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# Teacher Perception and Their Understanding of Progress Monitoring Throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System

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Teacher Perception and Their Understanding of Progress Monitoring  
Throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and their understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. This monitoring of student progress is to enhance their academic skills in mathematics and provide necessary interventions for growth as measured on a longitudinal assessment system through fidelity of implementation of interventions processed through progress monitoring. Data was collected from participant responses through interviews, a demographic survey, and focus groups. Interview respondents participated in a closed-door, face-to-face interview. The survey was used to collect specific demographic data to provide a concise snapshot of each individual teacher. From the interviews, four major themes and 13 sub-themes emerged from 302 codes. Focus group respondents participated in a closed door, small group setting that concentrated on a single, open-ended question. From the focus groups, three major themes and nine sub-themes emerged from an average of 26 codes per group. Analysis of the themes captured a collage of personal responses from participants. Participants' shared perceptions of progress monitoring that varied from each other to the extent that some believed it was synonymous with grading assignments and not actually monitoring the progress of academic growth and skill mastery. Moreover, this led to the teacher belief that there was a need for professional development, training and open communication with other math teachers and educational support staff. Participants also identified a gap in student understanding of progress monitoring and the root purpose for longitudinal assessments. Participants also believed students should be a part of their own learning and progress monitoring. A web of connections recognized need and want for progress monitoring. Finally, the shared perceptions in this study presented an avenue for

continued conversation within the district of study and other educational communities -  
conversations that must continue until students are making adequate growth.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Nate who gave unwavering support and unequivocal love throughout this journey. He graciously agreed to this adventure, but little did he know how much extra he would have to give. He knew how important this dream was for me, and he loved me unconditionally throughout. I love you with all of my heart! I also dedicate this to my children Alex, Sebastian, Erika and Luisa. They watched Mami pour herself in to school when we all knew that being with them was preferred. It was important for me to show them that setting and reaching a goal of this magnitude was imperative to other life goals. I truly hope they see the life lessons in this process. In addition to my husband and children, I dedicate this to my parents. Richard and Peggy are the best cheerleaders. Dad would listen to me explain the next steps in the process, and Mom spurred me on to not quit. They encouraged me from beginning to end. Most of all, I am forever thankful to Jesus. I have this drive and passion for building relationships, seeing students grow, and giving my all because of Him.

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## CHAPTER I

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and their understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. The focus of this study was to understand the perception of math teachers in high school located in a Midwestern town. This study is significant because a single summative assessment without data discussions between educators, and progress monitoring for students is just a single test in a single moment of time. It challenges the core purpose of the assessment and the reason for its administration. My hope was to provide insight for educators regarding progress monitoring to ensure student academic growth for the current academic year and longitudinally, until they enter either college or career post-high school.

### **Problem Statement**

With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education ACT (ESEA), the federal government, through the Department of Education, set forth mandates for all educational institutions to follow. These expectations are (a) raising standards for all students in English language arts and mathematics (b) developing better assessments aligned with college-and-career ready standards, and (c) implementing a complete education through improved professional development and evidence-based instructional models and supports (United States Department of Education, 2010). Teacher perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system has an effect on the expectations previously listed. In recent years, the emphasis on students graduating from high school prepared for college and/or a career has increased. Conley (2008) reports that preparing students for college has become a higher priority in many schools as parents, business leaders, and politicians emphasize the importance

of a highly educated workforce and citizenry. Efforts to improve students' academic preparation have often been directed at the high-school level, although for many students, gaps in academic preparation begin much earlier. (ACT, 2012).

The implementation fidelity of progress monitoring has a direct impact on the outcomes of a longitudinal assessment system. A lack of progress monitoring will not enhance student growth on the expected benchmarks of college and career readiness. The primary focus is the teacher perception of progress monitoring and the fidelity of implementation to progress monitoring. The literature offers similar conclusions that a one-time assessment of student growth and aptitude does not suffice. A summative assessment alone captures a moment in time and not a comprehensive picture of student growth. Lacking effective progress monitoring accompanied by a structured longitudinal assessment system diminishes the impact of learning.

This information in this chapter will unwrap the context, problem of practice, systemic and instructional focus, and research questions that provided a structured guide for this research. Also, the positionality of the researcher, any potential assumptions and biases that may impact the study and definitions of key terms are included to provide accountability and understanding of the study.

### **Instructional and Systemic Issues**

Emphasis from both the federal and state departments of education has been placed on secondary educational institutions to increase the number of students who graduate from high school. It is further expected that students graduate with their original cohort group and that they are prepared for college and/or career. Efforts have occurred at the high school level, but systemic issues of preparedness start at a much younger age. Teachers work in specific content departments or independent grade levels for instruction and student growth. For assessment

systems to be successful and for students to show growth over an extended period of time, building and district level staff must collaborate on instruction both horizontally (across grade levels) and vertically (through subject areas and whole student growth). An assumption would lead to the thought that without staff interaction and implementation of an effective longitudinal assessment system, student academic performance and growth will have the potential to be static or diminish.

The district of study adopted the ACT Aspire as a longitudinal assessment system. This tool is utilized to assess student academic growth, determine content areas of need and provide data for progress monitoring. The assessment is also used to reflect on measures in which to maintain fidelity to the curriculum. The curriculum is aligned with the Kansas College and Career Readiness standards. The ACT Aspire is given to students in grades 3-10. The Aspire assessment system has two formative assessments and one summative assessment each year. The final summative assessment in the longitudinal assessment system is the ACT. It is given to 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in their spring semester. Determining student achievement on the ACT is signified by four sub-scores (English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science Reasoning) and a solo composite score. Similar to the ACT, the ACT Aspire also has content area assessments. The focus of this problem of practice will be in the mathematics content area, specifically progress monitoring in mathematics. Understanding the disparity between the current state of scores (underperforming) and the desired state of scores (achieving benchmark or higher) and evaluating the existing progress monitoring implementation will aid in finding a workable solution for student growth as measured by the Kansas College and Career Ready (KCCR) benchmarks and the ACT Aspire longitudinal assessment system.



## **Directly Observable**

Observable research was done in a select group of Chicago Public Schools. This research provided information that identified a need for a longitudinal assessment system and that a one-time assessment is not a valid form of data collection. Researchers at the University of Chicago—the Consortium on Chicago School Research Colleges (CCSR) rely on this test (ACT) because it tells them who has the higher-order analytical and problem-solving skills needed to succeed in college classes. Those skills cannot be crammed into a few months—they take years of hard work and challenging class assignments. The researchers at CCRS also reported that, students' descriptions of test preparation in their classes suggest that little learning is occurring. They describe test preparation as boring and disconnected from anything else they are learning in their class or need for the future (Allensworth, Correa & Ponisciak, 2008).

Assessments are given to provide a preponderance of data. Data alone is only a starting point. It is the role of the teacher to take the data and provide a plan for each student. The need for a plan leads to teachers establishing action steps. These steps confront the need for academic growth, while also informing instruction. All of this is relative to the perception of progress monitoring and what each teacher brings to the classroom, in conjunction with the results from the assessments.

ACT benchmarks were first established in 2005. The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are the ACT College Readiness Assessment scores associated with a 50% chance of earning a B or higher grade in typical first-year credit-bearing college courses. The benchmarks also correspond to an approximate 75% chance of earning a C or higher grade in these courses. (ACT, 2012). Across the college outcomes considered in the study using American College Test Composite (ACTC) score and high school grade point average (HSGPA) in combination resulted

in greater prediction accuracy and was more effective for identifying successful students among those expected to be successful, relative to using either pre-enrollment achievement measure separately (Radunzel & Nobel, 2013). The problem of practice was observable within the context of the literature and within the context of the district of study, by acknowledging that progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system provides continuous predictions for summative assessments.

### **Actionable**

With the state's move to Kansas College and Career Ready Standards (benchmarks), the standard in which schools are measured is more rigorous. Kansas' achievement gaps begin in the earliest grades and extend through college enrollment and admissions (Casey Foundation, 2010). With the introduction of an embedded longitudinal assessment system, students in earlier grades will be provided with a cohesive means of continuous instruction. The implementation of a longitudinal assessment system with effective progress monitoring is actionable in that the data collected will have a baseline. It will also provide areas of need and necessary improvement for individual students and cohort groups over years of data collection.

