting. One question left unanswered is, do

students in one classroom setting make better progress in reading than those educated in a different setting? Another remaining question is, how do the students with learning disabilities perceive their learning environment for reading? Do they prefer to be educated in a resource room where they receive from individualized small group instruction? Or do they prefer to remain the general education classroom with their peers? If they remain in the general education classroom, are they able to keep up with the curriculum demands?

### **Teacher Perceptions**

Teacher data included perceptions regarding the reading instruction they provided, the skills reader's need, goals for students, classroom traits, benefits of each type of classroom, and achievement for students with learning disabilities. The fourth grade teachers who taught in general education classrooms had very similar reading lessons, the resource room teacher's reading lesson consisted of very different components and utilized different methodologies than that of the general education classrooms. The general education classrooms utilized the Reader's Workshop model for reading instruction where the teacher would present information or a new task in a mini lesson. Following the mini lesson, the students would read independently. During independent reading, the teachers would conference with students individually in order to monitor progress, ensure understanding and reteach if necessary. In the resource room, Leveled Literacy Instruction was used to instruct a small group of three students. This lesson included: rereading familiar books, the introduction of a new book, book discussion, identification of unknown words, activation of prior knowledge, discussion of concepts within the book, read aloud of new book, discussion of author's purpose, and

further rereading. While the lessons may have looked differently between the special education classroom and the general education classrooms, the overall goal of improving the student's reading was constant.

Each teacher was asked during the informal interview how they viewed achievement for the students with learning disabilities. The views that the teachers' held towards achievement for students with learning disabilities ranged. One teacher believed that as long as a student was making progress that was achievement. Teacher F stated, "As long as they are moving forward and making adequate progress, it's good." While Teacher K felt that if a student was making gains, and continuing to work hard, that constituted achievement. The special education teachers both viewed achievement as the growth the student made toward grade level expectations.

### **Supporting Data from Analysis**

One of the research questions guiding the study was, What are the teachers' perceptions of their reading instruction? Each teacher was asked what they saw as benefits from reading instruction in their own classroom. The special education teacher described the benefits of instruction within her resource room as:

1. Students with learning disabilities were met with every day in small groups
2. She was able to ensure that students were reading books at their individual appropriate level
3. The lessons in the resource room focused on the needs of the individual students
4. Students who were drastically behind grade level would benefit from this type of pull out instruction
5. Instruction in the resource room could help close the gap between where the student was currently reading and grade level expectations.

The co-teachers felt the benefits of a co-taught classroom included:

1. Student with learning disabilities got conferred with

on a daily basis 2. The students with learning disabilities got more attention 3. The collaborative partnership between the two teachers positively impacted all of the students in the co-taught classroom. The single general education classroom teacher felt that his classroom: 1. Offered a Least Restrictive Environment, 2. Provided a general education curriculum, which is important because the students with learning disabilities do not struggle in all areas, 3. Helped to build tolerance, patience, and understanding.

While each teacher indicated that they were doing the best they could to provide the necessary support for the students with learning disabilities, they also felt more support was needed. Two teachers stated that they felt every student could benefit from a co-taught classroom, but in addition to that the student may also need resource room support. And while students benefit the most from one on one instruction with a highly qualified teacher, caseloads and time constraints do not allow for this type of instruction.

### **Supporting Data from Literature**

Students with a learning disability in the area of reading are struggling readers. These students are often not proficient with applying reading strategies, decoding unknown words, or do not have a vast sight word vocabulary. They may not be able to predict, visualize or connect to the text. The purpose for reading often eludes students with a reading disability. Because these students have such great difficulty with learning to read, motivation for reading is frequently an issue.

Students with learning disabilities need an educator in the school environment who understands how to address the individual academic needs in the deficit areas of each individual student (Bano, Dogar, & Azeem, 2012). Students with learning

disabilities require individualized and specialized instruction daily by a highly trained teacher (Lyons, 2003). In this study, the instruction came from different teachers in different settings. A special education teacher provided instruction within a resource room setting. A general education teacher may provide instruction within the general education classroom. A special education teacher co-taught with another the general education teacher. Effective teachers (special education or general education) offer students with learning disabilities support and direction that they require (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004).

The teacher's own perceptions could determine the reading instruction for the student with learning disabilities. Knowledge and awareness of these perceptions will help teacher's understanding. These understandings can help focus instruction (Telfer, Jennings, McNinch, & Mottley, 1993, p. 51). Teachers are unique individuals and they differ from one another in their beliefs and practices. The way a teacher provides instruction coincides "...with their beliefs and understanding about teaching, learning, and reading and writing" (Allington, 2006, p. 34). Each of the teachers involved with this study fell into the Skills philosophy on the TORP. Yet, while all of the teachers felt skills were very important to reading instruction, how they taught the skills varied by classroom. In the resource room, skills were taught daily within a small group setting. These skills were driven by the student's goals. In the general education classrooms, skills were sometimes taught to the student during the conferring sessions, when the teacher met individually with student. Yet, skills were not taught daily to these students in the general education classrooms, as these students were also responsible for the general education curriculum.

