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Meeting the Needs of Students Through a Targeted Professional Development

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS THROUGH A TARGETED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a complex problem of practice occurring at Primrose Elementary school [pseudonym]. A large portion of Primrose Elementary School's population has been unable to meet Florida's state reading proficiency standards over the last twelve years. Students of Primrose Elementary have a poor foundation in language on which to build vital reading skills. Consequently, students cannot overcome this deficiency because teachers lack the content knowledge to meet the students' language and subsequent reading deficiencies, in spite of 12 years of reading professional development. This dissertation in practice will propose the use of targeted professional development to address below grade level reading performance. The proposed professional development should be delivered through a cyclical model focused on six, sequentially presented key elements: (1) knowledge of language development; (2) knowledge of text complexity; (3) modeling; (4) close reading; (5) collaborative conversations; and (6) independent reading. Delivery is designed to support reading proficiency through language acquisition. Delivery steps will (a) introduce, (b) practice and plan, (c) use, (d) reflect on, and (e) review each element as a skill. A review of school performance and literature correlated impacts of low student socioeconomic status and teacher quality on student reading outcomes.

I dedicate this dissertation in practice to my wonderful loving husband, my biggest fan and supporter.

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CHAPTER 1
PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Problem of Practice

This dissertation in practice presents a complex problem of practice occurring at Primrose Elementary school [pseudonym]. A large portion of Primrose Elementary School's population has been unable to meet Florida's state reading proficiency standards over the last twelve years. Students of Primrose Elementary have a poor foundation in language on which to build vital reading skills. Consequently, students cannot overcome this deficiency because teachers lack the content knowledge to meet the students' language and subsequent reading deficiencies, in spite of 12 years of reading professional development.

Previous attempts to solve this problem over the last twelve years led to the implementation of several programs and multiple professional development programs. This study will first review previous attempts to solve the problem and the coinciding FCAT Reading scores, to determine the effectiveness of past solutions to create a more complete understanding of the problem. This study intertwines literature regarding socio economic status (SES) and reading ability, professional development and teacher effectiveness, to clarify causation of the problem. The data from past solutions and the information from the literature will be used to create a professional development model as a solution to this complex problem of practice.

The researcher serves as a fourth-grade educator at Primrose Elementary School where this complex problem of practice resides. All claims regarding the organizational

and historical context related to the school were derived from first-hand knowledge, conversations with the current principal and public data from the Florida Department of Education. This dissertation in practice uses Primrose Elementary School's demographics, past solutions, and their coinciding FCAT sores to determine why this is a problem within the context of the organization.

Primrose Elementary School is a Title One school (Florida Department of Education 2013b). Title One schools receive additional funding to aide students who are considered economically disadvantaged by providing additional professional development, staff, and intervention programs (Florida Department of Education 2013b). In order for the school to receive Title One funding, the school must have at least 40% of the student population meet national guidelines for free or reduced lunch (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Over the last twelve years 89% to 94% of the population met or exceeded national guidelines for free and reduced lunch, (Florida Department of Economic Recovery, 2014; Florida Department of Education, 2013c).

According to the literature, students of low SES come to school deficient in oral language skills in comparison to their more affluent peers (Bahktin, 1981; Baker, 2010; Beck, 2007; Bernstein, 1971; Cairney, 1990; Cazden, 1988; Cox et al., 2004; Durkin, 1978; Gee, 2010; Halliday, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Hu-Pei, 1980; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Littlejohn, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tharp, 1982). This deficiency in oral language creates a significant disadvantage for the low SES students. Low SES students have smaller vocabularies and less practice with fully articulated versions of language (Bernstein, 1971; Cox et al.,

2004; Hart & Risely, 1995). Students of middle class and upper class would have greater practice with formally used language (Bernstein, 1971). The larger a child's vocabulary at the beginning of Kindergarten the quicker they learn to read and comprehend text (Beck, 2007; Hoff, 2003). It is then inferred that in order to meet the needs of the majority of low SES students at Primrose Elementary, it is necessary to increase students' formally articulated language.

Although, all students in Volusia County, regardless of their economic situation, are taught using the same materials, curriculum, and timeline of proficiency testing (Volusia County Schools, 2014) Primrose Elementary School's Title One status is intended to financially support the special needs of their students. Past solutions focused on three professional development series. Two of the series developed teachers' use of scripted programs focused on reading fluency and phonics. The third series focused on reading comprehension. None of the previous solutions addressed students' language development. Therefore, previous professional development has been misaligned with the needs of the students and teachers at Primrose Elementary School.

The significance of the problem goes beyond students passing the FCAT 2.0 reading test. Students who are unable to read proficiently before the end of elementary school have a 54% higher chance of failure in high school (Allington, 2009; Hernandez, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation in practice is to create a professional development model where teachers are able to utilize existing materials and curriculum more proficiently meet the needs of Primrose Elementary School students.

Those Affected by the Problem

Students

In order to ensure students and teachers are meeting state proficiency standards the State of Florida annually administers a test statewide. During the 2012-2013 school years, the State used the FCAT 2.0 to determine students' proficiency according to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for third, fourth, and fifth graders. This test provided scores in reading, writing, science, and math. According to the data, Primrose consistently makes gains in all areas tested with the exception of reading. For this reason, this dissertation in practice focuses on the area of reading.

Reading proficiency in third, fourth, and fifth grade is critical to students' overall academic success. Those who fail to meet the state's reading proficiency standards at the elementary level are more likely never to read on grade level throughout their academic career (Black, S.E., 1999; Hernandez, 2011). According to Hernandez (2011), three-fourths of poor readers at elementary grade levels will continue to be poor readers throughout their educational careers unless specific interventions intercede and increase students' reading proficiency while in elementary school. Students leaving elementary school reading one or more years below grade level have a 54% chance of not graduating or not graduating on time from High School (Allington, 2009; Hernandez, 2011).

Teachers

All Elementary school teachers are affected by the scores of students taking the state mandated proficiency tests. Florida legislation (F.S. 1008.22, 2011) requires, "At least 50% of a [teacher's] performance evaluation must be based upon data and indicators of student learning growth assessed annually and measured by statewide assessments or, for subjects and grade levels not measured by statewide assessments, by district assessments"(para. 8). The remaining 50% of teachers' performance evaluation is calculated based on data from other sources including observations of their instructional practice. This accountability is also accompanied by penalties and rewards. Educators who demonstrate their teaching skill through positive student scores on the State proficiency test are rewarded with financial incentives. Educators failing to have the majority of their students meet state proficiency standards on the state test for three or more years face termination.

Principals

Principals are also held to the high accountability standards in that 50% of their yearly evaluations are determined based on student data from state proficiency tests. The other 50% of their evaluation is dominated by skills in leadership; such as their ability to manage, interpret, and use data to increase the number of students meeting state proficiency standards (American Institute for Research, 2012; Stewart, 2013).

The Community

The current method to hold students, educators, and principals accountable for reaching state proficiency standards has been a secondary step in the school accountability process. During the 2001-2002 academic school years, grades began to be assigned to schools based on students' performance on FCAT and later FCAT 2.0. In order for a school to receive a passing state grade of A, B, or C, the school must have had a certain percentage of the students meeting state proficiency standards and making yearly growth as through performance on state assessments.

The topic of school grades and the public's perception of what constitutes a quality school are inextricably linked with the monetary value of the surrounding homes (Black, 1999). Black demonstrated the power of school grades, noting that a home directly linked to a school that scored in the top 25th percentile compared to a school in the lower 75th percentile would result in a housing price increase of $5,452. Figlio and Lucas (2004) investigated the value of Florida homes, comparing school grades of schools zoned to home locations. They found that "the housing market responds significantly to the new information about schools provided by these school report cards" (p. 603). This suggests that effectively meeting the needs of students, earning superior scores, and increasing the school's reputation has the ability to affect the community around the school.

Organizational Context

Primrose Elementary School, a medium-sized school with a student enrollment of approximately 500 students, is located in the center of an urban area of East Volusia County, Florida. According to the 2013 school grade report, 214 total students took the FCAT 2.0 in third, fourth, and fifth grades. Of the population taking the FCAT 2.0, 93% of students met the United States Department of Education guidelines for free and reduced lunch. According to a 2013 report, Primrose Elementary School has a large minority population where 80% of the student population taking the FCAT 2.0 are African American, 18% Caucasian, and 2% Hispanic (Florida Department of Education, 2013c). Of the population taking the FCAT 2.0 in 2013, 55% of students did not meet the state's benchmark of earning a level 3 or higher on FCAT 2.0 in reading.

It important note the adoption of new standards and more stringent tests which will replace the FCAT 2.0 (AIR, 2012). As the FCAT 2.0 is retired in 2014 the state will use the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), "as well as statewide alternate assessments in order to produce measures of educator effectiveness for more educators" (AIR, 2012, p. 31).

Primrose Elementary school has a mission statement which reads "All children can and will learn" (Volusia County Schools, 2014 para. 1). The school organizational construct is that of a hierarchically vertical form of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In this leadership structure, one individual or entity holds most or all of the decision making ability in an organization, and provides levels of leadership from the top down. The principal holds all power over the school, and demands all decisions be passed by her

desk before they are made. Supporting the principal is the academic team, led by the assistant principal. The academic team acts as enforcers of the principal's rules and procedures. However, the academic team has no power to enforce these rules beyond reporting to the principal insubordination of individuals. The principal's decision making is informed by student data, and testing requirements.

History of the Organization

In this dissertation in practice, the current demographics of Primrose Elementary School were used to determine the probable causes of the problem and the proposed design of the solution. Thus, it becomes necessary to review Primrose Elementary School's demographic changes from construction to the present. Telling the story of change starts by describing the original population, which led to the construction of Primrose Elementary School, described in the Beginning (1966) section of this historical account. Next, in the section entitled A Call for Change (1967-1975) , two major changes which shaped not only the demographics of the school, but also the relationship between teachers and district administrators, are also described. Most importantly, it becomes necessary to explain how and why the demographics of the school's feeding community changed so drastically from Primrose Elementary School's opening to present day in the Changing Demographics (1975-1994) section.

Beginning (1966)

Primrose Elementary School opened in 1966 as a segregated white school. It was built to meet the needs of the growing number of families moving into the area to work at the nearby General Electric (GE) Aerospace engineering plant. This meant the school served a predominately middle to upper middle class community. No expense was spared; the school was constructed at a price of $815,000, which at the time was considered an elaborate amount of money (Langolotz, 2000). The school was the first school in Volusia County to utilize central air-conditioning throughout the entire school, folding classroom dividers, and formal irrigated landscaping (Langlotz, 2000). The school was considered the heart of the neighborhood, hosting Halloween parties, holiday extravaganzas, and other social events (Langlotz, 2000).

A Call for Change (1967-1975)

In 1968, Primrose Elementary School teachers proposed a walkout to demand classroom support and funding. Teachers believed a lack of funding impeded their ability to teach students. Volusia County School's teachers protested that they needed materials to teach, time to work with students, and smaller class sizes. In 1968, student enrollment left many classrooms in the district with over 40-students (Langlotz, 2000). The walkout lasted from February 19 to March 12, 1968. Although a compromise was agreed upon, it was noted, "the walkout did not achieve significant gain in Florida education; animosities between those teachers who walked out and those who stayed still existed; teacher morale

had not improved since the walkout; teacher effectiveness in the classroom was not affected by the walkout" (Langlotz, 2000, p. 203)

Nevertheless, in 1970 to meet the growing population of the GE engineers and workers, another 10 classrooms and a new administrative wing were built (Langlotz, 2000). Although turmoil of the teacher walkout disrupted classroom life, it led to the unification between teachers of both black and white schools. All the while, the population in Volusia County continued to grow.