### **Strategy of Improvement and District Action Plan**

The district of study employs a functional longitudinal assessment system. Within the district is also a lack of progress monitoring implementation in mathematics, primarily at the secondary level. This has created holes in student data conversations and intermittent data collection that hinders fidelity to the curriculum and student academic growth. In the summer of 2015, the district created a new strategic plan. This strategic plan houses strategies, goals and action steps to measure student growth and create student preparedness for college and/or career readiness. The district has 5 primary goals in the plan. The goal closest aligned to the problem of

practice reads: “Increase and recognize the performance of every student as measured by district assessments, state assessments, and college readiness data.” The district standardized assessment refers to the longitudinal tool that includes the ACT Aspire and ACT assessment. ACT Aspire Early High School (grades 9–10) data will provide a predicted ACT score range for each subject area and a composite score. This will allow 9th through 12th grade mathematics students and teachers to determine if they are on target for college readiness as they prepare to take the ACT test and engage in college planning. ACT created a division within the corporation entitled Educational Planning and Assessment (EPAS). Within EPAS is a component that supports the need for progress monitoring throughout assessments. This goal provides a connection between longitudinal assessments, progress monitoring and the readiness of students by stating “that academic progress can be monitored to ensure that each student is prepared to reach his/her post-high school goals.” This goal aligns with the district to ensure that there is monitored fidelity to the curriculum through a tool of a longitudinal assessment system.

Formative or interim and summative assessments are given to determine readiness and growth from year to year. Formative assessments are given at intervals throughout the school year and a summative assessment is given closer to the end of the academic school year. These assessments are proctored in grades 3-10 and cover content areas within each core discipline. Post the assessments, both formative and summative, data is disaggregated to determine student growth, regression and a comparison to readiness indicators. The outcomes of these assessments guide data-driven conversations among district staff, both vertically and horizontally. These conversations also inform instruction and the need for progress monitoring of students.

### **High-Leverage and Significance**

Without multiple points of data, student academic growth would not be appropriately determined. In high school, without these data points, the preparation for college and career

readiness would not be determined for each individual student. Implementing a viable means for progress monitoring that partners with a longitudinal assessment system into the instructional framework of the district will provide a partnership among staff to increase fidelity to the curriculum, data-drive conversations and increase student academic measures. Understanding teacher perception on progress monitoring and the fidelity of implementing an effective longitudinal assessment system is key to student improvement. “Student progress monitoring is a practice that helps teachers use student performance data to continually evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions” (Safer and Fleischman, 2005, p. 81), and action steps for progress monitoring unfold data to show student growth that would support the goal of preparing students for college and career readiness as they graduate from high school. The significance of this study is to show teacher perception and their understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system within a small Midwest high school.

According to Wolf and White (2000) without a system designed to monitor growth, we will confuse the benefits of socioeconomic advantage with the results of good teaching. Teachers in poor schools will be doomed to underperformance, and teachers in wealthier settings can coast on the backs of special lessons, summer camps, and parental education levels. Longitudinal assessment systems provide monitored progress to enhance student learning and prepare students for college and/or career. Effective systems in place allow for continuous, observable means and continued collection of data.

Longitudinal assessment data disaggregation and review places emphasis on areas of improvement for instruction. This early identification of academic needs and subsequent monitoring of progress through data will give students a better chance of improving achievement

and skills before high school graduation (ACT, 2012b). A recommendation was made for educational institutions to utilize a longitudinal assessments system. Students who are off track academically in middle school have a limited chance of becoming college ready before graduation. Because of this, it is critical to begin monitoring development of foundational skills beginning in the elementary grades (ACT, 2012b). Adelman (2006) stated that it was imperative, “to identify the moments and aspects of schooling that may have made a difference, and to reflect on what might make the most difference in the future” (p. xvi).

Kansas’ achievement gaps begin in the earliest grades and extend through college enrollment and admissions (Casey Foundation, 2010). This is evidentiary with the ACT data outcome that there is not a cohesive progress monitoring system in place. With the introduction of an embedded longitudinal assessment systems, students in earlier grades will be provided with a cohesive means of continuous instruction.

Not all students are beginning high school meeting state and national expectations, and these students have virtually no chance of making the college readiness benchmarks by the end of the eleventh grade unless they make extraordinary learning gains in high school (Allensworth, Correa, and Ponisciak, 2008). Looking at progress toward college readiness during the middle school and early high school years—focusing on the number or percentages of students meeting or exceeding the ACT Explore and ACT Plan Benchmarks—adds to the college readiness conversation by providing meaningful and compelling information about the earlier academic achievement of students (ACT, 2012b). Students who fall short of ACT’s College Readiness Benchmark scores likely lack at least some of the skills they will need during their first year of college (ACT 2006a). Yet, schools that are successful at getting students to participate appropriately in their regular course work are the schools that show the largest improvements in

test scores during eleventh grade, from the fall PLAN to the spring ACT (The Consortium on Chicago School Research Colleges).

Students who are provided the opportunity to learn content, be assessed on their knowledge of the content, and then given the opportunity for learning the missing content through progress monitoring have a greater ability to show growth. The potential for growth is enhanced when cognitive and metacognitive abilities—skills in analysis, interpretation, precision and accuracy, problem solving and reasoning—are considered much more important... (Conley, 2007). Among students who took the ACT twice, those who reported preparing for the second test earned on average ACT Composite scores about 1.4 points higher than their scores on the first test. These scores were about one-half point higher than the scores of students who reported not preparing (Schiel and Valiga, 2014). If students are given instructional opportunities to improve content knowledge, that must start with both teachers and students having a concrete grasp of where the student has progressed. Not having this data is like shooting an arrow aimlessly toward a moving target. Thus, the high-level significance for practice of this study.

### **Research Questions**

The goals of this study were to comprehend the perception and understanding that teachers had in regards to progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system and to uncover the biggest obstacles of fidelity to progress monitoring within the specific discipline, grade-levels, and district. The purpose of this study was guided and achieved by answering the following research questions:

- What are teacher perceptions of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system?

- What is the fidelity of implementation for interventions processed through progress monitoring?

### **Overview of Methodology**

A qualitative study was conducted to identify the perceptions of educators directly connected to progress monitoring and a longitudinal assessment system of mathematics. The approach that was followed was a pragmatic case study approach borrowing methods from the field of phenomenology. This approach was used to by conducting interviews and focus groups to determine teacher perception and understanding of the current process and action of the progress monitoring structure. Personal interviews of a sampling of classroom teachers, a demographic survey of the classroom teachers, and an open-ended question presented to focus groups were used to collect data for this study. This data focused on progress monitoring and fidelity of implementation for interventions processed through progress monitoring..

### **Positionality and the Role of the Researcher**

Positionality is the lens in which the researcher approaches the collection and analysis of data throughout the study. This lens must be understood by the researcher to identify any limitations, biases, or assumptions that may be encountered and purveyed. The positionality of the researcher is also exposed to create an accountability to the study and findings.

My role as the researcher is to examine the phenomenon of progress monitoring of math students in high school throughout a longitudinal assessment system and the teacher perceptions of the progress monitoring process. My personal positionality is viewed through the lens of an adult female who grew up in the district of study, and whose parents and other family members still reside within the district boundaries. I am a wife of an educated male who works in the medical field and a mother of four, who range in age from 12-16. I am employed as a building

principal and a coordinator of professional learning. These components of my positionality prepare me to strongly understand the importance, as an educator and a parent, to educate children and identify areas of academic strength and weakness so that the students can show continuous growth as life-long learners.

These components of positionality impact the study in different ways. As someone who grew up in the district of study there is a passion for these students to grow academically and be challenged to their fullest potential. This firm foundation may narrow the stressors of certain college courses, especially those in a mathematical field of study. Being a parent of elementary age children, I recognize the importance of a strong mathematic foothold to enrich the coursework from a young age through graduation. Having the responsibility to educate students is a mantle that I have willingly put on. Their academic growth is necessary for their success both in school and during post-high school endeavors. It is also highly important to train and understand the perceptions of the educators. The teachers must also have knowledge and training to assure student learning. The onus lies with me, the researcher, as a leader and a life-long learner.

I am currently enrolled in the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas. This study satisfied a final requirement for the dissertation portion of the program. Prior to beginning this doctoral program, I completed a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Kansas and a specialist degree in educational leadership from Pittsburg State University. I also completed a building level endorsement from Fort Hays State University and a bachelor's degree in speech communication and secondary education from MidAmerica Nazarene University.



Before my current roles, I held positions as an administrator of curriculum/instruction and assessment, secondary instructional coach, gifted education facilitator, and as a teacher in learning center math, Spanish, speech communication and drama classes. In the differing positions that I held, I worked directly with teachers and students as they prepared for both state assessments and for nationally normed standardized assessments. These positions afforded me the opportunity to understand the significance of progress monitoring, student preparation for assessments and effective proctoring of formative and summative assessments. It was evident that mandating assessments without participating in effective data-drives and completing concise progress monitoring for students was simply a futile action and significant misuse of classroom instruction time.