Teachers who have taught students with a learning disability to read at the level of their peers have similar attitudes and expectations for their students. These teachers are responsive to the individual needs of their students (Lyons, 2003). I believe in my study the teachers had high expectations for their students with learning disabilities. While the students in the general education classroom settings were reading books at their own level, they were indeed held accountable for the same learning outcomes as the general education peers. Telfer, Jennings, McNinch and Mottley (1993) found that teachers perceived the student's attitude and attendance as important predictors of academic success. They also found that teachers feel that providing programs and instruction that motivate and builds success are critical factors for students with learning disabilities. All of the teachers involved in my study felt that they were providing the appropriate programming for the students with learning disabilities. However, all four teachers were in agreement that the students with learning disabilities would benefit from a co-taught classroom in addition to other support, possibly resource room support if the student was significantly behind his or her peers in reading.

Teachers are accountable for the reading growth of their students as well as their own performance as a teacher (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004). The teachers involved in my study used a district wide reading assessment, the DRA, at least twice during the school year to assess and monitor the progress of each student. The general education teachers also kept track of student progress and ongoing needs through antidotal records taken during the individual conferring sessions within Reader's Workshop. In the resource room, the teacher used running records with each student at least once a



week to monitor student growth and progress. Following the running record, she also checked for comprehension and fluency.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study has led me to wonder about other questions that remain, and have yet to be answered. Are teachers able to teach the skills or strategies that they deem important or does the curriculum not allow for them to do so? The general education teachers admit that the individual instruction they do with the students with learning disabilities often takes place during their conferring time during Reader's Workshop. However, this instruction is typically not planned for ahead of time. Because of curriculum demands, the teachers may not be teaching the lacking skills that each individual student may have. Another question that remains is do students with learning disabilities read enough during the school day? Students with learning disabilities need to read more than their general education peers in order to close the gap. If these students are only receiving the same amount of reading time as their general education peers, are they closing the gap? I am also wondering if a student with learning disabilities is identified in second grade, and he continues to be behind grade in fourth grade, is enough support being given to that student? Which then leads my thinking to, if students with learning disabilities can receive proper instruction that not only meets their individual goals, but helps them to achieve at the same level as their peers within the general education setting, is there still a need for pull out programs, such as a resource room? If all students can achieve, is there a need to continue to diagnose students with learning disabilities? These are all questions that would warrant further exploration.

## **Differences and Similarities across Classroom Settings**

Three different classroom settings were observed throughout this study: a co-taught general education classroom, a single-teacher taught general education classroom, and a special education resource room. Classroom observation data included the components of the reading lessons, students' behaviors during reading, and the reading goals held by students.

In the co-taught classroom and in the single-teacher taught classroom the reading lessons looked very similar. These teachers utilized the Reader's Workshop approach to provide reading instruction to their students. Reader's Workshop begins with the teacher calling the students to the carpet. In the co-taught classroom, students brought materials to the carpet with them. In the single-teacher taught, the students left their materials at their desks. When all of the students are seated at the carpet, the teacher begins the mini lesson. The mini lesson typically began with a recap of the previous day's work, then the teacher showed the students some Smart Board slides where information regarding the day's reading task was recorded. The teacher would then demonstrate what was expected from each student that day. In the co-taught classroom, the teacher asked the students to listen for a character's reactions as she read aloud a passage from a book. When she finished reading, she had the students turn and talk to their partner regarding what character's reactions they had heard in the passage. Following the turn and talk, the teacher had a few students share the reactions they had discovered. The students were then sent off to read on their own with the task of looking for character reactions within their own texts. While the students were independently reading around the classroom, (some on the floor, some in bean

bag chair, others were at their desks) the teachers (the special education teacher had now entered the classroom) would begin conferring one on one with students. One difference between the general education classrooms was that in the single-teacher taught classroom, the teacher had students who did not understand the day's task remain at the carpet for clarification. After restating the directions, these students would go off to independently read.

The reading lesson in the resource room looked very different from the Reader's Workshop method that was used in the general education classrooms. In the resource room, Leveled Literacy Instruction was used to instruct a small group of three students. This lesson began with the students entering the room, sitting down at the reading table, opening their book bags and rereading familiar books that they had already received instruction in. The teacher used this time to check in with each student. She listened to each student read aloud, and also asked each individual student what they were working on as a reader. She then gave each student new book. She talked to the students about what the book might be about and what genre the book was. With the guidance of the teacher, the students looked through the first chapter of the book with the purpose of identifying unknown words. As a group, the teacher led a discussion to activate the prior knowledge each student had regarding the book's topic. Each student was then asked to read aloud a section of the new book. Following the read aloud, a discussion of author's purpose took place. The students continued reading on their own until it was time to leave the resource room and return to their respective general education classrooms.