"Public schools in Volusia County had been segregated since the time of the Civil War" (Langlotz, 2000, p. 203). It should be noted that Volusia County Schools had been in noncompliance with the segregation laws in Florida, suggesting animosity over the desegregation of schools may not have been as strong as in other southern locations (Langlotz, 2000). However, as desegregation went into effect, Volusia County Schools was one of the last Florida school districts to integrate schools. The school district waited until February 1970 to submit a plan detailing how desegregation laws would be implemented. The desegregation plan originally included Grades K-2 and did not fully integrate all grade levels K-12 until the 1974-1975 school years (Langlotz, 2000).

Changing Demographics (1975-1994)

The Daytona Beach area feeding Primrose Elementary School continued to thrive due to the higher paying jobs supplied by the GE Aerospace industry. The surrounding area went from a smaller suburb to a sprawling urban area (Langolotz, 2000). The population served by Primrose Elementary School continued to increase until late 1989

when cuts in government defense caused layoffs from the Daytona Beach GE plant (Burnett, 1992). From 1989-1992, over 200 individuals lost their jobs (Burnett, 1993). Soon there were negotiations over GE's Daytona Beach plant and Martin Marietta's plant based in Orlando. In the end, Martin Marietta bought the Daytona Beach GE plant and moved operations to their already existing Orlando facility (Burnett, 1993). With the loss of over 1,400 jobs provided by the GE Aerospace plant in Daytona Beach, the area surrounding Primrose Elementary School witnessed great changes. The area, once supported by higher wages, was now dominated by jobs making little more than minimum wage (Pedicini, 2001). Although Primrose Elementary School at one time served predominately middle to upper class students that landscape has changed to a predominately impoverished student population.

Conceptualization of the Problem

Historically, a large portion of Primrose Elementary School's population has failed to meet reading state proficiency standards over the last twelve years. Because the students of Primrose Elementary low SES they likely have a poor foundation in language upon which to build vital reading skills (Bahktin, 1981; Baker, 2010; Beck, 2007; Bernstein, 1971; Cairney, 1990; Cazden, 1988; Cox et al., 2004; Durkin, 1978; Gee, 2010; Halliday, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Hu-Pei, 1980; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Littlejohn, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tharp, 1982). Students cannot overcome this deficiency because previous attempts to solve the problem did not focus on building teachers content area knowledge in reading

and language. Thus, teachers lack the content knowledge to meet the students' language and subsequent reading deficiencies, despite twelve years of reading professional development (Darling- Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002). To create understanding of the problem and its causation, this dissertation in practice reviews previous solutions, focusing on how. problem has been viewed and addressed.

Student proficiency as described by the complex problem of practice is measured by state tests. Therefore, brief overviews of the past and present state proficiency tests are presented in the School Accountability sections. This historical timeline of testing and modifications to the tests must be intertwined with the report of statistical data. This is accomplished in two sections focused on accountability: (a) Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Primrose Elementary School (1996-1998) which describe the beginning of accountability testing effecting Primrose Elementary School and (b) FCAT and FCAT 2.0 Primrose Elementary School (1999-2013). Lastly, in the Professional Development section, current and past methods the school has used in order to remedy the complex problem of practice, as explained by the principal of the school, is presented.

School Accountability

For the State of Florida to receive federal funding, its school districts had to administer a test to determine whether each school was making progress toward the national goals established per No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) (Florida Department of Education, 2013c). Since 1996, the state has been developing, modifying and creating

standards in order to meet these guidelines. Florida currently uses the FCAT 2.0 to determine whether all state run or state funded schools have made sufficient progress (Florida Department of Education, 2013c). The state supplies a report which monitors each school's progress toward meeting state and national goals. This report reflects the percentage of students meeting the state determined levels of competency within one school year. The percentage of students meeting the goals and expectations set by both the national and state government are then used in awarding individual schools points toward earning their school grade. For example, if 45% of students met or exceeded reading proficiency, this would give the school 45 points (Florida Department of Education, 2013c).

Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Primrose Elementary School (1996-1998)

Currently, state proficiency reading scores are only available from the 1996 school year and beyond. This was the first year the State of Florida fully enforced an accountability program and began field-testing for the soon-to-come FCAT. These data from1996 to 2014 are presented in Table 1. For the 1996-1998 school years, students took what was then called the CTBS. This test was used to determine common skills among students scoring among the top 25% of the students taking the test. Results from the 1996-1997 statewide tests showed only 38% of students scored in the upper quartile when compared to their peers in reading. This number dropped during the following year. During the 1997-1998 test administration, only 27% of students were considered in the upper quartile.

Table 1

Primrose Elementary School: Student Reading and Mathematics Performance, Tests, and Socioeconomic Status (2002-2013)

School Year	Definition of Higher Standards	% Students Meeting Reading Standards	% Students Meeting Mathematics Standards	Test	% Students At or Below Poverty	% Students Minority
1996-1997	Upper Quartile	38	35	CTBS	78	65
1997-1998	Upper Quartile	27	40	CTBS	77	68
1998-1999*	Upper Quartile					
1999-2000*	Level 2 or higher	67	33	FCAT		
2000-2001*	Level 2 or higher	67	42	FCAT		
2001-2002*	Level 3 or higher	49	38	FCAT		
2002-2003	Level 3 or higher	44	41	FCAT	89	85
2003-2004	Level 3 or higher	66	60	FCAT	90	81
2004-2005	Level 3 or higher	66	64	FCAT	89	83
2005-2006	Level 3 or higher	67	62	FCAT	88	80
2006-2007	Level 3 or higher	64	61	FCAT	87	85
2007-2008	Level 3 or higher	63	62	FCAT	88	84
2008-2009	Level 3 or higher	68	60	FCAT	90	86
2009-2010	Level 3 or higher	62	67	FCAT	93	85
2010-2011	Level 3 or higher	56	59	FCAT 2.0	93	85
2011-2012	New scores determining a level 3 are implemented	35	48	FCAT 2.0	94	85
2012-2013	New Scores	45	57	FCAT 2.0	93	82

Note. * denotes missing data from State archives (Florida Department of Education, 2014)

FCAT and FCAT 2.0 Primrose Elementary School (1999-2013)

Third, fourth, and fifth grade students' cumulative test scores are reflected in the report used to measure Primrose Elementary School student proficiency in meeting state standards. Records of testing for the 1998-1999 school years are missing from State reports; however, this was the first year FCAT was administered, and administration was in the pilot phase. During the 1999-2001 school years, students taking the FCAT were required to reach a level 2 to meet State standards. During both administrations of the FCAT for the 1999-2000 and the 2000-2001 school years, 67% of students met state standards in reading by either scoring a level 2 or above.

During the 2001-2002 school years, a score of a level 3 or higher had to be obtained in order for students to meet state proficiency. Results for the reading portion of the FCAT, 2001-2002 school year, show Primrose Elementary School had 49% of its population score proficiently on FCAT in 2002. In 2003, Primrose Elementary School had only 44% of the population meet or exceed the state's expectations of FCAT. In 2004, a change of leadership to the present principal coincided with 66-68% of Primrose Elementary School students maintaining proficiency levels of three or higher from 2004-2010. During the 2010-2011 academic years, the FCAT testing material was revised to increase the cognitive complexity of the questions (Florida Department of Education, 2013b). This newly revised test took on the name FCAT 2.0 (Florida Department of

Education, 2013b). Reading scores from the 2011 FCAT declined 10%, as only 56% of students scored proficiently. For the 2012-2013 academic year, cut scores changed across all elementary, middle, and high school levels, creating a higher standard of proficiency for the FCAT 2.0 for Elementary School students. Cuts scores were defined by the number of points a student needed to score on FCAT 2.0 in order to meet proficiency levels. For the 2012-2013 academic years, Primrose Elementary School saw the number of proficient readers drop 37% to only 35% of the population meeting state minimum standards in reading. For 2013, FCAT 2.0 Primrose Elementary School saw a 29% increase in the population meeting or exceeding the state reading level of proficiency (Florida Department of Education, 2013). The following 2013-2014 years were the final year for FCAT 2.0.

Since the 2008-2009 school years, mathematics scores have been higher than reading scores. Comparatively, in 2008-2009, 5% more students met state proficiency levels in math than reading. In the 2009-2010 school years, only 3% more students achieved higher in mathematics than in reading. As shown in Table 1, during the 2011-2012, 13% more students performed higher on the mathematics portion of the FCAT.

Professional Development

Reading First Initiative

Obviously, increasing student achievement is the ultimate goal for the students at Primrose Elementary School. With this in mind, it is important to note that Primrose Elementary School has used many of the same reading resources and corresponding professional developments since the 2002-2003 academic years. Many of the programs and corresponding professional developments have been indirectly connected to the Reading First Initiative that began in 2002.

The Reading First Initiative dedicated large sums of grant money to supply scientific research based, instructional, and assessment tools to classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). This grant grounded on the National Reading Panel (NRP) required the use of certain assessments and interventions which the NRP determined to be scientifically proven instructional programs and assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In order to monitor students' reading progression, many states utilized the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). DIBELS is a test "designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills" (Good & Kaminiski, 2001, p. 1). However, the use of the DIBELS assessments diverted the attention from the ultimate goal of reading, from comprehension, to the speed with which students read

(Samuels & Riedel, 2007). This focus left programs such as Direct Instruction from SRA, Great Leaps, Read Naturally, and Quick Reads as staple interventions for many elementary schools, including Primrose Elementary School. These programs all focused on increasing fluency (U.S. Department of Education n. d.). Although, fluency is necessary in order for students to read text, there must be a balanced approach to literacy instruction between students receiving instruction in how to read (e.g. phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency) and how to create meaning from text (e.g. comprehension) (Allington, 2009).

SRA's Direct Instruction

In her response to questions regarding student performance, the current Primrose Elementary School principal who assumed leadership during the 2002-2003 academic years indicated that she observed many problems inhibiting student performance. These problems focused around educator belief, educator capacity, and parental involvement. She believes these factors contributed to the inability of students to meet state and proficiency standards.

The principal sensed that educators believed students were unable and unwilling to meet state standards of proficiency. This belief transcended into their teaching, and ownership of the problem was deflected to students' low SES status. The principal saw a gap in educators' capacity to correctly teach foundational reading skills (e.g. phonemic

awareness, phonics, and fluency) to create students who were phonetically and fluently strong. This belief led the principal to solicit community resources to fund an additional reading program in support of student reading achievement.