### **Assumptions**

The ACT Aspire and the ACT are assessments used throughout the United States to determine preparation and acceptance into colleges and universities. These assessments are part of the longitudinal assessment structure in the district of study. The data for comparing student outcomes to benchmarks that may ultimately decide the post-high school academic future of a student is normed nationally. All teachers who have access to this data within the district have a perception of its importance and a responsibility to enhance the skills of the students for academic growth. Thus, it is assumed that the perception and understanding that teachers may have of progress monitoring and fidelity to implementation of interventions greatly impact student growth.

With this information, there are possible biases in this study. As an administrator in the district that the study was done, the desire to have the students in the building that I lead show growth and have their scores reach benchmark, is very strong. A second bias is that all teachers

should want to assess and progress monitor their students on a regular basis. A third bias falls outside of the community where I live. The district of study has always been compared to its educational counter-parts in neighboring districts. Even though an educator should want ALL students to be successful, it is a competitive nature to want YOUR students to have at least competitive or better scores than other students.

Two assumptions were made by the researcher. The first assumption made was that all participants were knowledgeable about progress monitoring and understood the fidelity of implementation of educational strategies. A second assumption was that all participants understood and answered the questions truthfully as they shared their perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*ACT*: American College Test

*CCR*: College and Career Ready

*EPAS*: Educational Planning and Assessment System

*Fidelity of Implementation*: The delivery of content and instructional strategies in the way in which they designed and intended to be delivered. Fidelity measures focus on the individuals who provide the instruction. (National Center on response to Intervention)

*KCCR*: Kansas College and Career Ready “an individual has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, and employability skills to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.”

*Longitudinal assessment systems:* assessments that provide data over an extended period of time that a student is in school, showing a growth or decrease from year to year.

*PD:* Professional Development

*PLC:* Professional Learning Community

*Progress monitoring:* Monitoring student academic progress throughout the school year to determine necessary interventions for academic growth.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The following chapters move through a scope and sequence of the study. Chapter II introduces, provides, and expands upon a conceptual framework of related literature that will inform the study and bring depth to the need of addressing the problem of practice. Chapter III introduces the qualitative approach for data collection methods used to investigate the problem of practice. Chapter IV encompasses a summary of the collected data, settings, and findings from the research. The final chapter, Chapter V, provides an overview of the problem of practice, the purpose statement and research questions, review of the methodology, and major findings, along with recommendations for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER II

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and their understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. This purpose was accomplished by answering research questions previously stated in the first chapter. To delve deeper into the study, the following questions guided the review of the literature.

- What are teacher perceptions of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system?
- What is the fidelity of implementation for interventions processed through progress monitoring?

The research that was explored in the review was collected through a continuous search of available literature. Key terms and phrases were initially identified that created an umbrella from which to search for supporting documents. The terms in the search included: curriculum-based measurements, formative and interim assessments, longitudinal assessment systems, and progress monitoring, and teacher perceptions. These key terms and phrases were used to explore common literature through internet search engines. ProQuest Central and Google Scholar proved to be advantageous as it forged a path to like studies, manuals, books, and implementation guides that informed the research and framework for this study.

### Review of Literature

The problem of practice identifies that without an effective progress monitoring intervention, partnered with a longitudinal assessment system in place, summative data will be a single data point. That leads to a stunting in student academic growth. Currently, the ACT

composite and subject scores for students in the 2013 and 2014, 12<sup>th</sup> grade cohort reflect that students are not college and career ready. In the district of study, few students scored above the established benchmarks, more than 90% did not. The current state for the district is the need for closing the achievement gap for each student. This gap is signified by composite scores from the ACT. The focus of the study is specifically in the area of mathematics. The desired state is for students to score on or above the established benchmark. Implementing effective progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system is the proposed solution. Without multiple points of data, student academic growth would not be appropriately determined. In high school, the preparation of college and career readiness would not be able to be verified for each individual student without evidence of growth. Implementing a plan for ongoing collection and documentation of evidence of students' performance in the classroom is a fundamental component of formative instructional practices, essential for ensuring student success (Joseph, et. al., 2014).

Embedding progress monitoring in conjunction with a longitudinal assessment system into the instructional framework of the district will provide a partnership among staff to increase fidelity to the curriculum, data-drive conversations, and student academic measures. Outcomes from this type of monitoring will uncover data to show student growth that would support the goal of preparing students for college and career readiness as they graduate from high school. The significance of this study is to show the effectiveness of consistent progress monitoring and implementation of a longitudinal assessment system in grades 9 through 12. Validating the financial means that were apportioned to reach the desired state of students meeting and surpassing the KCCR benchmarks is highly important, but not a driving force for research. The financial burden to purchase a site license for the assessment tool should never over-shadow the

importance of student learning. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) makes a clear delineation that the one-time, end of the year summative assessment alone is “of little use to the students who took them.” He emphasizes that “rather than pouring time into figuring out what students failed to learn at year’s end, it is much more effective to focus on interim assessments and avoid failures all together” (p. xxxiv).

### **Progress Monitoring**

The research makes a clear connection to schools that have instructional and/or systems issues in relationship to college and career readiness. Longitudinal assessment systems provide data for monitored progress to enhance student learning and prepare students for college and/or career. Effective systems in place allow for continuous, observable means and continued collection of data. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) shared “eight perilous pitfalls” to avoid while implementing effective data-driven instruction. Two of those pitfalls speak specifically to the problem of practice: curriculum-assessment disconnect and ineffective follow-up. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) goes on to say that, “Districts and schools that do not create a clear, simple system to implement specific plans at a specific time won’t be able to make real change at the level of the classroom” (p. xxi). The progress monitoring challenge is what occurs post-assessment. The connection between assessing students and retrieving data to crunch numbers is not new to education. The expectation of what to do with the data for student growth has become high-stakes.

To identify the appropriate interventions to enhance student academic growth, according to Safer and Fleischman (2005), the teacher first determines a student’s current performance level on skills that the student will be learning that school year, identifies achievement goals that the student needs to reach by the end of the year, and establishes the rate of progress the student

must make to meet those goals. A second key component to effective interventions is student buy-in to their own academic growth. The Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) implementation guide (2014) expounds on this, noting, “Communication and transparency between the teacher and student at the secondary level is crucial. Students need to understand why they are being placed in the particular groups, and the criteria required for moving out of each group” (p. 86).

The overall goal of this type of instructional system is to frequently assess ongoing work, monitor individual progress, provide informative feedback to students, adapt instruction as needed, and ultimately improve student overall performance (Ysseldyke & Bolt, 2007). Interventions determined for student progress are based on the areas of need from the outcomes of the assessments and the monitoring throughout the school year. The MTSS guide charged educators to “determine whether individual students are making sufficient progress and judge the effectiveness of core, supplemental, and intensive interventions” (p. 17). The guide continues to state that progress monitoring of students in intervention is critical to ensure appropriately targeted instruction leading to student growth (p. 57). This continuous state of monitoring is only as effective as the fidelity of implementation for the interventions that the educators hold fast to. This fidelity creates an accountability for teachers, support staff and administrators to do what is best for students and their learning.

### **Longitudinal Assessments**

The ACT benchmarks, established in 2005, paved the way for the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. These benchmarks include the ACT College Readiness Assessment scores associated with a 50% chance of earning a B or higher grade in typical first-year credit-

bearing college courses. The benchmarks also correspond to an approximate 75% chance of earning a C or higher grade in these courses (ACT, 2012).

Longitudinal assessment data disaggregation and review places emphasis on areas of improvement for instruction. This early identification of academic needs and subsequent monitoring of progress through data will give students a better chance of improving achievement and skills before high school graduation (ACT, 2012b). A recommendation was made for educational institutions to utilize a longitudinal assessments system. Students who are off track academically in middle school have a limited chance of becoming college ready before graduation. Because of this, it is critical to begin monitoring development of foundational skills beginning in the elementary grades (ACT, 2012b).