### **Supporting Data from Analysis**

The research question that guided this aspect of the study was: What are the differences and similarities in reading instruction across of the three classroom environments? The reading instruction in the two general education classrooms looked very similar, while the reading instruction in the special education resource room looked vastly different. Another difference between the three classroom environments was the behavior of the students. In both of the general education classrooms, there was a lot of talking amongst students at times when the students should have been engaged in their independent reading. When the students came to the carpet for the mini lesson and again when they left to find their reading spot, there was a lot of movement. A few students even stopped by their desk to grab their snacks before heading to their reading spots. Several students needed reminders to get where they should be. In both classrooms, there were students who remained at their desks and were playing/fidgeting with toys or their pencils boxes. Throughout the independent reading time, students would leave their reading spots, to go to the classroom library to search for another book to read. A few students in each of the general education classrooms left the classroom to use the bathroom. In the single-teacher taught classroom, while the teacher was conferring individually with students, he was approached by other students who seemed to have a question. While there were off task behaviors in the resource room, they looked very different. One student was rocking in his chair, while looking out the window. Another student was flipping through his Word Ring, but did not appear to be reading the words. At various times, these students would also get out of their seats, to retrieve an item such as a tissue, or to simply walk to the door, turn

around and then come back and sit down in their seat. Because the resource room teacher was seated at the reading table along with her three students, there were far fewer off task behaviors in the resource room.

In the resource room, the students were continually asked what they were working on as readers. The resource room teacher described these individual goals, as fluid, as they would change depending on the student's needs. But she did expect the student to own the goal and carry it back into the general education classroom and continue to work toward that goal. A few goals I noticed the students working on included: focusing on punctuation, focusing on clear reading (fluency), focusing on the main idea, reading slowly, and reading so that the text made sense. In the single-teacher taught classroom, I observed the teacher asking his students what they were working on as readers today. He also asked the students what they noticed was going on in their books. In the co-taught classroom, the conferring seemed to focus on the daily task of the students, the teachers would ask the student to read aloud, and then remind the student to take notes on the big ideas after reading.

### **Supporting Data from Literature**

A resource room is a type of special education program often referred to as a pull-out program, because the students with disabilities are pulled-out of their general education classroom for part of their school day in order to receive direct instruction with the special education teacher (McNamara, 1989). In this study, one of the fourth grade students with learning disabilities in the area of reading was provided reading instruction in this type of setting. The instruction was provided to a small group of students with similar abilities by a special education teacher (Bentum & Aaron, 2003).

One advantage to this type of program is that the student receives instruction that is designed to meet his needs. The student's IEP had goals written to address the deficit in reading, and the special education teacher would be developing lessons to ensure that the student met his reading goals. I observed this instructional setting on three occasions. The student was aware of his reading goals, was asked periodically what he was working on as a reader. He spent 30 minutes every day engaged in reading at text at his reading level. However, he was not given choice as to the books he read. The resource room teacher had the student read aloud and independently throughout the lesson. She also checked for comprehension and fluency. A disadvantage to a resource room was that the student with learning disabilities was segregated from his general education peers for a portion of his school day. The student was also missing the general education curriculum while he received instruction in the resource room.

In a co-taught classroom a general education teacher and a special education teacher work together to deliver instruction to all students, including those with learning disabilities. By working together, these two teachers can meet the needs of all of the students in the classroom (Magiera, Simmons, Marotta, & Battaglia, 2000). Co-teaching provides the direct and immediate special education support to the students with disabilities while at the same time allowing the students with disabilities access to the general education classroom (Walsh & Jones, 2004).

One benefit of a co-taught classroom is that the special education teacher involved in this setting does not provide support to only the students with identified disabilities. Both of the teachers participate fully in the instruction, while their roles may

look different; they both play active roles in the instruction. Most co-teachers teach together during instructional periods when identified students have the most difficulty with the curriculum (Walther-Thomas, Korenik, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). In this study, the co-teachers taught together during Reader's Workshop. The individual goals that the students with learning disabilities had were able to be met under this type of instructional setting. These students were not removed from their general education classroom or their general education peers and they were able to participate in the general education curriculum.

One issue faced by the co-teachers is time or a lack of time. The special education co-teacher involved in this study stated that there was simply not enough time. Ideally, she would have liked to spend more time in the general education classroom and also would like more time to collaborate with the general education teacher. In order for co-teaching to be successful, the general education teacher and the special education teacher must make every effort to be able to meet on a regular basis in order to discuss the curriculum, the planning of lessons, and role assignments.

The single-teacher taught classroom, is a typical general education classroom where there is only one general education teacher. The general education teacher is responsible for providing reading instruction to all students. One advantage to this type of program is that the student is fully included in the general education classroom for the entire school day. The student is never absent from any of the general education curriculum. In this study, the teacher from this environment believed most students with learning disabilities benefited from this type of educational setting, however for some

students who are significantly behind grade level in reading, direct reading instruction on a daily basis with a special education teacher may be more appropriate.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Throughout this study I have come to realize that there is no one classroom setting that would best meet the individual needs of all students with learning disabilities. However, one question remaining is, how do schools find the best match of educational settings to meet the individual needs of students with learning disabilities? When I asked the general education teachers involved in this study if they knew how the students with learning disabilities came to be placed in their classrooms, they responded that they did not know. One of the special education teachers replied that she had asked the principal to have her students with learning disabilities placed in the co-taught classroom. The resource room teacher felt that every student could benefit from being placed in a co-taught classroom, however there were not enough special education teachers available to allow for this to happen.