The principal of Primrose Elementary School from the academic years of 2004 to 2012 put forth a great deal of time, effort, and Title One funding, utilizing every available employee to teach the Direct Instruction (DI) program by SRA. The DI program concentrates on teaching students through heavy phonics instruction, building fluency, and good reading behaviors, such as rereading to find answers to comprehension. According to SRA, the ability to decode difficult words and increases in fluency would allow students to read well enough to understand text (McGraw Hill Education, 2013). When understanding is not attained in the program, students are directed to reread. However, the ability to comprehend requires the student to complete a thought process (USDOE, n. d.). Direct Instruction never uses any cognitive process to analyze and understand text other than rereading. The Direct Instruction program focuses on modifying behaviors, such as how to phonetically blend words, the rote memorization of many vocabulary words, rereading for the development of fluency, and the notion that with fluency and vocabulary development comprehension would be attained (Baker, Pearson, & Rozendal, 2010). The program offers professional development in order to train teachers to teach the heavily scripted lessons, making the program virtually "teacher proof" (McGraw-Hill Education, 2014). The program did not allow for any teacher

modifications, and the professional development focused on a checklist of observations, ensuring teachers were utilizing scripts and materials exactly as outlined (McGraw-Hill Education, 2014). Although the program coincided with improved FCAT reading scores for the 2004-2010 school years results were not lasting. When the DI program was first initiated, the FCAT relied heavily on simple answers that could be answered directly from the text. For example, if students were asked to read a portion of Charlotte's Web, they may be asked questions like, "What did Charlotte do after completing her first web?" Students were able to find this in the text and then pick the corresponding answer. When the FCAT 2.0 increased the cognitive complexity of the questions, students reading the same text might be asked, "What is the theme of the passage?" The more complex questions of the FCAT 2.0 required students to apply reasoning skills to comprehend and analyze text (Florida Department of Education, 2013b). During the 2010-2011 school years a 10% decrease can be seen. The complexity of the FCAT 2.0 was further increased during the 2011-2012 administration when the state increased the number of points students would need to receive in order to meet state proficiency standards. During this time 37% fewer students met minimum reading state proficiency standards.

Homogenously Grouped Reading Instruction

The DI program existed as an ancillary curriculum and professional development to the already existing reading curriculum provided by the school district. In order to

meet the demands of state standards assessed by the FCAT during the 2004-2010 school years, the principal authorized the creation of homogenously classified reading groups, where teachers would only teach a certain group of students. In this model, students were placed in reading groups based on their reading District Interim Assessments, a test designed and administered by the district every five weeks to monitor progress toward the current reading standards assessed by the State of Florida through the FCAT. This program allowed the state mandated reading block of 90 minutes to target students with similar reading abilities, and assigned teachers to teach "above, on, or below level" readers. The principal then assigned the students needing the most help with the most proficient reading teacher, as identified by the teachers' historical reading FCAT scores. At the start of reading, students would move to their "reading teacher's" class to receive their 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading. This district's curriculum presented through homogenous grouping came with professional development for teachers. Like the DI program teachers were observed to ensure all aspects of the school district provided curriculum were exactly as described including the use of scripts. The school district reading specialist, the school's reading coach, the assistant principal, and principal observed and documented whether or not teachers were teaching the program with fidelity. Teachers were provided with immediate feedback along with school-wide professional development on the use of district provided curriculum series. Although this method of application of the districts reading curriculum coincided with increases in

FCAT reading scores, results were short lived, and like the DI program when the complexity of the FCAT increased for the 2010-2012 school years students 37% fewer students met state proficiency standards. Thus, this program ended in the 2011-2012 school year.

Positive gains started fading as FCAT 2.0 increased in cognitive complexity and students were unable to answer questions that required deeper cognitive thought. It is the researcher's professional opinion, guided by the use of the DI program and the past reading series that students were able to utilize simple reading behaviors such as direct quotes from the text but were unable to answer questions that required paraphrasing, inference skills, or summarization. As shown in Table 1, the inability to maintain reading scores can be seen most dramatically in the scores for the 2010-2012 school years where a 44% drop in students meeting the state's minimum reading proficiency levels. Subsequently, the district no longer endorsed either their own curriculum or the DI program and recommended that they no longer be used. However, at present, the school district has not provided a new reading curriculum or materials to be utilized.

Gradual Release of Responsibility and Close Reading

During the 2012-2013 school years, the district started providing monthly professional development focused on the gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) and close reading (Fisher & Frey, 2013). The gradual release of

responsibility is a process where the students are brought to independent functioning through activities which guide students from reliance on the teacher to reliance on themselves. Close reading is where students read a text multiple times to uncover multiple layers of meaning from text. The first Wednesday of every month the district would present, through the school's academic team, Fisher and Frey's model of close reading and the integration of the Gradual Release Model. The principal started to monitor the use of these techniques during classroom observations, recognizing teachers for successfully implementing the learned skills, even creating a wall showcasing exemplary methods used in implementing the Gradual Release Model and close reading in the classroom. Expectations grew for the Gradual Release Model to be included in lesson plans, for every lesson, and the use of close reading in every subject. Consequently, in the 2012-2013 school years Primrose Elementary School saw a 29% increase in students meeting minimum state levels of proficiency.

Factors that Impact the Problem

Because this dissertation in practice relies heavily on public data, historical events reported by the principal, and firsthand knowledge of the researcher, it becomes necessary to ensure the data and the historical events as reported in the Conceptualization of the Problem coincide. This integration of historical events and data allows an understanding of the problem's significance and the likely causes leading to the

identification of a solution. These assumptions are then used to guide research to provide clarity to the causes in the discussion of the data.

FCAT and FCAT 2.0.

Comparisons to early testing during the 1997-2001 school years differ greatly in terms of qualifications to meet state proficiency levels. Due to a lack of clear standards articulating student expectations at the time, it was not possible to compare all years equally. Therefore, the researcher chose to represent this data for historical and demographic contexts, and concentrated on data from the 2002-2013 school years to identify and design a solution to the problem of practice. Previously defined historical accounts, solutions, and coinciding scores are presented in Table 2.

The scores of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students were reflected in reports documenting the number of students meeting state proficiency standards on the reading FCAT 2.0. Table 2 shows the tests taken, the percentage of Primrose Elementary School students achieving reading proficiency, socioeconomic status and coinciding factors for the 2002-2013 school years.

Table 2

Primrose Elementary School: Student Reading Performance, Socioeconomic Status, and Contextual Factors (2002-2013)

School Year	Test Taken	% of Students Meeting Reading Standards	% of Students Meeting Poverty Guidelines	Interventions and Contributing Factors
2002-2003	FCAT	44	89	• Current Principal takes charge
2003-2004	FCAT	66	90	• Reading First Initiative brings fluency to the forefront. SRA's Direct Instruction Program is implemented at the beginning of the year and continued through the end of the 2012 school year. Homogeneous reading groups
2004-2005	FCAT	66	89	
2005-2006	FCAT	67	88	
2006-2007	FCAT	64	87	
2007-2008	FCAT	63	88	
2008-2009	FCAT	68	90	
2009-2010	FCAT	62	93	
2010-2011	FCAT 2.0	56	93	• Test is made more rigorous
2011-2012	FCAT 2.0	35	94	• Cut score changes WTI is started
2012-2013	FCAT 2.0	45	93	• Walk to Intervention is continued Teachers start to receive district training in the Gradual Release of Responsibility (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) and Close Reading (Fisher and Frey 2013)

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2014

FCAT 2002-2003. The current principal of Primrose Elementary School assumed leadership prior to the 2002-2003 school years. Results from the 2002-2003 FCAT Reading show 44% of the population met or exceeded a level three on the FCAT Reading.

FCAT 2003-2004. During the 2003-2004 school year, the Reading First Initiative brought reading fluency to the forefront. As a result, the principal implemented SRA's

Direct Instruction (DI) program as a secondary reading curriculum across all grade levels as noted in the Conceptualization of the Problem.

FCAT 2004-2010. Test scores from the 2004-2010 school years showed 62% - 68% of students met or exceeded state proficiency levels on the FCAT 2.0 Reading. During this period, the fidelity of the DI program was at the highest levels in the school's history. Teachers of Primrose Elementary School received support through consistent observations enabling targeted training and coaching in the use of the DI program. During this time, the principal moved teachers annually between grades and had students homogenously grouped by reading ability indicators in an effort to limit class sizes and to have the most productive teachers in positions to influence FCAT scores as noted in the Conceptualization of the Problem section.

FCAT 2.0 2010-2011. According to the Florida Department of Education (2013a), during the 2010-2011 school years, the complexity of the tasks students would have to perform with text increased as noted in the Conceptualization of the Problem section. During the 2010-2011 school years, student FCAT Reading scores saw a decrease of 10% of students meeting minimum reading proficiency scores on FCAT 2.0 Reading.

FCAT 2.0 2011-2012. For the 2011-2012 school years, the principal tried to prepare for the increase in cut scores by implementing the WTI program in third, fourth, and fifth grades while Kindergarten, first- and second-grade students continued to use the

DI Program. During this time period student 39% fewer students met proficiency standards in reading.

FCAT 2.0 2012-2013. For the 2012-2013 school years, the use of DI was limited with loss of the district's financial support, and only in Kindergarten and Grade one classrooms. Second, the WTI program was continued. Principal support and classroom coaching complimented further district professional development on the Gradual Release of Responsibility and close reading. The 2012-2013 FCAT 2.0 Reading scores coincided with 29% more students meeting minimum proficiency standards.

Demographics

Currently Primrose Elementary School has a minority population of 82%; however, this does not reveal the causes of the problem. Although student performance increases when skills are imbedded in the students' cultural context, this is just good practice; research does not support ethnicity as a factor in learning capability (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Hu-Pei, 1980; Tharp, 1982; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). However, researchers have revealed a strong correlation between a student's economic status, capacity to use language, and subsequent reading ability (Gee, 2010; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Hu-Pei, 1980; Hye Son & Wilkinson, 2011). Economically disadvantaged students are defined by their household income.

As discussed earlier in the History of the Organization, the minority and low SES population of the school has grown significantly since the opening. During the 1997-1998 school years, 78% of students met guidelines for low SES students, and, as shown in Table 1, 65% of the school's population were of minority descent. At the conclusion of the 2013 test administration of the FCAT 2.0, 93% of the population met guidelines for low SES, and 82% were of minority descent. This meant increases in students' reading scores during the 2004-2010 school years were accomplished regardless of students' economic status or ethnic background. Although scoring methods for the 1997-2001 tests differed, more students met state standards in reading during the 1996-2002 periods when a larger percentage of the school's population did not meet economically disadvantaged standards.

School Improvement Plan

The language deficit which correlates to low SES of students at Primrose Elementary, greatly impedes their ability to learn to read (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Gee, 2010; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Hu-Pei, 1980; Hye Son & Wilkinson, 2011). However, teacher quality can move students past factors affecting low SES students (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). Darling-Hammond (1999) determined that greater teacher content knowledge in the area of reading increases the likelihood their students would meet proficiency standards. Furthermore, she defined

certain characteristics attributable to this higher content knowledge, such as specialization in teaching area and teaching experience. Similarly, Nye et al. (2004) showed a positive affect between teaching experience and student performance in low socioeconomic schools. Thus, both studies pointed to the ability of the teacher to successfully orchestrate reading education. This dissertation in practice is concerned with the ability of the researcher to conduct and create effective solutions using readily available detail. Therefore, further investigation into the strengths of teachers was not conducted. However, a further needs analysis of the teachers is considered an implication of this study.

Table 3

Primrose Elementary School Teacher Demographics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Total teachers	44	100%
Total rated effective or higher	42	95%
Certified in field	44	100%
ESOL endorsed	17	39%
Reading endorsed	8	18%
Advanced degrees	15	34%
National Board certified	0	0%
Years of Experience		
First year teachers	6	14%
1-5 years	15	34%
6-14 years	13	30%
15 or more years	10	23%

The purpose of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is to help identify and organize strategies and resources that should be used to increase student achievement

(Florida Department of Education, 2013c). Table 3 depicts the public information pertaining to teacher qualifications at Primrose Elementary School. According to the SIP, 100 % of teachers at Primrose Elementary School hold certification in elementary education, 18% of teachers hold specialized reading endorsement, 34% of teachers hold advanced degrees, and 48% of teachers have five years or less experience in the classroom. During the 2012-2013 school years, there were five 3rd-grade teachers, three 4th-grade teachers, and three 5th-grade teachers.