Classroom instruction and assessments that run as separate entities are detrimental to the ability to monitor academic growth in students. It also creates curriculum disconnect for teachers with what is being taught and what is being assessed. There is little chance to have data-driven conversations with merit. Thus, any assessment results gathered have no bearing on what actually happens in the classroom (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). Bambrick-Santoyo goes on to say that, “Quality interim assessments have the power to fundamentally improve every aspect of academic performance” (p. 11). Formative, interim, and growth measurements are terms that are synonymous with each other. Throughout the study, research from a variety of studies will use these terms to identify the same practice of assessing students throughout the school year. Interim assessments are an essential component to longitudinal assessment system within a school district. These particular assessments are a form of assessment that educators use to (1) evaluate where students are in their learning progress and (2) determine whether they are on track to performing well on future assessments, such as standardized tests or end-of-course



exams (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). The purpose of the interim assessment is to monitor growth throughout the school year utilizing a universal assessment. This assessment not only compares the student to their previous score, it also compares the individual student with others in the same grade level both within the school system and with other districts participating throughout the United States.

Through connecting the literature to the need for implementing progress monitoring of math students, three sub-topics emerged for further review. The subtopics of teacher perceptions of formative assessments, evidence-based interventions, and fidelity of implementation for interventions were researched and reviewed to connect the problem of practice and the purpose of the study.

### **Teacher Perceptions**

Teacher perceptions are key to identifying the culture and behaviors toward monitoring and assessing students. The process of assessing students to gain insight into the necessary interventions must be only part of the student growth equation. The process of determining what those key interventions are establishes a starting point for student growth.

Richardson (1996) groups attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as a set of mental constructs that “name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states thought to drive a person’s...actions” (p. 102). She also alludes to the definition offered by anthropologists, social psychologists, and philosophers that considers beliefs as psychological propositions, premises, and other understandings about the world that are felt to be true (Richardson, 1996).

### **Fidelity of Implementation**

Educators should consider the consistency and accuracy of screening, progress monitoring, instruction, and data-based decision-making (Mellard and Johnson, 2007). Hanover

Research (2014), asserts that three crucial practices should be applied to all mathematics interventions: universal screening, explicit and systematic instructional methods, and data-based decision making. In the district of study, an assessment calendar is published near the start of each school year. This calendar is a framework for each building to establish a timeline for interim, formative and summative assessments. This calendar also provides time between the assessments for data-driven conversations in learning communities and instructional changes to meet student academic and skill needs. The calendar provides time that align to the three crucial practices mentioned in the Hanover Research above.

Through an effective longitudinal assessment system, valuable data is collected to inform instruction. This rich, comprehensive data is used to identify explicit needs of each student in specific discipline areas such as: math, reading, writing, English, and science reasoning. Fidelity in this sense is not for proctoring the actual assessment within the time frame but using the data from the assessments to drive instruction and interventions to meet the academic needs of students. Implementation fidelity should be directly measured at all tiers. The most efficient way to monitor implementation fidelity is to track student performance (e.g., use the progress-monitoring data) and where student performance is not adequate, conduct a direct observation of instruction in the classroom (VanDerHeyden, 2015).

## **Historical Review**

For many years, the district of study used a longitudinal assessment program that provided data for progress monitoring. With the introduction of Kansas College Career Ready Standards, a new longitudinal assessment system was needed to align more closely to the standards and show a comparative preparedness to the ACT. In the recent past, the district adopted a new longitudinal assessment system. Teachers and support staff worked diligently to

connect the data to determine curricular gaps, set goals for students and monitor student growth. A big concern was that the interim assessments did not necessarily align with the summative assessment. The assessment structures between interim and summative were different. Measuring growth throughout the year did not coincide with the process, appearance and output of the summative assessment. Gaining teacher perception on this new assessment format and the progress monitoring process, as well as how teachers then identified and maintained fidelity of implementation, will inform the outcome this study and suggestions for future studies.

### **Conceptual Framework**

My understanding of this problem of practice through a pragmatic lens, identified a need in the current structure of monitoring student academic growth. The research that was discussed, as well as my positionality as an educator and a parent, gave a more defined direction to the study. Professionally, I witnessed the need for progress monitoring in the district of study. Personally, I have watched my own children grow academically through progress monitoring from data received post formative assessments. This study provided a framework for investigating the problem of practice and answering the research questions.

From the sub-sections that were associated with the research questions, the literature was focused on: progress monitoring, longitudinal assessment systems, teacher perceptions, and fidelity of implementation. These research questions and sub-sections provide the groundwork for the study and create a clear connection between the reviewed literature, the need for systems change and implementation fidelity and my own personal experiences that resonate with the value in school systems operating with a progress monitoring structure in place.

## Summary

The literature pointed directly to a need for continuous progress monitoring of students and interventions that align to inform instruction for academic growth. The lack of organizational structure for progress monitoring and embedded longitudinal assessment systems is a reality. It could be a slight internal system change, or it could mean that an upheaval of the current building schedule is necessary to meet the needs of students and provide avenues for fidelity of implementation for the teachers. With the introduction of continuous progress monitoring and embedded longitudinal assessment systems, students in earlier grades will be provided with a cohesive means of continuous instruction.

The MTSS studies that I have examined in relation to progress monitoring are primarily focused on interventions for reading, students with special needs, and elementary or middle school grades. The studies that were identified at the secondary level were more quantitative in nature and focused on the end goal of the assessment score in correlation to student demographics. This provides a clear delineation with “who scored what”, but does not identify the needs of progress monitoring of general education students in mathematics or the perceptions that teachers have. Analyzing through a qualitative lens provides a deeper look at the need of a progress monitoring structure at the secondary level. Future studies that make a more direct connection to progress monitoring at the secondary level and post-high school college or career success might aide in removing road blocks for student academic success.

## Chapter III

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and their understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. Through qualitative research, a phenomenological study was conducted to investigate teacher perception of progress monitoring of students to enhance their academic skills in mathematics and provide necessary interventions for growth as measured on a longitudinal assessment system through fidelity of implementation. The research questions introduced in the previous chapter drove the focus of the study.

*Table 3.1 Research Questions*

<b>Research Questions</b>
1. What are the teacher perceptions of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system?
2. What is the fidelity of implementation for interventions through progress monitoring?

This chapter is presented in a manner to provide literature that establishes a foundation for the theoretical perspective. This is framed through a qualitative study by means of a phenomenological perspective. This perspective will be gained by collecting data and interpreting the teacher experiences and perceptions first hand through individual interviews, focus groups and demographic surveys.