### **Summary**

This section discusses how the findings are correlated. This research questions are provided along with answers that were discovered through the study.

1. How do fourth grade students with learning disabilities in a small rural school district perceive themselves as readers across three different classroom settings?

While all three fourth grade students who participated in the study felt that they were good readers, the classroom observations pointed out some very interesting details. The fourth grade student who received his reading instruction in the co-taught classroom felt that one aspect he liked about reading was being able to choose what



books he read in class. The student educated in the single-teacher taught classroom expressed the same feelings. However, the classrooms observations revealed that these choices were not unlimited choices. The students in both classrooms were allowed to choose books from the book bin that correlated with their reading level. Therefore, these students were only given a limited choice. The student who received reading instruction in the resource room did not have any choice as to the books he had to read each day. The teacher chose the books for him.

2. What are the teachers' perceptions of their students' reading ability? What are the teachers' perceptions of their reading instruction?

There seemed to be a disconnect between the teacher's score on the TORP and actual classroom observations. According to the TORP, all four of the teachers' theoretical orientation fell in the skills based orientation. While the general education co-teacher's score fell in the skills based range, it did come very close to the whole language theoretical orientation. Yet, in both of the general education classrooms, the observations revealed that the teaching of reading skills was not emphasized in the reading instruction. The approach to reading instruction in the general education classroom was that of Reader's Workshop. Therefore the instruction did not match the teacher's orientation.

When the teachers were asked how they perceived achievement for their students with learning disabilities, the general education teachers discuss making gains and moving forward in the curriculum as achievement. The special education teachers viewed achievement as growth. If the student with learning disabilities made growth toward grade level expectations, it was considered achievement. How these teachers

each defined progress was not asked, but it appears that there is a disconnect between how the general education view achievement for students with disabilities and how the special education teachers view achievement for students with disabilities.

3. What are the differences and similarities in reading instruction across the three classroom environments?

The co-taught classroom appeared well-suited for the student with learning disabilities who was placed in there. He was given the opportunity for movement within the classroom, and he met with a teacher every day during independent reading time. The student in the single-teacher classroom met with his teacher 1-2 times per week. The student who received reading instruction in the resource room, met with the special education teacher daily for 30 minutes, but in a small group and not 1-on-1, as the students in the other two classrooms did. In the resource room, the special education teacher had specific goals for each student. The student was asked what he was working on as a reader at the beginning of each reading lesson. At the time of the first observation, the student was working on noticing the punctuation when he was reading, for example, pausing at the periods. This tied into his fluency goal later on.

### **Conclusions**

This study used a qualitative design with a case study format to explore the perception that students with learning disabilities along with their teachers hold regarding reading and reading instruction. Interviews, surveys, observations and field notes were part of the data collection techniques utilized by this study. Triangulation was achieved by obtaining the data from multiple participants and well as collecting the data through several methods.

This study suggests that students with learning disabilities who receive reading instruction in a resource room, a co-taught classroom, or a single-teacher classroom all perceive themselves as good readers. These students also believe that purpose of reading is to read at higher levels. The students also felt like their teachers supported their reading skills in numerous ways.

This study also suggests that the general education teachers view their reading instruction that they provide to students with learning disabilities much the same as they view instruction for the general education students. The students with learning disabilities receive the same reading instruction during the mini lesson of Reader's Workshop as their nondisabled peers. The general education teachers were likely to provide individualized instruction during the conferring period of Reader's Workshop, when the teacher met one on one with the student with learning disabilities. The special education teacher who co-taught in the general education room was more likely to provide individualized instruction on a daily basis, as she met with her students with learning disabilities every day in the general education classroom. However, these conferring/conferencing times were very short, only 5-10 minutes long. The resource room teacher viewed direct instruction for her students with learning disabilities as imperative. Her students require direct instruction, 30 minutes a day, in order to make significant progress and close the gap between where the student is functioning and where grade level expectations are. During her lessons, she is able to focus on the individual need of each student.

The teachers that provide reading instruction to their students with learning disabilities perceive achievement as the student making growth. The general education

teachers felt that if the students with learning disabilities were making progress in the general education curriculum that that could be viewed as achievement. The special education teachers believed that it was imperative that the student with learning disabilities work toward closing the gap of where the student was currently reading and where grade level expectations were. The special education teacher also felt the student was achieving if they were making adequate progress toward their reading goals.

Finally, this study suggests that there are many similarities as well as differences between reading instruction in general education classrooms and the special education classroom. Both of the general education classrooms utilized Reader's Workshop as the method to provide reading instruction, while the resource room used the Leveled Literacy Instruction as a basis for her instruction. All three classroom settings allowed for one on one instruction. In the general education classrooms, this typically took place during the conferencing or conferring time within Reader's Workshop. These one-on-one conferences only lasted approximately five minutes. While in the resource room, the teacher spent a much greater amount of time working with students individually. In the resource room, students were met with individually on a daily basis, the same is true for the co-taught classroom. However, in the single-teacher taught classroom, students were only met with once every three or four days. The amount of independent reading time also varied from the general education classrooms and the special education resource room. In the general education classrooms, 30-40 minutes daily was spent on independent reading, while in the resource room the reading lessons only lasted 30, and much of that time was spent on book talks, teaching skills, and reading aloud.