All qualities displayed in Table 3 are deemed by the state to aide students in academic success (Florida Department of Education 2014a). To be considered highly qualified at the elementary level in Florida, a teacher would only need to pass the certification examination in Elementary Education. "The Elementary Education K–6 Test consists of five sections: Language Arts and Reading; Social Science; Physical Education, Health, Music, and Visual Arts; Science and Technology; and Mathematics" (Florida Department of Education, 2010, 201, p. 4). The test is scored as a whole, meaning there is no way to determine whether a teacher understands how to effectively teach reading (Florida Department of Education, 2010). Although, 18% of teachers held a Reading Endorsement, a second certification specifically in reading, only four of the 11 (36%) teachers were teaching in an FCAT 2.0 tested grade during the 2012-2013 school years. Advanced degree data could further clarify teacher knowledge; however, the SIP does not signify subject area of the degree; thus, there has been no correlation of teacher

quality and reading. Lastly, of the 11 teachers in FCAT 2.0 tested grades during the 2012-2013 school year, nine (82%) have been teaching less than five years.

Although, 100% of teachers at Primrose Elementary School are highly qualified and 34% have advanced degrees, there exists no precise way in this dissertation in practice to connect this information to teachers' reading content knowledge. Conversely, information regarding teacher experience and specialized reading certification does shed light on possible causes. Currently, 82% of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers have been teaching for less than one year, and only 37% of these teachers hold a specialized reading endorsement. Therefore, both research on teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 1999) and the data regarding the quality of Primrose Elementary School teachers as defined by this dissertation in practice point to the need for professional development to build teachers' capacity to teach current skills in reading. Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade teachers are not addressed because they do not directly teach an state assessed grade.

Discussion of the Data

Previously the school has implemented over the last twelve years three professional development programs which constituted school wide training, support from administration, and the district. The first two programs, DI and homogenous grouping, focused on training teachers to utilize heavily scripted programs. Scripted programs do not allow teachers to deepen their understanding of content knowledge (Colt, 2005).

Meaning the teachers at Primrose Elementary School did not receive direct training to build content knowledge to combat the language deficits in academic language and the resulting reading deficiencies experienced by the students of Primrose Elementary School. Although a 41% increase in students meeting the State's minimum reading proficiency standards occurred between the 2002-2010 school years, scores never went beyond 68% of the population meeting the State's minimum reading proficiency standards, and the scores could not be sustained when the cognitive complexity of the state test increased. The school had dedicated eight years to professional development but teachers were unable to meet the demands of the new test, teachers had not acquired any new skill or content knowledge in the area of reading, such as how students learn to comprehend text, and strategies that can be used to scaffold this understanding (Colt, 2005). Teachers like students need to be able to be scaffolded in their learning to acquire new skills and content knowledge through well planned, targeted professional development (Colt, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002). Teachers had instead learned to read a script and follow directions.

In contrast, during the 2012-2013 school years teachers started to receive school wide professional development regarding the gradual release model and close reading. This professional development concentrated on providing teacher content knowledge in reading, and vital skills in which to teach them. As a result, 29% more students met minimum proficiency standards in reading on the FCAT 2.0. Therefore, at the root of the

problem, although students of Primrose Elementary have a poor foundation in language due to their SES, they have the ability to overcome this deficiency and meet more complex requirements as shown by the 29% increase when teachers received professional development and support in just the area of reading for the 2012-2013 school year. The true problem lies in the professional development programs used in the past to educate teachers at this school. In order to meet the needs of students and teachers to achieve what is expected of the new reading standards and assessment, the instructional and curricular competence of the teachers will need to be improved, thereby increasing the probability of significantly improving the ability of the students to read and analyze more complex text (Colt, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002). Consequently, a solution to this problem would indicate the creation of a professional development model that incorporates effective professional development implementation and design, used to deliver content knowledge in the area of language and reading development.

Model

Unlike previous solutions to the complex problem of practice which centered on the use of "teacher proof" interventions, this dissertation in practice must produce a professional development model which affectively meets the language deficiencies and subsequent reading deficiencies experienced by students to improve their abilities to read. Therefore, the purpose of the professional development model is to increase teachers'

knowledge of how to foster language development and a deeper understanding of content area knowledge pertaining to reading. To support this professional development the principal and the administrative staff would need to apply positive pressure to ensure teachers would adhere to the professional development model (Guskey, 2002).

In order to design a professional development model to address the complex problem of practice a curriculum and a delivery model will be constructed around the contextual needs of the school. First, a curriculum would have to be sought that would enable teachers to foster language development while simultaneously teaching vital reading skills such as comprehension. Second, a delivery model meeting the contextual needs of the school and literature supporting elements of effective professional development will be created to scaffold teachers' understanding of knowledge and skills within the context of the classroom to mastery. The idea of this design must also move teachers from a dependent state on the professional development information to an independent state of use and integration.

CHAPTER 2
DESIGN AND RATIONALE OF A SOLUTION TO THE COMPLEX PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

This dissertation in practice presents a practice occurring at Primrose Elementary school. A large portion of Primrose Elementary School's population has been unable to meet state of Florida's reading proficiency standards over the last twelve years. Students of Primrose Elementary have a poor foundation in language in which to build vital reading skills. Consequently, students cannot overcome this deficiency because teachers lack the content knowledge to meet the students' language and subsequent reading deficiencies, in spite of 12 years of reading professional development.

Over the last twelve years, 92%-94% of Primrose Elementary School's population has been considered low socio economic status (SES) students. This population commonly enters with a diminished capacity to read caused by language deficiencies (Hoff, 2003). This diminished capacity starts at the age of 3 (Hart & Risely, 1995), because students' lack exposure to an academic language needed for the educational arena (Bernstein, 1981).

A conceptual analysis of Primrose Elementary School demonstrated a focus on script based interventions as opposed to professional development which focused on increased educator content knowledge for the improvement of the enrichment of learners. During the 2004-2010 school years, DI program from SRA and the Districts mandated reading curriculum series, implemented through homogenous groups, were fully

implemented school wide were both script based programs. Although early implementation of both programs coincided with a 50% increase in students meeting minimum proficiency scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), neither the DI program nor the district's curriculum led to lasting or continued change or the development of teachers' content knowledge in the area of language and reading (Colt, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002).

During the 2012-2013 school years, the district provided professional development regarding the gradual release model, and close reading. Training regarding the gradual release model and close reading supplied teachers content knowledge in the area of reading only, this coincided with a 29% increase in students meeting minimum state proficiency on the more rigorous FCAT 2.0. According to the Florida Department of Education (2014), the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) will replace the FCAT 2.0 for the 2014-2015 school years. This test will indicate students understanding of the more rigorous Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) (2014). It is inferred that correctly aligning the curriculum and the delivery of the professional development model to the needs of the students and teachers would lead to significant gains in students' proficiency levels (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2009; Tharp & Gallimore, 1982).

Therefore, the professional development created as a solution to the complex problem of practice must provide the teachers of Primrose Elementary School: (a) content knowledge pertaining to reading and language development (Darling-Hammond,

2002; (b) the ability to utilize the content knowledge to foster an environment where students are exposed consistently to an academic language (Bernstein, 1981, Gee, 2001); and (c) the ability to utilize this content knowledge to meet the expectations of the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) 2014. Thus, improving student reading ability as indicated on the future state proficiency test, the FSA.

The proposed professional development model consists of two distinct constructs which must complement one another to meet the contextual needs of Primrose Elementary School. First, the *curriculum* for the proposed professional development model is specified as the reading and language content knowledge and the techniques for teachers to implement this content knowledge. Second, the *implementation* is defined by the way in which teachers would receive the curriculum.

The curriculum had to supply both content knowledge pertaining to language development, reading, and techniques in which to use the knowledge in accordance with the LAFS (2014). *Rigorous Reading* (Fisher & Frey, 2013) was identified as the as a text supplying the curriculum for the professional development. The curriculum guides teachers systematically through content area knowledge in language and reading, and supplies techniques in the creation of language building experiences. However, *Rigorous Reading* does not supply content knowledge meeting the specific deficits experienced by student of low SES, or integrate an understanding of how to incorporate the new knowledge with current LAFS (2014), the expectation of the future FSA. In order to

create a clear understanding of language development the creation of the *language norms* were created according to Hart and Risley' s (1995) and Bernstein's (1981) studies.

Based on the review of literature on effective professional development teacher decision-making and the contextual needs of the school, the researcher designed the cyclical model as a guide for the implementation of this professional development model. This cyclical model incorporates collaborative planning during which the LAFS (2014) would be utilized to practice the new areas of knowledge and teaching techniques, effectively meeting a limitation of the curriculum.

The Professional Development Model: The Curriculum

To meet the goals of this study, teachers will require skills with which to deliver the content knowledge effectively. To foster language development among students, teachers must understand how language acquisition occurs and how to foster this language in the classroom environment (Gee, 2010). This is accomplished through teacher understanding of text complexity (Fisher & Frey, 2013) and the language norms (Fisher & Frey, 1995). The language norms are defined by the five characteristics which teachers will need to understand and implement throughout their day. To meet the contextual demands of Primrose Elementary School teachers will need to utilize: (a) language at various complexities, utilizing all facets of language; (b) tone and expression to add depth to meaning to words in context; (c) emphasis on proper word usage for

names, relations, and recall; (d) questioning to increase details in answers and explanations; (e) expectations of student behaviors (e.g., complete sentence composition) to answer all questions.

In order for teachers to utilize this knowledge, they must have content knowledge and skills with which to foster students' understanding. This is accomplished through reading and language content knowledge applied through: (a) modeling, (b) close reading, (c) collaborative conversations, and (d) independent reading, following the gradual release model (Fisher & Frey, 2013).

The Professional Development: Implementation

The goal of this professional development model is to provide teachers with an understanding of new knowledge and skills and provide a means in which to apply them in their classroom practice. The facilitator is solely responsible for the delivery of the curriculum to the participant through the cyclical model. Therefore, to provide clarity, the roles of facilitator, participants, and the collaborative rules defining their interactions are defined in the following sections.

Facilitator Role

For this professional development, the facilitator will act as an expert, active participant, observer, or a silent presence. In the role as an expert relaying knowledge,

the individual will utilize PowerPoint presentations, materials from the curriculum, and their expertise as they relay information to participants. As an active participant and observer, the facilitator will assess understanding of participants and act as an authoritarian regarding the norms created for collaboration. As a silent presence, the facilitator is not actively observing, teaching, or working with participants but has created an open door policy, allowing participants to individually contact the facilitator with questions or concerns.

Participant Role

For this professional development participants will either be active listeners and observers, active participants, active users, or active reflectors. As an active listener and observer, the individual is watching, taking notes, and asking questions. As an active participant, the individual is utilizing the knowledge areas, skills, and LAFS (2014) to work collaboratively. The individual as an active user is using the new knowledge in the classroom. Individuals as active reflectors are either making reflection notes in their physical lesson plans or actively reviewing student data.