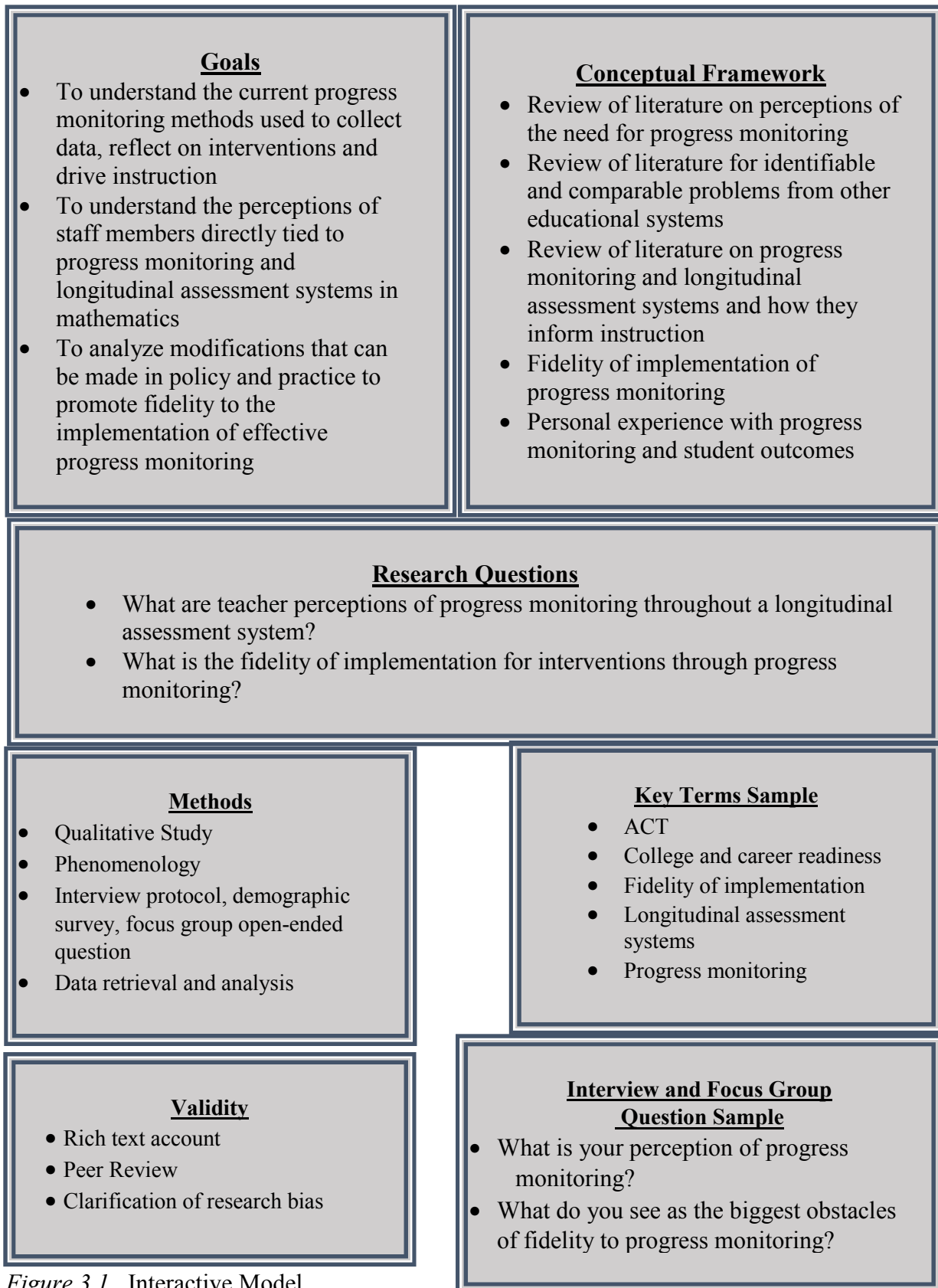


Figure 3.1. Interactive Model

A qualitative study was chosen to examine teacher perceptions and understanding of progress monitoring and their fidelity to progress monitoring. Gaining knowledge of teacher perception and understanding was important to the study since it would directly answer the research questions and potentially establish a baseline for growth and improvement. Utilizing this approach allowed the researcher to study this phenomenon within the context of the school setting, to collect data using a variety of methods and to establish any patterns that emerge from the research (Creswell, 2013). Another purpose for choosing the qualitative approach is due to a lack of qualitative research related to this phenomenon. There is a significant number of quantitative studies related to progress monitoring and longitudinal assessments, but the published studies appear to shy away from the perception of the educator.

The following section offers the rationale for the study, a review of the lens that was expounded upon through establishing the context of the problem of practice, participant sampling and data collection protocols, trustworthiness procedures to validate the data, and the limitations and restrictions of the study.

## **Rationale**

The research approach of this qualitative study provides the opportunity to go beyond the summative numbers of an assessment and reach to the teacher perspective of progress monitoring and the fidelity held to implementing said process. The individual and collective responses of the participants were examined from a constructivist viewpoint to construct their first-hand perceptions. The research questions and teacher responses were used to shape the phenomenological approach by using multiple sampling procedures. This research was done to establish a baseline for growth and improvement.

## **Problem Setting and Context**

The setting of this problem of practice is in a small school district. It is an urban, land-locked school district in a metropolitan area of a mid-west state. The district has one typical high school, one alternative high school, one middle school, and five schools that house students in grades pre-kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup>. For this study, the socio-economic status is referenced through the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. The district percentage is 72% and the high school percentage is 64%.

From 2006 to 2012, a longitudinal assessment tool was used throughout the district that provided an embedded progress monitoring tool. With the purchase of the assessment site license also came professional development training. At the end of the tenure of this particular assessment system, a new assessment system was introduced. Also, during the transition between the former and current longitudinal assessment system a significant teacher attrition pattern occurred. The new staff members did not receive professional development on implementing progress monitoring.

For the purpose of this phenomenological study, seven mathematics teachers volunteered to participate in a semi-structured survey and interview protocol. These seven teachers are a representation of mathematics teachers in the district of study. Also, for the purpose of the study, focus groups were formed with educational support staff.

## **Research Sample**

Participants were selected using purposeful sampling. This sampling technique was used due to the specific nature of the sample. The sample was explicitly chosen since they are the teachers who are in direct connection with the problem of practice and the defined purpose of the



study. These teachers are employed by the district of study in the area of secondary mathematics.

The participants included seven teachers who have earned at least a bachelor’s degree that qualifies them, through the state’s licensed personnel report, to teach at the secondary level. The participants were primarily female.

*Table 3.2 Demographic Survey*

Teacher Name	Age	Gender	Years in District	Years in Education	Ethnicity	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience	Highest Degree Earned	Number of Courses	Number of Students
Janine	51 - 55	F	6-10	11 - 20	White	Moderate	Masters	6	151 - 175
Victor	56 - 60	M	31 years or more	31 years or more	White	High	Masters	2	16 - 30
Joan	41 - 45	F	6-10	11 - 20	White	Moderate	Masters	6	126 - 150
Patty	26 - 30	F	6-10	6 - 10	White	Moderate	Bachelors	6	126 - 150
Eugene	46 - 50	M	3-5	21 - 30	White	High	Bachelors	1	1 - 15
Paul	36 - 40	M	3-5	11 - 20	White	High	Masters	6	76 - 100
Sue	26 - 30	F	2 years or less	3 - 5	Black African American	Low	Bachelors	5	16 - 30

## **Data Collection Methods**

Data for this study was collected through a structured survey, semi-structured interview protocol conducted by the researcher, individual teacher records of progress monitoring procedures, and observations of the mathematic teachers' learning community. Collecting data utilizing these processes is in line with collecting qualitative data.

### **Structured Survey**

The structured survey was given to each participant individually. The survey was used to acquire information that will be disaggregated into descriptive data. This survey requested the following information: number of years teaching mathematics, number of years employed in the current district of study, level of experience each teacher has with progress monitoring, level of education, and the gender of the participants.

### **Interview Protocol**

The interview protocol was administered to each of the participants on an individual basis. The interview took place within in the high school of study. The protocol consisted of 14 questions. The first four questions were for respondent information used solely by the researcher for organization of the interviews. The next four questions were asked to gain a viewpoint of the teacher perspective on progress monitoring, longitudinal assessment systems and how each of these inform instruction within the classroom. The following two questions asked about previous experience with progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. The last four questions asked about the uniqueness of the district, professional learning and for any additional information the interviewee wished to share. These interviews were captured on a personal recording device and uploaded to a personal computer.

## **Data Analysis Methods**

To gain the perceptions of teachers directly connected to progress monitoring in mathematics classrooms, with a primary emphasis on fidelity of implementation data collected were analyzed by coding the narrative descriptives of the participants. Multi-cycle coding was used to drill down to find emerging themes. These themes provided the framework for the descriptive presentation of the data. Google© Forms was used to collect the demographic data for each interview protocol respondent. The interview protocols and focus groups recordings were transcribed outside of the United States of America by Weloty Academic Transcription Services. An initial read of all the transcripts was done. The interview protocol transcripts were coded using first cycle coding to organize them into comprehensible data. Second cycle coding was completed to determine emerging themes. These codes were used to provide an inclusive comprehension of the understanding and perception that teachers have of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. The focus group transcripts were coded using axial coding, recommended by Krueger (1994), which allows the researcher to fracture the data and reassemble it in new ways. Coding the data is done so to challenge the researcher's assumptions. For the three focus groups, a combination of transcript-based analysis and note-based analysis was used. Both analyses were completed to provide an understanding of the data collection process and setting of the focus groups.

## **Description of Data Collection Process**

Each interview protocol respondent participated in a closed-door, face-to-face interview with the researcher. The interview was taped using a small, personal, voice-recording device. The protocol included 14 questions that tried to gain understanding and establish the perception of classroom teachers regarding progress monitoring as it relates to longitudinal

assessment systems. The first four questions asked the participants of their perception and experience with progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. The next four questions asked the participants about current supports and challenges that they perceived through this problem of practice. Questions nine and ten inquired of the participant's personal experiences with progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. The following three questions asked the participants to consider the differences between their current district of employment, professional learning needs for both effective progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. The final question asked for any additional information that the participant may want to share. The interviews ranged in time from 11:26 minutes to 34:42 minutes. The information was uploaded to the personal computer of the researcher. Each recording was submitted, electronically, to Weloty Academic Transcription Services. The recordings were transcribed and returned electronically with a written transcription. Each recording was listened to while comparing the partner transcription for accuracy.

The interview protocol participants also answered questions in a demographic survey. The survey was constructed using the framework of Google© Forms. The survey asked 11 questions in order to collect specific demographic data to provide a concise snapshot of each individual teacher and how that potentially may contextualize their perception and understanding of the problem of practice. This survey was conducted in a separate setting from the interview and the researcher was not present. All responses were collected electronically.