**APPENDIX A**

## General Education Co-Teacher Interview Protocol

## Introduction/Opening

- Good Morning Mrs. K! (General Education Teacher) We are here today to talk about co-teaching, and your feelings about it.
- Ground Rules
  - I want you to be able to say how you feel. I am not going to share anything you tell me. What you have said here will remain confidential.
  - I will be taking some notes and recording our conversation this morning.
- Summary of Rights
  - Voluntary (You have the right to stop at any time)
  - Confidentiality (Your name will never exist in any of my notes, and no one will even know what you have said here)

Questions

How many special education students are in your classroom? Which disabilities are represented in this number?

How was it decided which students with learning disabilities were assigned to your classroom?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from co-teaching?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from resource room support?

Were you able to choose which setting (single-teacher taught/co-teacher taught) you teach in?

How would you define co-teaching?

What is the purpose of co-teaching?

Did you choose to co-teach with Teacher S?

If so, why did you choose Teacher S?

What traits must a general education teacher possess in order for co-teaching to be successful?

What traits must a special education teacher possess in order for co-teaching to be successful?

What are all of the elements (planning, assignments, instruction) that are involved in co-teaching?

How does having a student with learning disabilities in your classroom affect your planning?

Can you explain a typical co-taught lesson? What do you do during the lesson? What does the special education co-teacher do?

How are instructional materials selected or designed?

How are teaching methods selected?

Are there certain methods that you feel have more of an impact with your students with learning disabilities?

How are the assessments developed?

What does homework look like? Who designs the homework? Who grades it?

Do you have all of the necessary resources to co-teaching successfully? If not, what resources would you require?

Describe the behavior of the students with learning disabilities while Teacher S is working in your classroom? Do they respect Teacher S as a teacher?

Do you feel that the students benefit from Teacher S being in your classroom?

How do you view the achievement of the students with learning disabilities in your classroom?

Teacher S is in your classroom for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes everyday. Do you feel like this is a good length of time?

How do you feel in general about working having Mrs. B work in your classroom?

Ideally, how would you like to see co-teaching operate?

### Closing

Is there anything else that you can tell me that may help me to understand your views, attitude or perceptions regarding co-teaching?

Thank you again for your time.

## APPENDIX B

### Special Education Co-Teacher Interview Protocol

#### Introduction/Opening

- Good Morning Teacher S! (Special Education Teacher who teaches in a Co-taught Fourth Grade Classroom) We are here today to talk about co-teaching, and your feelings about it.
- Ground Rules
  - I want you to be able to say how you feel. I am not going to share anything you tell me. What you have said here will remain confidential.
  - I will be taking some notes and recording our conversation this morning.
- Summary of Rights
  - Voluntary (You have the right to stop at any time)
  - Confidentiality (Your name will never exist in any of my notes, and no one will even know what you have said here)

#### Questions

How many special education students are educated in the co-taught classroom? Which disabilities are represented in this number?

How was it decided which students with learning disabilities were placed into the co-taught classroom and which were placed into a resource room?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from co-teaching?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from resource room support?

Were you able to choose which setting (co-taught classroom/resource room) you teach in?

How would you define co-teaching?

What is the purpose of co-teaching?

Do you and Teacher K (the general education teacher) co-teach?

Did you choose to co-teach with Teacher K?

If so, why did you choose Teacher K?

What traits must a general education teacher possess in order for co-teaching to be successful?

What traits must a special education teacher possess in order for co-teaching to be successful?

What are all of the elements (planning, assignments, instruction) that are involved in co-teaching?

How does having a student with learning disabilities in your classroom affect your planning?

Can you explain a typical co-taught lesson? What do you do during the lesson? What does the co-teacher do?

How are the instructional materials selected or designed?

How are teaching methods selected?

How are the assessments developed?

What does homework look like? Who designs the homework? Who grades it?

Do you have all of the necessary resources to co-teaching successfully? If not, what resources would you require?

Describe the behavior of the students with learning disabilities while you are in the general education classroom? Do the students respect you as a teacher?

Do you feel that the students benefit from being in a co-taught classroom?

How do you view the achievement of students with learning disabilities who are taught in a co-taught classroom?

How much time do you spend in the general education classroom daily? Do you feel like this is a good length of time?

How do you feel in general about working in Teacher K's classroom?

Ideally, how would you like to see co-teaching operate?

### Closing

Is there anything else that you can tell me that may help me to understand your views, attitude or perceptions regarding co-teaching?

Thank you again for your time.



**APPENDIX C**

## Special Education Resource Room Teacher Interview Protocol

## Introduction/Opening

- Good Morning! We are here today to talk about placement of fourth grade students with learning disabilities, and your feelings about it.
- Ground Rules
  - I want you to be able to say how you feel. I am not going to share anything you tell me. What you have said here will remain confidential.
  - I will be taking some notes and recording our conversation this morning.
- Summary of Rights
  - Voluntary (You have the right to stop at any time)
  - Confidentiality (Your name will never exist in any of my notes, and no one will even know what you have said here)

Questions

How many students do you typical see at a time in the resource room?