Collaborative Planning

It must be noted that much like a classroom with students, behavioral expectations must be implanted in the design of professional development for teachers. When dealing

with adults, however, it is important to make sure they understand the purpose of the behavioral rules, giving these behavioral rules validity. Garmston and Wellman (1999) outlined seven norms for collaborative teams: (a) pausing, (b) paraphrasing, (c) probing for specificity, (d) putting ideas on the table, (e) paying attention to self and others, (f) presuming positive intentions, and (g) pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry. Each of these norms, although not explicitly defined with operational definitions, will be discussed, guided, and operationally defined at the beginning of the first meeting. For example, the facilitator would lead a discussion to determine what pausing would mean to the group, why it is important, and how it will be implemented during the collaborative sessions. This will continue so that all norms are operationally defined. The operational norms would then be reviewed before each professional development meeting.

The Cyclical Model

Guskey (2002) argued teachers must be trained well enough to mimic, practice, reflect, and repeat as often as needed to attain new skills. This led to the creation of the Cyclical Model. This model consists of eight steps that allow the teachers use of the knowledge to be scaffolded by context of their classrooms and by the facilitator. The following is an outline of each step.

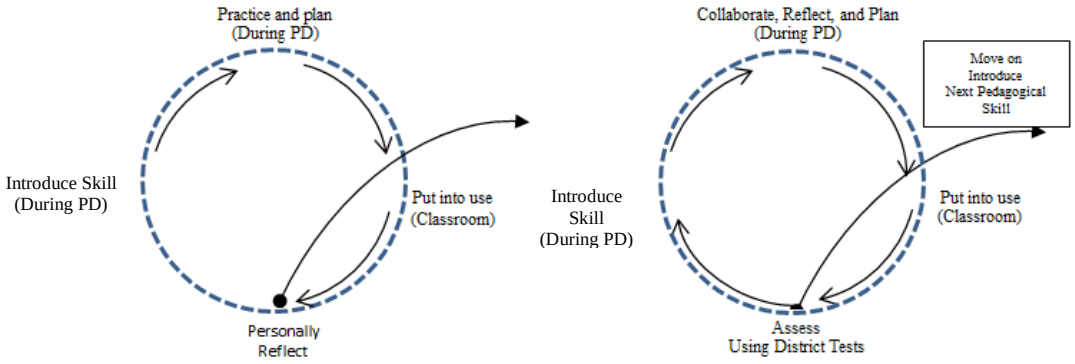

Figure 1. Cyclical model: Two-week Delivery Model for Professional Development

Step 1: Introduce skill. Participants are introduced to the new area of knowledge or skill during the Introduce Skill sequence. During this time, participants will have 30 minutes dedicated to reviewing the skill or knowledge area through lecture utilizing PowerPoint. They will then 20 minutes dedicated to seeing the area of knowledge or pedagogy modeled, either through video, or instructor interaction, utilizing the upcoming week's reading standards. In this learning sequence, the role of facilitator is that of an expert relaying knowledge, and the role of the participant is that of an active listener and observer.

Step 2: Practice and plan. During this step participants will have 35 minutes dedicated to practicing the newly acquired knowledge or skill with peers, utilizing the upcoming week's reading standards. Participants will then have a second 35 minutes to use the practiced lesson to create a formally written lesson plan. In this learning

sequence, the role of facilitator is that of an active participant and observer, and the role of the participant is that of an active participant.

Step 3: Put into use. During the Put into Use step, teachers will utilize the newly acquired knowledge or technique in the classroom. The role of facilitator is that of an active participant and observer. In this role the facilitator will make periodic observations of participants in their classrooms taking notes and correcting misunderstandings as an active participant and observer. The role of the participant is that of an active user.

Step 4: Personally reflect. During the first three steps the teachers will note in their physical lesson plans problems, successes, questions, or suggestions. They will then bring these notes with them to the second weekly session. In this step, the role of facilitator is that of a silent presence, and the role of the participant is that of an active reflector.

Step 5: Review skill. During this step, the facilitator will conduct a 20-minute review of the previous week's knowledge area or skill. The facilitator will use 15 minutes to model the previously learned skill and utilize an area of knowledge. The role of facilitator is that of an expert relaying knowledge, and the role of the participant is that of an active listener and observer.

Step 6: Collaborate, reflect, and plan. Teachers will utilize their notes to share with one another successes and failures and gain insight. The facilitator will still answer

questions and meet with teachers who indicate they need the help, but will circulate to maintain a strong presence. Teachers will be planning to teach the final week before the students take their district bi-weekly reading test.

Step 7: Put into use. During this Put into Use step, teachers will utilize the newly acquired knowledge or technique in the classroom for a second week. The role of facilitator is that of an active participant and observer. In this role the facilitator will make periodic observations of participants in their classrooms taking notes and correcting misunderstandings as an active participant and observer. The role of the participant is that of an active user.

Step 8: Assess. Teachers' successful application of the new knowledge will be assessed by student performance on the district's mandated bi-weekly tests. In this learning step, the role of facilitator is that of a silent presence, and the role of the participant is that of an active reflector.

The Professional Development: Outlined

A total of five skill areas are proposed for this professional development for teachers, each for a two-week period. The skills are: (a) language norms and text complexity; (b) modeling; (c) close reading; (d) collaborative conversation; and (e) independent reading. The structure and focus of the first two-week period is explained in the following section, each detailing the introduction of the skill, practice and

planning, putting into use, reflection and, reviewing the skill and knowledge, collaboration (reflection and planning), and assessing.

Example Weeks 1 and 2: Knowledge Demands--Language and Text Complexity.

During this cycle, participants will be starting the professional development the week before students return from summer break. During this two-week learning cycle, the facilitator will create a presentation utilizing Bernstein's (1981) theory of code to define why students were deficient in language as defined in Chapter I of this dissertation in practice. Second, teachers will review the five characteristics of language development according to Hart and Risely (1995) defined previously for this professional development as the norms of language development: (1) the use of language at various complexities, utilizing all facets of language; (2) the use of tone and expression, to add depth to the meaning of words in context; (3) an emphasis on proper word usage, for names, relations, and recall; (4) use of questioning to increase details in answers and explanations; and (5) Requiring certain behaviors of students, such as composing complete sentences, to answer all questions.

<u>Introduce Skill</u>

The participants during this cycle will be introduced to causes of language deficiencies in students, and the concept of language norms (Bernstein, 1981; Hart and

Risley, 1995). The facilitator will then model the use of the language norms utilizing a sample lesson teaching the first week's LAFS (Language Arts Florida Standards, 2014) dictated by Volusia County's language arts curriculum maps. The facilitator will demonstrate how to create language development opportunities in a myriad subjects.

The facilitator will use presentations, video demonstrations, and rubrics excerpted from *Rigorous Reading* (Fisher & Frey, 2013) text complexity. Participants in this learning sequence will gain "knowledge and know-how in text analysis by learning how to identify and evaluate the three elements of evaluation, and matching readers with texts and tasks" (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p. 149). Participants will be guided through the importance of "the gradual release of responsibility and its impact on students' access to complex text" (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p.149).

Practice and Plan

First, participants will review the norms of collaboration, working as described earlier in this chapter, and define clear expectations of each norm. These norms will be utilized and reviewed at every collaborative session. Participants will start by utilizing the knowledge of language to practice with each other in a classroom scenario. For example, the facilitator will ask multiple participants to tell how their summer went. Then, when someone finally answers with one word such as "great," the facilitator will use questions to encourage the participant to elaborate, use specific names, and provide

details. The facilitator will converse about the thoughts on the participant's summer using explicit language and modeling the language norms.

Second, participants will be asked to bring materials for use during the following week according to the district's language arts curriculum map. Participants will be given copies of the text complexity rubrics and asked to determine the complexity of their next week's language arts materials.

Third, participants will be asked to utilize the materials previously mentioned to determine text complexity to create at least one opportunity a day in which students will be exposed to medium to difficult text complexity. These lesson plans will need to be made and copied for the facilitator, enabling the facilitator to keep track, and make note of, when to observe teachers.

Put Into Use and Reflect

During this sequence, participants will be in the classroom, and facilitator will be acting as an active observer in classrooms and as a silent presence for questions for participants not observed.

Review Skill

The facilitator will present a summary on the language norms, and text complexity for the school. The facilitator will then present a model scenario

demonstrating how to measure text complexity and utilize this knowledge to construct questions which will give students opportunities to utilize an academic language.

Collaborate, Reflect, and Plan

Have participant arrive at the session with the following week's materials as outlined by the district's language arts curriculum map. Have participants review the norms of collaboration. During this time, the facilitator will have prepared a lesson and materials for participants which met the following weeks LAFS (2014) according to the districts language arts curriculum map and which will utilize both reading and language building activities. For, example the standard LAFS.3.SL.2.4 asks students to "Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace" (LAFS, 2014, p. 23). Have participants pair up. Have participants recount the current week's text utilized in language arts. Have participants retell the text to each other using as many details as possible. The facilitator will have participants practice asking each other probing questions, paying close attention to the use of detail and proper names.

Next, participants will once again be asked to determine the complexity of the following week's text. Participants will be asked to use these texts to create at least two opportunities daily in which students will be exposed to, and practice with complex text.

Assess

This will be the first short assessment taken by students addressing the current LAFS (2014) as dictated and scheduled by the district's curriculum map. The facilitator will take base line data of all students in order that all participants involved can track their students' progress.

Rationale for the Curriculum

The language deficits that accompany students when they enter Primrose Elementary School can negatively affect their reading ability (Bahktin, 1981; Baker, 2010; Beck, 2007; Bernstein, 1971; Cairney, 1990; Cazden, 1988; Cox et al., 2004; Durkin, 1978; Gee, 2010; Halliday, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Hu-Pei, 1980; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Littlejohn, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tharp, 1982). This section will explain why *Rigorous Reading* (Fisher & Frey, 2013) was chosen to frame the curriculum for the professional development model. This was accomplished by identifying literature circles as an instructional strategy to meet the deficits experienced by the students of Primrose Elementary School. This instructional strategy was then used to identify *Rigorous Reading* (Fisher & Frey, 2013) to define what teachers would need to know to effectively meet the needs of Primrose Elementary School students.

What Students Need to Know

Wilkinson (1965) argued that although an increase in oral language could increase student reading and writing ability, only increasing "student talk" or "teacher talk" in the classroom is not the answer. Researchers (Cazden, 1988; Durkin, 1979) observed that teachers rely on simple question- answer relationships to confirm student comprehension of topics. Language needs to be developed through extended responses allowing students to practice comprehension skills (Fisher & Frey 2013; Hart & Risley, 1995). Correctly structured collaborative conversations offer an ideal medium for students to utilize academic language to problem solve during reading.

The transactional theory of literature (Rosenblatt, 1978) and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1979) argue that language development is necessary for students to gain valuable reading skills. Language development can promote student movement from an oral state requiring comprehension guidance to independent reading and comprehension (Rosenblatt, 1978; Vygotsky, 1979).

Although direct instruction of comprehension skills is necessary to give students tools to understand text, time must exist for students to practice the act of reading independently (Allington, 2008). This independent practice allows students to utilize the skills as well as reflect verbally their individual difficulties and understandings. This allows for targeted educator intervention (Frey & Fisher, 2013). When students read independently, they can benefit from numerous "unteachable lessons" (Cairney, 1990, p.

483) wherein readers might develop metacognitive awareness of their reading abilities if presented the opportunity to use these strategies as the result of previous experiences with text.