Each focus group participant took part in a closed door, small group setting that concentrated on a single, open-ended question. The participants sat around a circular table so as to face each other. The open-ended question was presented by the researcher. Once the question was asked, the researcher moved away from the table to take field notes and allow participants to

respond freely with each other. The focus group conversation was taped using a small, personal, voice-recording device. This question was asked in such a manner that tried to gain understanding and establish the perception of educational, support staff regarding progress monitoring and the biggest obstacles to its fidelity within the educational system. The focus groups responses ranged in time from 12:44 minutes to 23:09 minutes. The information was uploaded to the personal computer of the researcher. Each recording was submitted, electronically, to Weloty Academic Transcription Services. The recordings were transcribed and returned electronically with a written transcription. Each recording was listened to while comparing the partner transcription for accuracy.

For the purpose of this study, there were three separate focus groups. Two of the groups had three participants and one group had two participants. It was determined that one large focus group would not suffice since, multiple groups with similar participants are needed to detect patterns and trends (Krueger, 1994). The focus group participants in this study were all employed in a small, land-locked school district in a Midwestern state. The focus group participants were comprised of eight educational support staff members. Each of the focus groups participants hold at least a bachelor's degree in education. Their current employment positions are special education support facilitator, instructional coach, media specialist, technology coach, and assistant principal. In addition to holding different employment positions, the focus group participants also span grade level support for grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Each focus group participant previously held a position as a classroom teacher. Some within the current district and some from other districts and states.

The focus group participants sat at a small round table so that they could interact with each other face-to-face. The researcher read the question aloud while sitting at the table. Once

the question was presented, the researcher moved away from the table so as to not be a part of the conversation. This provided the researcher opportunity to observe the participants and take field notes. The purpose of the focus group was to gain an understanding of the biggest obstacles of fidelity to progress monitoring.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in any study is of great importance. Perceptions of the teachers brings in their personal experiences of progress monitoring mathematics, with a primary emphasis on their perception of progress monitoring and the fidelity of its implementation. Maintaining integrity throughout the study was based upon three aspects. These aspects are confidentiality of the participants, validation of the data collection, and verification of the collected data by the researcher transparency of communication with all participants. Apprehensions were eased by the researcher communicating with the participants on a personal level. This transpired by the researcher answering questions from the participants pertaining to the study, providing an opportunity for the participants to review their own interview transcripts, and by sharing appreciation from the researcher for participant involvement. The participants were encouraged to share their attitudes towards the data and their level of comfort throughout the study. To add another layer of trustworthiness, the above mentioned was done on an individual basis. Sharing participant data with the group could potentially cause participants to not trust the researcher and eventually drop out of the study. Validating the data collection was done by the researcher's willingness to share data with the participants. The participants had an opportunity to review their individual data and transcriptions, if requested. Verification of the research was done through communication with colleagues that are part of the researcher's dissertation cohort. These colleagues are not employed by the district of study. These colleagues are in similar roles as the researcher but in different school districts. These colleagues understand confidentiality

and the level of verification necessary for research at this level. They provided insight for research methods, transcribing options, recording procedures, and data collection.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations of a study can be caused by external conditions that could directly affect the study, such as: time of the study, district crisis, and personal set-backs of the researcher. In addition to the study, limitations of the participants could be that they do not fully understand the scope and importance of the study. This could lead to a lack of integrity of the survey and the interview. If the participants do not hold to the integrity of the data collection, they may share the specifics and invalidate the individuality of the responses. It is imperative that the participants know that they are not to share interview, survey or other descriptive data with anyone throughout the timeline of the study. Also, the comfort level of the participants could wax and wane. This presents a possibility of participants exiting the study before the data collection has been completed. The comfort level may also be hindered due to the professional positionality of the researcher. With the researcher being a building administrator, the participants may withhold complete responses out of fear. This fear may also lead to apprehension to answer honestly.

Limitation was subject to time and location. Time that the teachers participated in the survey and interview was set to the length of the interview and the demographic survey. The surveys and interviews took place outside of the teacher contract time, but in the location of their employment. This held a possibility of conflicting with the participants personal events and questions by colleagues.

Delimitations of the study provided boundaries for the teachers such as: grade levels and mathematics over language arts. Participants were contacted for the study based upon their

teaching position within the district of study. Delimitations of the study provided boundaries for the support staff such as: employed with the district and had previously been a classroom teacher. Data collection methods were delimited to interviews conducted face-to-face, surveys conducted through technology, and focus groups at a location designated by the researcher. The sample included seven mathematic teachers and eight support staff. Future studies may determine that a different methodological approach was more suited for this or similar studies.

### **Summary**

Examining the phenomenon of teacher perception and understanding of progress monitoring and the fidelity of implementation of progress monitoring drove the decision to take a qualitative approach for this study. Collecting data through a variety of tools offered a comprehensive outlook at the demographics, perceptions and progress monitoring process of teachers. The multi-step use of cycle coding provided a drill-down process to data analysis that was enhanced through the emerging themes. These themes provided the framework for the remainder of the study and determined suggestions for informing future studies. This chapter provided a rationale, setting and context, sample, data collection tools and procedures. Chapter IV provides the results and data analysis from the study.



## Chapter IV

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and their understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. The focus of the study was to understand the perception of math teachers in a high school located in a Midwestern town. The interviews and focus groups took place during the fall and winter of 2016. The participants of the interviews were chosen based upon their employment as math teachers. The focus group participants were chosen based upon their experience of being in the role of certified, support staff. The following two research questions informed this study:

1. What are the teacher perceptions of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system?
2. What is the fidelity of implementation for interventions through progress monitoring?

These questions established the foundation for the interview protocol questions and focus group question. They were developed based upon the research objectives, the theoretical framework, and the methodology that was chosen for this particular study

This chapter is separated into three distinct sections. The first section of chapter four is a summary of the participants, and the collected data that the researcher used. The instruments used to collect the data were a structured, electronic demographic survey, personal interview protocol, and an open-ended question presented to focus groups. During the data collection, participants described their perception and understanding of progress monitoring, longitudinal assessments systems and the challenges of each.

The second section of this chapter encompasses summaries of the interview protocol. Within these summaries is a description of each respondent and their perception and understanding of progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. This section also provides a summary of the focus groups' data in response to a single open-ended question to gather a collective perception.

The third and final section of this chapter presents the findings from the interview protocols, demographic data, and focus group question.

### **Participants**

The interview protocol participants in this study were all employed in a small, land-locked school district in a Midwestern state. The interview protocol participants were comprised of seven mathematics teachers who instructed students in grades ranging from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>. There was a possibility for 11 mathematics teachers to participate, but since taking part was on a voluntary basis, some teachers chose not to participate. Female participants ( $n = 4$ ) represented fifty-seven percent of the study sample.

Table 4.1 Demographics: Gender

Teacher Name	Age	Gender	Years in District	Years in Education	Ethnicity	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience	Highest Degree Earned
Janine	51 - 55	F	6 - 10	11 - 20	White	Moderate level of experience	Masters
Joan	41 - 45	F	6 - 10	11 - 20	White	Moderate level of experience	Masters
Patty	26 - 30	F	6 - 10	6 - 10	White	Moderate level of experience	Bachelors
Sue	26 - 30	F	2 years or less	3 - 5	Black or African American	Low level of experience	Bachelors

For the ethnicity of the participants, only one identified as not white. African-American educators ( $n = 1$ ) represented fourteen percent of the study sample.

Table 4.2 Demographics: Ethnicity

Teacher Name	Age	Gender	Years in District	Years in Education	Ethnicity	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience	Highest Degree Earned
Sue	26 - 30	F	2 years or less	3 - 5	Black or African American	Low level of experience	Bachelors

There was a fairly even distribution between male and female participants in regard to the highest degree earned. Fifty-seven percent had earned a masters degree. Of that 57%, 50% identified male and 50% identified female. One of those participants ( $n = 1$ ) had more than 30 years of experience in the district of study. While the other three participants ( $n = 3$ ) each had 10 or less years of experience in the district of study.

Table 4.3 Demographics: Degree Level

Teacher Name		Age	Gender	Years in District	Years in Education	Ethnicity	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience	Highest Degree Earned
Janine		51 - 55	F	6 - 10	11 - 20	White	Moderate	Masters
Victor		56 - 60	M	31 years or more	31 years or more	White	High	Masters
Joan		41 - 45	F	6 - 10	11 - 20	White	Moderate	Masters
Paul		36 - 40	M	3 - 5	11 - 20	White	High level	Masters

More than half of the participants ( $n = 5$ ) had more than 10 years of teaching experiences. With two of the participants, Victor and Eugene, identifying that they had more than 20 years in education. All of these participants identified as white and 80% responded to having a masters degree.