How are students with learning disabilities placed? Who decides where the most appropriate placement is for the student with learning disabilities?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from co-teaching?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from resource room support?

Were you able to choose which setting (co-taught classroom/resource room) you teach in?

What traits must a special education teacher possess in order for a resource room to be successful?

What are all of the elements (planning, assignments, instruction) that are involved in teaching in a resource room?

Can you explain a typical lesson in the resource room?

How are the instructional materials selected or designed?

How are teaching methods selected?

Are there certain methods you feel have more of an impact with your students with learning disabilities?

How are the assessments developed?

Do you have all of the necessary resources to support your students with learning disabilities? If not, what resources would you require?

Describe the behavior of the students with learning disabilities while they are in the resource room?

Are your students with learning disabilities who are taught in a resource room benefiting from the pull-out support?

Do you think the students with learning disabilities who are receiving resource room support are receiving enough support?

Do you think the students with disabilities who are receiving special education support in a co-taught classroom are receiving enough support?

Ideally, how would you like to see special education services operate?

### Closing

Is there anything else that you can tell me that may help me to understand your views, attitude or perceptions regarding the placement of students with learning disabilities??

Thank you again for your time.

## APPENDIX D

### Single-Taught General Education Classroom Teacher Interview Protocol

#### Introduction/Opening

- Good Morning! We are here today to talk about placement of fourth grade students with learning disabilities, and your feelings about it.
- Ground Rules
  - I want you to be able to say how you feel. I am not going to share anything you tell me. What you have said here will remain confidential.
  - I will be taking some notes and recording our conversation this morning.
- Summary of Rights
  - Voluntary (You have the right to stop at any time)
  - Confidentiality (Your name will never exist in any of my notes, and no one will even know what you have said here)

#### Questions

Do you have students with learning disabilities in your classroom?

How are students with learning disabilities placed? Who decides where the most appropriate placement is for the student with learning disabilities?

Which students with learning disabilities benefit from co-teaching?

Which students benefit from resource room support?

Were you able to choose which setting (co-taught classroom/single-teacher taught general education classroom) you teach in?

What is the purpose of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

What traits must a general education teacher possess in order for inclusion to be successful?

What are all of the elements (planning, assignments, instruction) that are involved in teaching in a general education classroom?

How does having a student with learning disabilities in your classroom affect your planning?

What does a typical lesson look like in your classroom?

Do you differentiate the instruction for the students with learning disabilities??

How are the teaching methods selected?

Are there certain methods you feel have more of an impact with your students with learning disabilities?

How are the assessments developed?

Do the students with learning disabilities take the same assessments as their non-disabled peers?

What does homework look like? Who designs the homework?

Do you have all of the necessary resources to successfully include your students with learning disabilities? If not, what resources would you require?

How does the special education teacher help you to help the students with learning disabilities be successful?

How do you view the achievement of students with learning disabilities who are taught in your classroom?

Do you feel that the students with learning disabilities benefit from being in your classroom?

Ideally, how would you like to see inclusion operate?

### Closing

Is there anything else that you can tell me that may help me to understand your views, attitude or perceptions regarding inclusion?

Thank you for your time.

**APPENDIX E**

## Student Interview Protocol

## Introduction/Opening

- Good Morning! We are here today to talk about your thoughts and feelings about reading.
- Ground Rules
  - I want you to be able to say how you feel. I am not going to share anything that you tell me with your teacher, your parents or the principal. What you have said here will remain between us.
  - I want you to know that I will be taking some notes and recording our conversation this morning.
- Summary of Rights
  - Voluntary (You have the right to stop at any time)
  - Confidentiality (Your name will never exist in any of my notes, and no one will even know what you have said here)

Questions

## Part 1 – Attitude

1. How do you feel about reading in school?
2. What do you like about reading?
3. What do you dislike about reading?
4. How do you feel when your teacher gives you a new book to read?
5. How do you feel about reading for fun?

## Part 2 – Perceptions

1. What do good readers do?
2. What do you find easy about reading?
3. What do you find difficult about reading?
4. How do you think your teacher supports your reading?

5. How does one become a good reader?

Closing

Is there anything else that you can tell me about what you think about reading that may help me to understand your views, attitude or perceptions?

Thank you again for your time.