Allington (2009) determined the need for struggling readers to independently read a minimum of two hours a week in order to catch up to more proficient peers. However, student selected books are not the answer. Instead, teachers must guide each student to books with complexity levels matching the student's individual ability level. This guidance allows students the opportunity to practice formally taught comprehension skills and independently build their own repertoire of knowledge about the topics they are reading (Fisher & Frey, 2013).

Eeds and Wells (1989) explored "what happens when children and educators gathered to talk about a book they had all read" (p. 6). In their attempt to operationalize Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of literacy, they decided that if literature circles provided evidence to support Rosenblatt's (1978) theory, individuals could construct meaning from text socially. Literature circles are small groups of students reading the same text, and taking on an active role as a participant to help make meaning from text through discussion (Eads & Wells, 1989). Eeds and Wells (1989) found that students unable to comprehend the text were able to create individual understanding based on participation in discussions. Prior to collaborative conversations, struggling readers made connections between off topic thoughts and incorrect previous knowledge. As a result of

collaborative conversations, students corrected and explained information to one another. The researchers concluded that literature circles allow for an increase in reading comprehension beyond any independent increase by an individual reader. Although Eeds and Wells (1989) did not specifically focus on increasing reading comprehension skills among a language deficit, their findings are relevant to the significance of the proposed solution.

McElvain (2010) studied the use of literature circles to improve reading comprehension for English Language Learners (ELL). The 75-member treatment group included fourth- and fifth-grade ELL students struggling with reading, and a comparable control group. Results showed a positive effect among students with low English language attainment. Struggling ELL readers who received the literature circle intervention "outperformed the students in the control group on a standardized reading test, and in seven months, students increased one grade level in reading" (McElvain, 2010, p. 178). McElvain (2010) effectively demonstrated the power of literature circles as a strategy to increase reading comprehension among language deficient students.

Classrooms that utilize "collaboration and joint discovery" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 201) allow the creation of learning environments supportive of the contextual needs of particular classroom dynamics. Because low SES students like those at Primrose Elementary School begin their education with a lack of understanding of an elaborate understanding of language, and have demonstrated an inability to clearly

express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, literature circles allow educators to teach students in a socially constructed environment. As an instructional strategy, literature circles permit educators to effectively implement an intervention, increasing student exposure to an elaborate language that allows students to rely on oral language as an aid to reading comprehension. This reliance can lead to increased independent reading comprehension for low SES reading students.

What Teachers Need to Know

Primrose Elementary School teachers demonstrate a need for deeper understanding of the steps involved in building language and reading comprehension. Although literature circles can create the medium for this task, it is not a suitable solution on its own. In order to build language, and for growth to occur, students must consistently practice elaborate language. Hart and Risley (1995) found children from a higher SES interacted with as many as 1,500 more words an hour than their lower SES peers. Therefore, it is expected that, to effectively meet the language deficiencies of Primrose Elementary School students, consistent use of conversation and practice with elaborate language will need to go beyond practice within a single reading lesson and be integrated into every part of the classroom experience for students.

Teachers need a learning sequence to effectively teach reading skills and move learners from a dependent state to an independent state while fostering language (Fisher

& Frey, 2013). The contextual demands of Primrose Elementary School require teachers to be skilled at fostering an increase in by increasing talk during as many classroom experiences as possible. The proposed solution to the identified problem of practice should supply knowledge and pedagogies for use beyond literacy lessons that enable a dramatic increase in interactions students experience with formal academic language. *Rigorous Reading* (Fisher & Frey, 2013) offers a curriculum which enables teachers to learn such a sequence. This sequence will allow teachers to move students through the Gradual Release of Responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), a technique familiar to the Primrose Elementary School faculty. The Gradual Release of Responsibility is defined by the instructional activities in place that move students from a state of dependency on teachers and then peers before progressing to a state of independent functioning.

Rigorous Reading offers teachers training in text complexity aligned with then demands of the CCSS (2010), the basis for the new LAFS (2014). The training is organized into four techniques supported by reading and language content knowledge that increases in complexity to aid teachers in scaffolding reading skills while simultaneously creating an atmosphere to increase student language acquisition. This training includes video demonstrations and PowerPoint presentations to model the classroom experience expected as a result of the training. Training details will be discussed in the following section of this dissertation in practice.

The Curriculum: Meeting the Contextual Needs of the Problem

Language Norms

Hart and Risley's (1995) five characteristics of exposure to language define the language norms for this professional development. The language norms will be utilized throughout the entire professional development to describe best practices to expose students to an academic language throughout the entire school day. This would create an interdisciplinary teacher routine. The five characteristics teachers need are: (1) language at various complexities, utilizing all facets of language; (2) tone and expression to add depth to meaning of words in context; (3) emphasis on proper word usage for names, relations, and recall; (4) questioning to increase details in answers and explanations; and (5) requirement of student behaviors (e.g., complete sentence composition) to answer all questions.

Text Complexity

Before teachers can effectively teach reading, they must understand the role of text complexity in their students' reading ability (Allington, 2003; Fisher & Frey, 2013). Teachers must have a deep understanding of how to assess students' abilities and correctly align text to the correct reading levels in order to create a learning environment in which students can acquire vital reading and language skills.

Fisher and Frey (2013) defined and explained text complexity from the point of view of the CCSS (2010), the basis for the new LAFS (2014). They explained the difference between qualitative and quantitative "measures of literary and informational text" (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p. 23) and provided rubrics to aid teachers in determining the level of complexity in both literary as well as informational text. In addition to quantitative measures, Fisher and Frey (2013) also explained how to match readers with texts and tasks.

Text complexity, for the scope of this dissertation in practice, includes quantitative evaluation of text, qualitative evaluation of text, and the ability to match readers with texts and tasks. Quantitative evaluation of text is defined by the "readability measure and other scores of text complexity" (NGA, 2010, p. 57). Qualitative evaluation of text is defined by the levels of "meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands" (NGA, 2010, p. 57). Matching readers with texts and task is defined as "reader variables (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and task variables (such as purposes and the complexity generated by the task assigned and the questions posed)" (NGA, 2010, p. 57).

Modeling

Modeling is an important approach that allows students to witness how reading comprehension strategies and an academic language are utilized to create meaning.

Reading comprehension strategies are defined as cognitive processes used by students to make sense of text (USDOE, 2013). By modeling, one is not leaving students to independently determine how to enact these processes because many times they are unable to complete these tasks (Templeton, 1991). Instead, modeling allows one to explicitly demonstrate to students how to use comprehension strategies by thinking aloud as text is comprehended from language deficits. Modeling proper language use through read-alouds (e.g., teacher reading to the student to aid understanding the text) and think-alouds (e.g., teacher sharing entire thought process to introduce students to process with academic language) is important.

Fisher and Frey (2013) argued that modeling is essential to ensure students eventually learn to comprehend complex text independently. For the purpose of this dissertation in practice, modeling is defined as a teacher verbally explaining "thinking by voicing all the things they are noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, and asking as they process the text" (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 26) also known as think-alouds or shared readings. Modeling focuses on educating teachers about what content to use and how to implement it during the teaching process. This dissertation in practice defines what teachers will model to address difficulties experienced by students and arrive at "ways to resolve problems, and how you interact with the text" (Fisher & Frey 2013, p. 27).

Close Reading

Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory posits that readers' prior knowledge created by their lives and the world around them is correlated to their ability to comprehend text. The low SES status of Primrose Elementary School students does not typically afford them the experiences with formal language that their higher SES counterparts have; therefore, they arrive at school lacking experience with academic language (Bernstein, 1981). This deficit does not allow students to understand common educational text. Rosenblatt (1978) suggested, "The reader must remain faithful to the author's text and must be alert to the potential clues concerning character and motive" (p.11). Teachers need the ability to scaffold students' understanding of text beyond modeling. Close reading allows the teacher to scaffold students' understanding of the academic language utilized by the text, and carefully dissect small amounts of text word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence to ensure meaning.

This dissertation in practice defines close reading as "careful and purposeful reading used to uncover layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension. It enables a transaction between the reader and the text creating a deeper understanding of what the author is saying" (NGA, 2010, Appendix B). The professional development curriculum includes opportunities for Primrose Elementary School teachers to be educated in methods to produce productive close reading lessons. These methods are defined by teachers' understanding the length and complexity of the text, how much time should be

spent on close reading of text, whether it should happen in small group or whole group, and "the need to limit the frontloading of information when introducing the text" (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p. 47). Teachers will also need to understand the goals of close reading that have been defined by having "students annotate the text, ask text-dependent questions, and engage in text-dependent after-reading activities" (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p. 47). Close reading will enable students to begin to effectively dissect written language and utilize skills to solve misunderstandings due to a lack of an academic language. Close reading in this dissertation in practice is considered an instructional practice and a strategy students need to learn and independently employ on text.

Collaborative Conversations

The first priority of this professional development is to increase teachers' ability to foster students' academic language through an exposure to an explicit use of an academic language. The previous review of literature circles provides support for one such instructional strategy enabling this task. However, it does not provide a clear path of learning to prepare students lacking in language ability to increase their academic language to a point where constructive use of literature circles will be productive. Once students have had reading strategies modeled and then refined through close reading activities, both in whole and small group instruction, students will have a better understanding of how to approach reading tasks. They will also have made progress

toward the acquisition of an academic language to utilize during collaborative reading sessions, increasing exposure and productive practice of reading skills and academic language (Fisher & Frey, 2013).

Collaborative reading groups are defined as "students participating effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively" (NGA, 2010, p. 22). The learning module created for teachers by Fisher and Frey (2013) models through videos, PowerPoint, and ready-made materials to assist teachers in this instructional strategy.

Independent Reading

Once students are reading independently, with the support of peers, they are ready to venture further on their own. Teachers can then continue to foster language and students' abilities to comprehend complex text through modeling as well as close reading. Independent reading alone is not enough to foster academic language. Students will need to do something with the information they are reading. Students need the ability to confer with an adult or complete a task where students are utilizing a more academic language (Bernstein, 1981; Fisher & Frey 2013).

Independent reading for this dissertation in practice is defined as the student silently reading during an allotted time with a book approved by the teacher that meets the students' reading ability and needs. Independent activities are defined as follow-up

exercises students complete to demonstrate comprehension of the selected text. In this activity, they utilize an academic language which has been modeled and scaffolded. They confer with the teacher or other students about their work, increasing exposure for the use of an to an academic language.

This curriculum provides content knowledge and coordinating skills that have the potential to increase a students' exposure to an academic while also still teaching the state standards in subjects beyond literacy. Modeling use of content vocabulary allows students to see inside the mind of a content area expert as the expert takes in and experiences subject matter knowledge. In any subject where students have text to read, careful scaffolding through close reading allows students practice with language by reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Once students have acquired a particular skill set, they are able to practice within their collaborative peer sessions. This is designed to foster independent student performance using academic language of a particular skill or subject.

Rationale for the Implementation: The Cyclical Model

Primrose Elementary School's previous professional development efforts focused on teacher utilization of scripts; never fully scaffolding teacher internalization of content knowledge and skills to positively impact student achievement. This professional development model was designed to allow teacher internationalization of content

knowledge about language and reading. The model was designed to include time for teachers to practice implementation of the five areas of the curriculum outlined in this professional development model in their professional practice. This section of the dissertation in practice presents teacher planning time as a precise time to plan implementation of professional learning from the proposed model.