Table 4.4 Demographics: Years of Experience

Teacher Name	Age	Gender	Years in District	Years in Education	Ethnicity	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience	Highest Degree Earned
Janine	51 - 55	F	6 - 10	11 - 20	White	Moderate level of experience	Masters
Victor	56 - 60	M	31 years or more	31 years or more	White	High level of experience	Masters
Joan	41 - 45	F	6 - 10	11 - 20	White	Moderate level of experience	Masters
Eugene	46 - 50	M	3 - 5	21 - 30	White	High level of experience	Bachelors
Paul	36 - 40	M	3 - 5	11 - 20	White	High level of experience	Masters

The age distribution of the participants was from 26-60. More than half of the participants (n = 5) responded that they were 41 years of age or older. Demographic responses were derived from a survey conducted electronically.

### Findings

The goals of this study were to comprehend the perception and understanding that teachers had in regard to progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system and to uncover the biggest obstacles to fidelity of progress monitoring within the specific discipline, grade-levels, and district. These goals were met by analyzing data from the participant responses to the interview protocol questions, the open-ended question, and the demographic survey. The interview protocol data were organized through coding methods identified in Chapter III into four themes. A total of 302 codes were identified. An average of 43 codes were identified from each transcript. There were other gerund codes identified, but they had no relevance to the study

or would be a recommendation for future studies. Four major themes were derived from the codes with 13 sub-themes.

These themes provided a structure for delving deeper into the participant responses to the two research questions that informed this study. The themes are: effective tools for assessment, teacher buy-in, collecting and using data, and student understanding of progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. From these four themes, 13 sub-themes were derived. Table 4.5. provides a representation of the themes and sub-themes.

*Table 4.5 Themes and Sub-Themes: Interview Protocol*

Effective Tools for Assessment	Teacher Buy-in	Collecting and using Data	Student Understanding of Progress monitoring and Longitudinal Assessment Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Understanding the purpose of a longitudinal assessment system</b></li> <li>• <b>Align to curriculum</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not understanding progress monitoring or how to do it</li> <li>• Need of professional development with support and training</li> <li>• Communication within the math department</li> <li>• Working with other math teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time: reteach</li> <li>• Time sensitive material</li> <li>• Getting meaningful data</li> <li>• Making sense of the data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of progress monitoring and a longitudinal assessment system</li> <li>• Making it valuable for students – Goal setting</li> <li>• Self-monitoring</li> </ul>

Analysis of the themes provided captured a collage of personal responses from each participant. The emerged themes and correlated teacher responses are presented below.

Some participants could not answer all of the questions or gave a simplistic answer of “no”. Presented in Table 4.6, two female teachers who had the least amount of experience in education were not able to or did not fully answer some questions. After further investigation, it was determined that this was due to a correlation between ‘years in education’ and ‘level of progress monitoring experience’.

*Table 4.6 Demographics: Lack of Response*

Teacher Name	Age	Years in Education	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience
Patty	26 - 30	6 - 10	Moderate level of experience
Sue	26 - 30	3 - 5	Low level of experience

**Theme 1: Effective Tool for Assessments**

Participants were asked to share their experiences with longitudinal assessment systems. They were afforded the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. Although the teachers shared that their students participate in longitudinal assessment systems, the assessments are not all the same in regards to when data is available, how to read the outcomes, and what is actually assessed. The sub-theme “understanding the purpose of a longitudinal assessment system” was used to describe the core reason why teachers invest time in preparing students throughout the school year. Victor shared his concern with longitudinal assessments.

I’m not a fan of them because I feel that a lot of times we take the thinking out and we concentrate on two or three main ideas and the students know those ideas and they can follow a recipe and do them rather than think for themselves.

Both Joan and Eugene had positive perspectives toward longitudinal assessments, but for differing reasons. Joan believes that if they were used authentically, the students could be placed by their ability or lack of skill in certain areas, so as to be able to ‘get the ready for the next

thing'. The assessments also change the center of focus for Joan and Eugene. The differences are represented below.

I mean, we see the numbers from like one year to the next, but besides looking at the numbers, and helping for placements, I don't know that we actually modify our teaching based on those. (Joan)

Sometimes we get so focused on what we do in our classroom we kind of lose the big picture. So, I think that helps us kind of get the big picture back...I look at, try to look at, the big picture. Are we, am I, I guess as a teacher, moving my students as a group where they need to go? (Eugene)

Sue described her perception and understanding as a new teacher by asking, "What are the effective ways of what are other schools doing? Exposure. I think that's what it really comes down to and sign up for that 'progress thing'.

The sub-theme "align to curriculum" was used to describe the correlation between what is being taught in the classroom and the mathematic skills that are being assessed on the longitudinal assessments. This sub-theme surfaced as important since it is 'the things that they are supposed to learn'. The need for the assessment to align to curriculum was shared by Paul:

I think that if they are well written, they can be useful to see if the student has really learned the concepts that are important. You try to make sure that the questions you are asking require more higher-level thinking, rather than just regurgitation of the material. So, these assessments, you kind of look and say okay, will they just get a surface knowledge, or do they really understand the concepts, so it's stuck with them...

## **Theme 2: Teacher Buy-In**

The teacher participants believed that communicating within the math department and working with each other was important and created buy-in within the department and high school. It was also believed by some that professional development and training was missing. It



was not agreed upon as to who was responsible for that training. One teacher wanted staff teaching staff. Another thought that the building instructional coach was responsible. According to Paul, “Just making sure that we are on the same page as what the students need...So, I think that working with other teachers is good and can help us out.”

The sub-theme “not understanding progress monitoring and how to use it” was used to describe a fracture of understanding that was evident amongst the participants. If teachers did not understand what progress monitoring was and how to use it, it would be difficult for them to have buy-in to participate in something they did not fully grasp. Some have the perception that progress monitoring and grades are one and the same. Some have the perception that it is a single score from a summative assessment. Yet, others believe that it is a process that occurs throughout the school year. A perception of progress monitoring as grading and work completion was described by Patty and Eugene as:

I do grades and I compare them from year to year and...see if we are on track, if it's taking longer or shorter to see if students come in better prepared or further behind...to see how well the students are comprehending things or remembering things from year to year.

I mean, when you say progress monitoring that's a lot of things. I mean, we've got obviously, this year we're using Canvas to do grades. I mean that's one form of progress monitoring and the other thing is I have access to that same information. I am constantly looking to see who has done what to monitor. You know, what do you need to retake, do you need to finish something that you haven't completed, those types of things.

An understanding of progress monitoring was described by Eugene as, “...in my classroom I've done it just with my standard testing and I have done test retest before. So, that's usually the extent of that type of thing.”

Progress monitoring was described as a single, summative measurement by Paul as:

I do think one of the things that I feel like the ACT is good for is that it's a fairly even percentage from one test to the next. It's usually 30%-35% Algebra I, 30%-35% Geometry, and then the rest is Algebra II/Trigonometry topics. You can always count on that so...if you want to do well we need to make sure we remember the basics...

An understanding of progress monitoring was described by Joan as:

So, I typically give like quizzes, 2 to 3 per unit, just to check, for understanding. I would say that, like our semester final, would check the progress for that half of the year. So, on a small scale like per chapter, sometimes we go back and review the material.

The sub-theme “need of professional development with support and training” referred to supports that were either currently in place or were needed. The youngest teacher shared that she “was not aware of any supports in place to utilize an effective progress monitoring system.”

Janine shared the need for training to understand the monitoring process and the assessment structure.

I think training on what the test is about, what types of questions that they are asking, and that how we need to build those questions to fit into whatever it is we are teaching. Even the wording on the test...even in the word problems that our kids don't understand because they are not exposed to that vocabulary.

Victor and Joan believed that that there was a shared responsibility for training and supporting teachers, yet those in place as a resource was insufficient. Joan shared that “there's no outside supports,” and,

I don't really know that there are, I might be able to get some support from our instructional coaches, but so far, I have not been assisted when I requested help. I ended up finding help from other people instead...they are very involved with a lot of different things and it's just too much stuff on their plate...I usually get help from someone else instead of waiting.