**APPENDIX F**

## DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP)

Name:

Directions: Read the following statements and circle one of the responses that will indicate the relationship of the statement to your feelings about reading and reading instruction. (SA= Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree). **You may use "3" only two times in your assessment.**

	<b>SA</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. A child needs to be able to verbalize the rules of phonics in order to assure proficiency in processing new words.	1	2	3	4	5
2. An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Dividing words into syllables according to rules is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When children do not know a word, they should be instructed to sound out its parts.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary when determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.	1	2	3	4	5

	<b>SA</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>SD</b>
9. Reversals (e.g., saying “was” for “saw”) are significant problems in the teaching of reading.	1	2	3	4	5
10. It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made.	1	2	3	4	5
11. It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to ensure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understand story content.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (e.g., nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When coming to a word that is unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess the meaning and go on.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (e.g., run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (e.g., running, longest).	1	2	3	4	5
17. It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Flash-card drills with sight words are unnecessary forms of practice in reading instruction.	1	2	3	4	5



	<b>SA</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>SD</b>
19. Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllabic words (pho' to graph, pho to' gra phy, and pho to gra' phic) should be developed as part of reading instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Controlling text through consistent spelling Patterns (e.g., The fat cat ran back. The fat cat sat on a hat.) is a means by which children can best learn to read.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Formal instruction in reading is necessary to ensure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.	1	2	3	4	5
25. It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.	1	2	3	4	5
26. If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.	1	2	3	4	5
27. It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Some problems in reading words are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped.)	1	2	3	4	5

To determine your theoretical orientation, tally your total score on the TORP. Add the point values as indicated on each item, **except for the following items: 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 23, 26, 27. For these items, reverse the points by assigning 5 points for strongly agree (SA) to 1 point for strongly disagree (SD).**

Once your points have been added, your overall score on the TORP will fall in one of the following ranges.

<b>Theoretical Orientation</b>	<b>Overall Score Range</b>
Phonics	0-65
Skills	65-110
Whole language	110-140

Now that you have found your theoretical orientation according to the TORP, please give your critical response to your placement. Do you agree? Disagree?

By number, indicate any items on the TORP that you found especially difficult to answer.

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Burke Reading Interview**

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?

Do you ever do anything else?

2. Do you think your teacher is a good reader? Why do you think that?

3. Do you think teachers ever come across something they don't know when they read?

What do you think good readers do when they come across something they don't understand?

4. If you knew that someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?

5. What would your teacher do to help that person?

6. How did you learn to read? Who helped you learn how to read? What did that person do to help you learn?

7. Do you think that you are a good reader?

8. What would you like to do better as a reader?

## APPENDIX H

### Domain Analysis from Student Interviews

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Pronounce/sound out words	is a way to	Solve Unknown Words (Reading Strategies)
Look for chunks		
Skip the word		
Reread		
Write word and divide into chunks (with notecards)		
Ask for help (from teacher or student)		
Focus		
Get another book		

**APPENDIX I****Domain Analysis from Student Interviews**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
To get to a higher reading level To read more (Like 5 chapters a day)	is a way to	Grow as a Reader (Reading Goals)

## APPENDIX J

## Domain Analysis from Student Interviews

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
At my house after school	is a way to	To describe when I read (& with who I read)
On my tablet		
In the car on a long drive		
When my mom makes me		
During Reader's Workshop		
During Social Studies and Science		
My mom reads with me		
Some people at school read with me		
My teacher reads with me		
My family reads with me		

## APPENDIX K

## Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
All students are included (co-taught)	is a kind of	Benefit from classroom
Ensures students with LD are met with one-on-one on a regular basis(co-taught)		
Greater frequency that student reads with teacher(co-taught)		
Conferring with teacher every day (co-taught)		
Ensure students with LD are reading books at their level (resource room)		
Students with focus issues get room attention(resource room)		
Can help close the gap (co-taught, resource room, single teacher taught)		
More small group lessons(resource room)		
Smaller classroom(resource room)		
Lessons targeted for students with learning disabilities(resource room)		

## APPENDIX L

## Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Two teachers who work together to teach the class	is a kind of	Co-teacher trait
Figure out what class needs to achieve goals		
Make sure the high needs students are met with frequently		
General education teacher and the special education teacher meet to discuss what is working and what isn't		
General education teacher and the special education teacher plan together		
General education teacher and the special education teacher listen to each other		
General education teacher and the special education teacher are flexible		
Figure out what is going to help students with LD		
General education teacher and the special education teacher have a shared vision		
General education teacher and the special education teacher collaborate		
Both teachers are in charge of the classroom		
Bother teachers have similar teaching philosophies		
Open mindness, think outside comfort zone		
Expectations and outcomes stay the same for all students		
Planning for individual student's needs drives the over lesson		
Extra support		



## APPENDIX M

## Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
I was not taught phonics, so I had a hard time learning to read	is a kind of	Teacher view toward achievement
Reading is so important, I don't want my students to be behind like I was		
"...access to different level books which sounds easy, but it's very challenging, very challenging to have a student who's learning disability affects the reading level in the right level book all the time."		
Meeting with students with LD for an additional separate lesson, easy to lose track of		
Consistency is imperative to the success of an inclusive environment		
"Honestly, I just, I don't know curriculum, it bores me to tears. I don't really care what we are doing in Reader's Workshop or whatever the next thing of passing, just give me the material, put whatever students you want in here, if you have help available, wonderful, if not we'll figure it out. I'm going to do the best I can. As long as they are moving forward and making adequate progress, it's good.		
I think any child would benefit from benefit from being in a co-taught classroom, not just students with LD		
Special Education teachers need more time (a significant amount) in general education classroom to truly co-teach		
Co-teaching is more effective when the special ed teacher can be in the general ed classroom for the entire block of time		
"I think the most important thing when working with kids that really struggle with reading is really being reflective on what they can do and building from what their		