Planning to Maximize Time and Reduce Stress

Guskey's (2009) first core element presents the need to allocate time for staff development with the knowledge of teachers' already tight and stressful schedules. Lesson planning can be viewed as a time consuming burden to many teachers, in fact, a study by Mutton, Hagger and Burn (2011) found the time involved in "lesson planning was an issue for more than two thirds of the teachers in their sample group of 17" (p.63). Effective professional development should occur at a time when teachers need the most advice on what to teach, how to teach it, when to teach it (Guskey, 2002). The principal and the district have required Primrose Elementary School teachers to create and monitor weekly, detail-oriented lesson plans. Therefore, Primrose Elementary School teachers invest a great deal of time in creating very detailed lesson plans. Professional development paired with the already existing task of lesson planning allows for a maximization of time. However, this is not the only noble benefit to these combined activities.

Guskey (2002) stated that the purpose of any staff development was "to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school personnel toward an articulated end" (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). "Lesson planning's most obvious function is to transform and modify curriculum to fit the unique circumstances of each teaching situation" (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 28). Hence, a link is made between the purpose of the professional development program designed for Primrose Elementary School teachers and the very purpose of lesson planning. Because the fostering of language skills requires great effort for the teacher to model and scaffold, the need to effectively plan to limit distractors must be a major concern for this project. To limit stress on teachers, the core of this design must support teachers' abilities to properly plan. Using lesson planning time effectively to support teachers through targeted reflection could make the difference between long-term success or immediate failure of this professional development.

Lesson planning as part of professional development may create a learning situation that uses time already dedicated to a task allowing for a maximization of time. Second, if supported through targeted education, mentorship, and positive collaboration, the pairing of lesson planning and professional development also has the ability to reduce stress (Guskey, 2002). This increases the likelihood that the core principals of professional development will be utilized and lead to lasting change (Guskey, 2002).

Lesson Planning and Student Achievement

The ultimate goal of this professional development is to increase student achievement by increasing the teachers' ability to meet the specific needs of Primrose Elementary School students. Further research into teacher planning enables the connection between teacher planning and the opportunity to create positive changes for students. According to Norman (2011), lesson planning is a vital part of teaching and without effective planning there can be no targeted or tailored instruction. Without effective tailored instruction to meet the needs of the curriculum and the context of the students, no growth will occur. Dunn and Shriner (1999) demonstrated that artfully planned professional development can effect lesson planning "to provide teachers with opportunities to acquire new knowledge of teaching" (p. 644). However, these researchers also noted, "Learning from these activities is possible, but not automatic" (p. 644). Simply allowing teachers to plan collaboratively and providing helpful information will not suffice in changing the practices of many teachers (Boote, 2007; Gill & Hoffman, 2009; Guskey, 2009).

By combining effective professional development through lesson planning, teachers can practice the skill of continually altering lessons to match student-specific contexts, meet the LAFS (2014), and create student growth. This success has the ability to change teacher beliefs and perceptions of students' capability, thus raising teacher expectations. Fuchs et al. (1994) found "general educators with higher standards for

student work habits reported greater responsiveness to individual student needs during their planning, and they effected greater achievement" in the classroom (p. 343). The ultimate goal of this professional development design is to facilitate the acquisition of long-term effects on student achievement. This can occur as teachers acquire new knowledge and teaching techniques to affect their literacy instruction, effectively building all four facets of students' language (i.e. speaking, writing, listening, and reading). Given these design goals, it is important to note that long-term effects will not might not be attained without consideration of teacher decision-making, a cognitive function.

Lesson Planning and Decision-Making

Although teacher decision-making research is dated (Peterson et al., 1978), teacher decision-making is the root of lesson planning. One study (Peterson et al., 1978) revealed the difference among classroom teaching experience and comfort in the classroom and the effects these two facets had on teachers' ability to make decisions. When teachers are unfamiliar with topics, lessons, or problems, their focus is more experimental. A teacher's limited schema in handling these classroom situations may result in random assignment of solutions. For example, Ms. Skinner frantically attempts to get her students to complete a math assignment in class. Although Ms. Skinner provides incentives, her efforts prove ineffective. Because of this, Ms. Skinner

continually attempts solutions until one appears effective. Mrs. Tinsley, a more proficient and experienced teacher, analyzes class demographics, student skill levels, student home lives, and consistently monitors classroom climate. Her understanding of the composite data results in an effective solution during its first application. Mrs. Tinsley's ability to instantly know what, when, and how to alter instruction grew from a number of experiences, each creating a larger schema that prompted an increased ability to make decisions. This increase in experience allows the teacher to shift from the experimental stage to the professional practice stage of diagnosis and treatment (Peterson et al., 1978).

Teacher ability and experience predicts the type of planning in which teachers will engage. Because a great deal of time can be spent lesson planning, as teachers gain experience they become, "precise, flexible and parsimonious planners. . . they plan what they need to but not what they already know and do automatically" (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 47).

Decisions made by teachers can be placed into two categories: "(a) teacher planning (preactive and postactive thought), and (b) teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions" (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 15). The first category defines whether the decision was made before student interaction (preactive) or after student interaction (postactive). The second category (interactive) determines the thought processes that occur during interaction with students. Both categories are heavily influenced by a

teacher's theories and beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1984; Yinger, 1993). Guskey (2002) stated that the purpose of any staff development was "to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school personnel toward an articulated end" (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). Hence, there is a connection between effective professional development and change in beliefs, theories, and practices to affect teacher decision making before, during, and after interaction with students.

Beyond planning at a convenient time within a tight and stressful schedule, allowing teachers time to plan and giving them the information to develop new skills and content knowledge does not constitute an automatic change in teacher beliefs, thoughts, or decisions. This dissertation in practice is concerned with changing teachers' ability to not only plan but also interact with students. The very nature of teaching is highly complex and unpredictable. The many different circumstances in which teachers find themselves interact with students require a large schema (Clark & Peterson, 1984; Norman, 2011). In other words, teaching depends on being able to, "make reasoned judgments in the contest of action" (Lampert & Ball, 1998, p. 29). The ability to make reasoned judgments can be hindered by the many complexities occurring in the classroom.

Internalization to Increase Effectiveness in Planning

Routines are "shared scripted, virtually automated pieces of action [that] allow students and teachers to devote their attention to other perhaps more important matters inherent in the lesson" (Berliner, 1986, p. 5). The routinization of many aspects of the classroom plays a significant role in the teacher's ability to properly and correctly concentrate on significant changes to be made in students' performance. The ability to create a routine is part of every teacher's repertoire. However, the effectiveness of the routine is up for individual evaluation (Berliner, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1984; Fuchs et al., 1994; Norman, 2011). Schön, (1983) discussed the difference between knowing how, and knowing the act:

> When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce obviously inappropriate descriptions. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our know is in our actions (p. 49)

At the core of being an educator, there exists a field of expertise where patterns and knowledge must be built in order for the practitioner to develop expert pedagogies. "These recognition skills appear to act like schema instantiations. The recognition patterns reduce the cognitive processing load for a person" (Berliner, 1986, p. 11).

Berliner (1986) argued that expert teachers develop this knowledge due to time and the many experiences that follow. Novice teachers tend not to hold this same knowledge and, as a result, struggle with lower level tasks. This struggle makes it difficult to reach more important aspects of teaching. In a comparison of novice and expert practitioners, Berliner (1986) observed that experts possessed metacognitive abilities that allowed them to be skilled planners. They were able to instantly see a clear picture of where the lesson was going and how much time would be needed for completion.

Experienced teachers only plan what they have to plan. This will lead to the understanding that as teachers gain experiences, they systematically internalize this information. This internalization allows for many aspects of classroom management and teaching to become part of their routine. At the very core of the effectiveness of language norms and the *Rigorous Reading* (Fisher & Frey, 2013) curriculum is a catalyst to develop student exposure to an academic language and the teaching of vital comprehension skills. Conversation will fuel the change in student language abilities. This will require on-the-spot thinking concerning the ability to assess, evaluate, diagnose, and apply a solution quickly--as quickly as any conversation will take place. With this type of demand placed on teachers, it becomes even more important that small details be internalized, allowing this development to become second nature and part of the teacher's schema. Truly effective teaching is going to come from the decisions made during teacher-to-student interactions, and the resulting effects those interactions have on

student-to-student independent cognitive actions (Gee, 2009). Deep reflection needs to occur during the post-active planning phase. This phase should be used in a cyclical pattern to create routines encompassing research that allows the teacher to concentrate on the cognitive tasks that build and put into practice new pedagogies.

The cyclical model of professional development conducted around lesson planning has the potential to make a great difference (Berliner, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1984; Fuchs et al., 1994; Norman, 2011). The curriculum implemented will require teachers to learn new pedagogies, classroom management, and ways of diagnosing student problems to be quickly analyzed and remediated. This will require practice, observation, reflection, and remediation on the teacher's part. Much of this will need to come in terms of group collaborations where teachers are able to practice pedagogies with one another and discuss problems or successes with implementation. Therefore, collaboration is an important part of effective professional development

The Cyclical Model: The Implementation Model of the Professional Development

Effective professional development must be centered on the contextual needs of the school (Guskey, 2002). Although the professional development will be constructed around the contextual needs of the school, it must also encompass other contexts beyond the curricular needs of the students and teachers. The professional development must occur at a time when it would cause the least amount of stress. This dissertation in

practice has suggested the use of teacher planning time, already dedicated to professional development, to teach new content and corresponding teaching techniques in language and reading.

Effective lesson planning is considered a vital step in meeting the contextual needs of students; however, this step alone would not be possible if teachers were not able to practice and reflect upon their new learning(Berliner, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1984;Guskey, 2002). Teachers need time to break old routines, and to collaborate to create new routines which fit the individual needs of their students. The use of collaborative planning during which teachers can voice concerns (e.i., behavior management, material management, time management) allows skills to be practiced in a problem solving environment.

The model must also focus teachers' attention on student data. The use of existing district tests and data systems allows teachers simultaneously track their own progress and that of their students. Lastly, the delivery model must offer teachers the ability to plan, practice with peers, practice with students, and finally to reflect with peers to problem solve; allows effects of the professional development to be experienced by teachers and students. This will allow teachers to learn content knowledge and gain correct experiences in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002).

CHAPTER 3
EVALUATION OF THE PROFFESIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

This dissertation in practice presented a complex problem of practice occurring at Primrose Elementary school. A large portion of Primrose Elementary School's [pseudonym] population has been unable to meet state of Florida's reading proficiency standards over the last twelve years. Students of Primrose Elementary have a poor foundation in language in which to build vital reading skills. Consequently, students cannot overcome this deficiency because teachers lack the content knowledge to meet the students' language and subsequent reading deficiencies, in spite of 12 years of reading professional. Therefore, a professional development model was created to address the needs of students. This professional development model consisted of two distinct constructs: the curriculum, and the delivery model. These two constructs were designed to work together to meet the needs of teachers and students. Additionally the goal of the professional development was to increase teacher's content knowledge through a series of learning activities and to routinize this content knowledge into all facets of their teaching.

Goals of the Model

The professional development created as a solution to the complex problem of practice provides teachers of Primrose Elementary School: (a) content knowledge

pertaining to reading and language development (Darling-Hammond, 2002); (b) the ability to utilize the content knowledge to foster an environment where students are exposed consistently to an academic language (Bernstein, 1981, Gee, 2001); and (c) the ability to utilize this content knowledge to meet the expectations of the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) 2014, thus, improving student reading ability as indicated on the future state proficiency test, the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA).

Target Audience and Benefit of the Professional Development

The purpose of this dissertation in practice is to design a model of professional development as a solution to the complex problem of practice affecting Primrose Elementary School. A contextual analysis of Primrose Elementary revealed 89%-94% Primrose Elementary School's population has been considered low Socio Economic Status (SES) students over the last 12 years. This population enters school with a diminished knowledge of an academic language, which inhibits the students' cognitive capacity to make meaning from text (Bahktin, 1981; Baker, 2010; Beck, 2007; Bernstein, 1971; Cairney, 1990; Cazden, 1988; Cox et al., 2004; Durkin, 1978; Gee, 2010; Halliday, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Hu-Pei, 1980; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Littlejohn, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tharp, 1982). The contextual analysis further clarified the school had conducted three professional development series over the last 12 years. The first, Direct Instruction (DI) program from

SRA, and secondly the district mandated curriculum series delivered through homogenous groupings accompanied by professional development to train teachers to utilize a scripts, and third, a professional development series which focused the gradual release model and close reading, focused only on increasing teachers' content knowledge in reading. It was determined through literature that the biggest contributing factor for students of low SES to overcome their deficiency is their teacher's content knowledge (Colt, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002). Consequently, the goal of this dissertation in practice was to design a professional development to increase teachers' content knowledge in the area of language and reading, increase their ability to utilize this knowledge effectively in the classroom, thus increasing student achievement scores on district bi-weekly tests.

Flexibility of This Professional Development Model

As stated in Chapter 1 of this dissertation of practice, failure of the previous professional development to solve the complex problem of practice lied in the misalignment of the previous professional development to needs of students' and teachers'. Both the curriculum and the and delivery model are designed to meet these contextual needs. The curriculum is designed to allow teachers to learn content knowledge in language and reading and skills in which to utilize this knowledge to mastery. Teachers first learn in sequential order allowing for individual mastery of each

skill, to build upon one another. For example, teachers would learn how to correctly utilize the language norms, and text complexity before they would be expected to model this knowledge. Therefore, teachers could not move onto modeling unless they were ready and demonstrated so in the sessions. The cyclical model allows for skills to be consistently retaught before moving on to the next knowledge or skill as defined by the curriculum of this professional development model. As shown in Figure 2. The skill is first introduced, then teachers practice the skill collaboratively, then plan the following week's lesson, next teachers use their lesson in the classroom, and reflect. If teachers are demonstrating difficulty, the skills can continue on the same cycle until mastered.

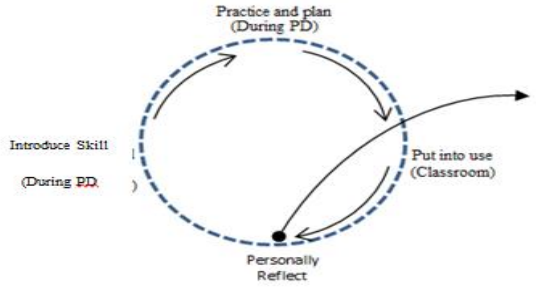

Figure 2. Flexibility of the Cyclical Model

Anticipated Changes in Performance

The goal of this dissertation in practice was to design a professional development model for teachers. The goal of the professional development model was to increase the reading ability of students at Primrose Elementary School. The problem of practice has

been framed by students' previous state reading proficiency scores. Therefore, the ultimate goal was to significantly increase the number of students meeting state of Florida's new reading standards as assessed by the FSA in 2015.

This goal of significantly increasing the percentage of students meeting minimum state proficiency standards on the 2015 FSA will rely greatly on teachers acquiring new content knowledge and skills to meet the deficiencies of the students at Primrose Elementary School. In order to reach these goals teachers needed professional development using a curriculum which provided explicit reading and language content knowledge through the language norms, text complexity, modeling, close reading, collaborative conversation, and independent reading. This knowledge will then be used to scaffold students' reading and language ability from dependence on the teacher to independence.

Teachers like students need the ability to be guided in their learning, and need the ability to apply their knowledge over time to allow for new knowledge to become internalized as effective routines (Berliner, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1984; Fuchs et al., 1994; Guskey, 2002; Norman, 2011). For this time and practice to occur, the curriculum: (a) presentments skills and knowledge in the identical order used by students to scaffold language and reading; (b) is presented using the cyclical model allowing teachers time to practice and apply the new knowledge through the LAFS (2014); (c) allows for support through a second presentation of the new knowledge; and (d) allows for the coaching,

and modification of the professional development based on student testing data. Because the FSA measures students proficiency at the end of the year, the bi-weekly district assessments designed to measure students' progress to meeting year end proficiency standards will be used to measure the success of the professional development in two-week intervals allowing for modification to take place to further meet the contextual needs of students and teachers.

Primrose Elementary School has experienced a situation where a large population over the last 12 years has struggled to meet state reading proficiency standards. Because of Primrose Elementary School's high population of low SES students this problem is critical. Students who are unable to read proficiently before the end of elementary school have a 54% higher chance of failure in high school (Allington, 2009; Hernandez, 2011). Past solutions have revolved around professional development that have either focused on teaching teachers to utilize scripts or teaching teachers only in the area of reading. Students of Low SES come to school lacking an academic language necessary to succeed. Therefore, a professional development was needed in order to meet the needs of these students, by building teachers content knowledge in language development and reading. Although research demonstrates teachers' content knowledge plays a large factor in a students' success, this is only half of what is needed (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Guskey, 2002). Teachers also need experience, and an understanding of how to use this knowledge correctly, giving time for this content knowledge and utilization of skills to

become internalized as effective routines (Berliner, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1984; Fuchs et al., 1994; Guskey, 2002; Norman, 2011).

CHAPTER 4
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When I began this course of study three years ago, I was focused on increasing my pedagogical content knowledge in order to make a difference in the educational attainment of the students I served. I feel this program has helped me in not only achieving this goal, but also doing much more. I work with an at-risk student population, currently 94% are from a low socio economic status. These students generally are products of generational poverty, locked in a community lacking resources, which encompasses every facet of their schema. This schema makes the average classroom and average modes of instruction underserving of their contextual and educational needs.

For years I watched as program after program, implemented school wide did little more than slightly increase the percentage of students meeting proficiency standards on Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Although students would respond positively, there existed a vast percentage of students who still failed. I knew the statistics for students failing to read proficiently in elementary school had a much higher risk of failure in high school. This failure is disheartening to me and the very opposite of why I became an educator. I view my job as ensuring their success regardless of their situation or shortcomings.

This program allowed me to see that those in charge did not hold all the answers. There existed no specific magical skill or program that would ensure success for every

student. I found, through research, that each student is different in their abilities and nuances making them uniquely shaped in their ability to learn. Therefore, to be a true reflective practitioner, you had to diagnose each issue independently then apply effective solutions. Much like a medical doctor, the reflective practitioner must review the diagnosis and the treatment continually to ensure success. This meant my schema as a teacher had to be vast and deep in order to recognize learning patterns, trouble shoot common problems, and have the ability to apply the correct pedagogy in order to treat problems in learning attainment.

In the beginning of the program my ability to read, write, and clearly articulate this process was limited. I had read many articles before, but was unable to decipher the difference between true research and a common article. This program gave me the ability to read and comprehend research at a level I had never thought existed. My exposure to excellent research on learning theory, school management, and skills allowed me to build the vast repertoire needed to attempt to write this dissertation in practice.

Because this knowledge was delivered while in the classroom, I was able to practice utilizing this knowledge over the course of the last three years, allowing me to practice and reflect upon successes failures and how to ensure student achievement. The ability to plan with increased knowledge lead to the idea that professional development should focus around teachers' planning time.

Implications

Primrose Elementary School students need teachers to alter and create new routines utilizing the new teaching skills, and content knowledge in order to increase student exposure to an academic language. This will, in turn, increase student language abilities, leading to deeper comprehension of text and allowing for better performance on the future state proficiency test the FSA. Thus, simply giving teachers new routines and pedagogies will not automatically increase their ability to teach literacy skills or foster academic language. Teachers need to know how to put these techniques into practice effectively until mastered, with support along the way to monitor this mastery (Darling-Hammond; Guskey, 2002).

Previous professional development at Primrose Elementary school focused on training teachers either to use scripts or to use particular methods. Skills were never presented allowing teachers the opportunity to utilize these skills in in the classroom with support. This model of professional development allows teachers to truly internalize the new knowledge, and then meet the individual dynamics of their classroom, and their students.

This model does place a strain on time and resources. As implemented, a great deal of teachers' time will be spent in professional development setting. This would then require a great deal of the presenter to win, support of the administration, and the support of the teachers. Without this support, the professional development would not be

successful. Although, this professional development model focuses on increasing teachers' content knowledge and techniques in which to use existing materials, teachers will want to create new lessons. With new knowledge, opportunity, and a collaborative atmosphere, the goal is to create teachers who are willing and able to create lessons that fit the context of the Primrose Elementary School. Money would need to be spent to increase these curricular materials.

Recommendations

This professional development model at this point although heavily based in theory is developed to solve a true problem. If implemented a more thorough analysis of the school and then individual needs of the teachers and students would need to be made. The use of planning time is also theoretical and based on the notion that teachers would want to and could contractually use their planning time, or their weekly early release date as time they would devote to this professional development. Finally, the effectiveness of the delivery model is only theoretical at this point. In order to determine whether the model is more effective than other models of professional development, research would need to be conducted comparing this model to others.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901, 407-882-2012 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To : **Anthony M. Tordini** and Co-PI: **David N. Boote**

Date : **June 25, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 6/25/2014 the IRB determined that the following proposed activity is not human research as defined by DHHS regulations at 45 CFR 46 or FDA regulations at 21 CFR 50/56:

Type of Review:	Not Human Research Determination
Project Title:	Low Socio Economic Students and the Construction of a Professional Development to increase Reading Proficiency
Investigator:	Anthony M. Tordini
IRB ID:	SBE-14-10380
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

University of Central Florida IRB review and approval is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are to be made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, please contact the IRB office to discuss the proposed changes.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/25/2014 01:46:55 PM EDT

Joanne Muratori

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B
VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS APPROVAL LETTER

Volusia County Schools

P.O. Box 2118 • 200 North Clara Avenue • DeLand, Florida 32721-2118

DeLand (386) 734-7190 | Daytona Beach (386) 255-6475 | New Smyrna Beach (386) 427-5223 | Osteen (386) 860-3322

Dr. Margaret A. Smith
Superintendent of Schools

School Board of Volusia County

Ms. Candace Lankford, Chairman
Mr. Stan Schmidt, Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Diane Smith
Mrs. Linda Costello
Mrs. Ida D. Wright

April 21, 2014

Anthony Copelin
1114 Greenstone Boulevard, #106
Heathrow, FL 32746

Mr. Copelin,

I have received your request to conduct research within Volusia County Schools and approved your topic on "Meeting the Needs of Low SES Readers."

As with all requests to do research; participation is at the sole discretion of the principals, teachers and parents of all students involved. Parent Consent Forms will be necessary for all data gathered from the students of Volusia County Schools.

By copy of this letter, you may contact the school principals who allow this research to be conducted with their faculty and students. We request that you conduct your survey with as little disruption to the instruction day as possible.

I would appreciate receiving a copy of your findings upon completion of the study.

Sincerely,

Bambi J. Lockman, LL.D.
Deputy Superintendent, Instructional Services

BJL/rg

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