<p>strengths are and knowing what their weaknesses are too, but building from their strengths and really taking the time to reflect back to what's happening in the lessons and what you're teaching point is going be on, so that you're picking one thing instead of worrying about 10 things that they are struggling with. And focusing on one area at a time, and getting them through that. And a lot of text."</p>		
<p>"My philosophy kind of shifts every year based on the students I'm working with and what their needs are and what I have learned as a teacher. Just as I feel like I'm comfortable and I know what I'm doing, and then I learn something new. It forces me to rethink my own thinking which I think is a great thing, you know, as teachers we need that. We need to be doing that, always changing as we know more."</p>		

**APPENDIX N****Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Reader's Workshop	is a kind of	Reading Instruction
Guided Reading Lessons		
Familiar Reading		
Leveled Literacy Instruction		
Small Group		

## APPENDIX O

### Domain Analysis from Classroom Observation

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Focus on stopping at periods	is a kind of	Reading goal for students
Be mindful of commas		
Focus on clear reading		
Stop at punctuation		
Focus on main idea		
Give supports for main idea		
Read slowly		
Make sense		
"What are you working on as a reader?"		
"What do you notice is going on in your book?"		

## APPENDIX P

### Domain Analysis from Classroom Observation

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Lots of chatter/whispering Approaches teacher to ask questions Goes to bathroom Chooses which group to work with Moves to reading spot Plays with toys, pencils, markers, bean bag, another student, etc. Raises hand Grabs snack from desks Leaves reading spot to look for new book Actively engaged in reading Looks away from book/shows book to student sitting next him Rocking in chair/at rug Plays with Word Ring Head down at desk Stays at desk during mini-lesson	is a kind of	Student behavior during reading

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**ABSTRACT****WHAT ARE THE SIMILIARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF READING INSTRUCTION OF FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES TAUGHT IN A CO-TAUGHT CLASSROOM, A RESOURCE CLASSROOM AND A SINGLE-TEACHER TAUGHT CLASSROOM?**

by

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With the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004, more demands are being placed on schools to provide special education services within the general education classroom. The law states that students with disabilities should only be removed from their general education classroom when the nature and severity of the disability is such that instruction in the regular education classroom cannot be achieved satisfactorily, even with the use of supplementary aids and services (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). IDEA also states that students with disabilities will be provided with instruction that meets the student's own specific needs, which will be made available at no cost to parents (IDEA, 2004). In 1975, when special education services were first mandated, schools began to implement programs in which students with learning disabilities in need of specialized instruction were generally "taken out" of their general education classrooms. Students were then provided specialized instruction mostly in a small group setting in a resource room, which was taught by a teacher who was certified in special education. The purpose of these programs was to provide students with

disabilities an intensive, individualized program of instruction in the deficit area (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer, 2000). However, more and more school districts are utilizing inclusive general education settings to provide the necessary support to these students. Two types of inclusive general education settings are a co-taught classroom and a single-teacher taught classroom.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reading instruction and the perceptions of three fourth grade students with learning disabilities in a co-taught classroom, a resource room or a single-teacher taught classroom as well as their teachers. The focus was on the perceived and observed differences and similarities between each of the three classroom settings. Qualitative research methods were utilized in this study to collect data. These methods included classroom observations, student interviews, teacher interviews, field notes, and audio tapes. Research questions guided the study and the data was analyzed and reported on consistent with qualitative studies.

This study suggests that students with learning disabilities who receive reading instruction in a resource room, a co-taught classroom, or a single-teacher taught classroom all perceived themselves as good readers. These students also believed that purpose of reading is to read at higher levels. The students also felt like their teachers supported their reading skills in numerous ways. This study also suggests that the general education teachers view their reading instruction that they provide to students with learning disabilities much the same as they view instruction for the general education students. The special education teacher who co-taught in the general education room was more likely to provide individualized instruction on a daily

basis, as she met with her students with learning disabilities every day in the general education classroom. The resource room teacher viewed the direct instruction in the resource room for her students with learning disabilities as imperative. Many similarities and differences between the general education special education classroom settings were uncovered in this study.

### **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Doreen Avenall received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Northern Michigan University in 1996. She holds certifications in elementary education, math (6-8), and science (6-8). She received her M.A.E. in Special Education with a Learning Disabilities certification in 1999 from Northern Michigan University. In 2002, she earned her Ed.S. in special education administration from Eastern Michigan University. At Wayne State University in pursuit of her Ed.D., she has majored in Special Education with a cognate in Special Education Administration.

Mrs. Avenall began her teaching career in a small rural community in the upper peninsula of Michigan teaching in lower elementary general education classrooms. In Algonac, Michigan, she began teaching special education at the middle school level. She is currently a resource room teacher in a small school district in southeast Michigan. Mrs. Avenall functions as the START coach for Lakes Elementary School in Hartland, Michigan. She also serves as a chair person for the School Improvement team for her elementary building. She has co-taught a course on inclusive education at Wayne State University.