The need for professional development was also expressed by Patty and Sue as:

...we talk about professional development, but there is not like the math department, not specifically like just the math department, had professional development on it. I think that is different for other grade levels because we as a high school, we don't have only like sophomores, who are the ones tested...it's kind of all intertwined. I think just...meeting on professional development days as a whole...(Patty)

Yes, I think that would be lovely to understand just why we're doing what we're doing. How is it trickling down to us and then like what we do, how does it trickle back up...just seeing the whole picture and if that was communicated better...(Sue)

The sub-theme “communication within the math department and working with other teachers” was discussed by participants sharing the need for open dialogue on student progress and student deficiencies. Teachers either not willing to or not having opportunities to communicate could be largely responsible for influencing their level of buy-in. Working with other teachers, in the same department, brings cohesiveness of a team to work together and have mutual buy-in of expected initiatives. Subjects shared the concern that some students could be left behind if a level of accountability was not created amongst the mathematics department.

Paul and Patty shared:

...if you are not using common assessments, then one teacher saying, “Okay well, it's okay to leave this off”, when the other teacher is like, “No, they really need to know that before next year”. So, when you get those common assessments going then you can say, “Okay, we are making sure that all of our students are progressing over the same topics.” So, we don't have a group getting left behind on this while another group is really strong in this area...then at department meetings talking about...how are your students doing...those are one of the things that...at the last department meeting we were talking about...why aren't they getting it? So as teachers asking ourselves those important questions too, not just, well these kids aren't doing well...why aren't they doing well...why aren't they getting it...did we forget to emphasize certain things were important, did we go through too quickly? So, I think working with other teachers is good and can help us out. (Paul)

...so, for us it would be seven through twelfth or six through twelfth (grade teachers)  
...under what curriculum do these fall? How in-depth and what level should they have to go in each of these standards or the standards or indicators. (Patty)

### **Theme 3: Collecting and Using Data**

The teachers believed that proctoring an assessment without follow-through was a disservice to the students and also to those other professionals within the math department. They also shared that time was a big factor in collecting the data, utilizing it effectively, and showing student growth over a specific period of time. This finding explores the theme “collecting and using data”. If the assessment is deemed important, then the teacher mindset must also be in that same vein. The theme was then disaggregated into additional sub-themes, “time to go back and reteach”, “time sensitive material”, “getting meaningful data”, and “making sense of the data”.

The sub-theme “time to go back and reteach” referred to what options the teachers have when they have collected data from assessments, but the school calendar doesn’t allow for time to “go back” in fear of running out of time when the end of the year summative is given to students. For some teachers, progress monitoring and collecting data is non-issue. They do it and understand its purpose. The constraints of time thwart those measures of academic success since as Joan shares:

I think it is just really hard with the time constraints that we have, and topics we need to cover. So, if we have the time to like do more...and checking, then we can go back...if the kids aren’t understanding you still have to move on. It’s not necessarily a district policy, or a building policy, or department policy. It’s more like it’s an unstated, it’s like unwritten policy, like unwritten rules that we need to cover so much material to prepare them for the next years’ math class....Like when you look from one year to the next, if you have a history of data, it’s good to see growth like over time, but that’s all we’ve really had time to do.

Eugene also believed that reteach relearn, and retake is a process he would be willing to adopt to show growth that develops over time. He gave an example of adults who take high-stakes tests and do not score well the first time and their options or process.

I do know one thing that I have kind of come around on in my teaching career. It is the notion of retaking tests...it was like, well, you know you really need to learn it by the deadline because life has deadlines and things like that...if you think about some of the assessments...like the bar exam for lawyers...even doctors get another shot at their medical boards. ACT allows you to do a retake. So, if a student didn't get it the first time...Maybe it's worth it if we get them to go back and learn the material and come back and show, I've got it now, I know what I'm doing now; then that's worth it.

The sub-theme “time sensitive material” was an important theme that was sewn throughout the interviews. Some teachers referenced it as not getting the informal data soon enough to make necessary changes for students in the classroom. While other teachers referenced the results from summative assessments that were not distributed until after students had moved on to the next grade or level in math. This led to frustration that Joan shared:

...but then we don't have results...we had a meeting the next year. We got results, but then we couldn't open it...I think that we would have to have those results, like not immediately, but I think it's time-sensitive material. Like the results...then have them available to all teachers, across disciplines.

The sub-theme “getting meaningful data” was multi-faceted. For some, getting the data to making meaningful changes for students was shared. Other teachers expressed how the assessment instrument had changed a few times over the years and the difficulties that came with that inconsistency. Patty and others shared:

I know that I have a bad habit of...just doing what I've always been doing. I think that we are really doing a disservice since we've changed assessments...just to make sure we are really working towards the kids doing well...

I mean we see the numbers from like one year to the next, but besides looking at the numbers, and helping for placements (for the next math class) I don't know that we actually modify our teaching based on those. I think it would be better, or easier if we knew okay, they're going to take them, we're going to get these results back, and we can use them for the rest of the year, or we can make changes or do something with it. (Joan)

I think they need proof that they know it, (progress monitoring) works or it can work. Like, data that shows that you tried this, you've done this...it went from here to here and that's what we need to be doing. I think you have to have the progress monitoring system first. Then from there you start moving on to the bigger task of the ACT or the SAT...setting it up to work. (Janine)

When collecting student data to make meaningful changes, Paul shared an experience:

I kind of have the mindset that the students will rise up or lose themselves to the level of expectation that you have...it was really broken down rather than just chapters or unit, and really broken down into skill. You would keep track of each individual student with each individual skill. So, you literally had a chart for the kids and you can mark off whether they were getting a skill, or they weren't. Then from that you can tell okay, this student needs to work on this, and this student needs to work on this.

The sub-theme "making sense of the data" shares a similar concern from teachers as the sub-theme "getting meaningful data". This sub-theme differs from the previous theme of collecting data that is meaningful to student growth, to now we have data, but what does it actually mean. How can the data that is received be meaningful if the assessment instrument keeps changing or what is expected to be taught and assessed keeps changing?

But I think that, it changes. It seems like we've used different ones recently. I mean it's been a couple of years. I'm trying to think, when was the last time we used MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), and when we started using the Aspire, but then we don't have results... and now the ACT. (Joan)

The teachers have to, I think, all teachers in all disciplines have to be willing to agree that if we're going to take out time to do these assessments that it has to be important. It has to be relevant to everyone. So, they have to agree on the importance of it...but also saying, here's their test, but here is their results, quickly.

Getting the data out there in an understandable format...I think different tests have different objectives. Again, having a test that really breaks down the student's needs. I mean, if we're testing on that, our ultimate goal is to figure out how to best serve our students, and you can't really do that unless your assessment tool breaks it down for you or helps you break it down. As a teacher, I think that information would be how to dissect that information. How to take the data and figure out what it means to us and our students, because again a lot of times with these systems, the data can just be kind of overwhelming. So probably as teachers, we would need help understanding this is what this information means. (Eugene)

#### **Theme 4: Student Understanding of Progress Monitoring and Longitudinal Assessment Systems**

The teachers believe that progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems are not solely for teachers. Their attitude is that it is a tool and process that they use for students, and these students should understand both the monitoring process and the assessment tool. Some shared that it created an accountability for 'keeping kids focused on their long-term goal'. The sub-themes that emerged from this primary theme were the 'purpose of the progress monitoring and the longitudinal assessment system', 'making it valuable for students-goal setting', and 'self-monitoring'.

Sue shared her experience as a student and posed "THE" question that she believes should be asked and should ultimately be answered:

I was thinking back to my high school and I'll let you know, I was not cognitively aware that we were taking assessments...you are in like an auditorium...I never knew that that's what we were doing. I had no clue. No one explained it to me...do they even know why they are taking the assessments?

...like my generation of teachers came from this environment...what they are taking...why are they taking it...we're now teachers and we're doing the same thing to our students. Like repeating the cycle, or just uncertainty of what is happening. (Sue)

The sub-theme “purpose of the progress monitoring and the longitudinal assessment system” perspective was discussed by participants as they described how they approach progress monitoring within their classrooms. Paul stated that, “I...have the mindset that the students will rise up to the level of expectation that you have.”

To just keeping the kids focused on their long-term goal like do they even know why they are taking the assessments? Most of them, I don't feel like they have a clue that they are taking that assessment. They just think it's the new test that they have to take. They didn't understand the purpose behind it. I felt like that needs to be the forefront, like almost the introduction to this is ...this is why we do things, the how and why. (Sue)

Some participants described their viewpoint on the sub-theme “making it valuable for students-goal setting”. This sub-theme was used to encompass the teachers' direct responses to the questions asking about an *effective progress monitoring system*. Eugene shared, “I still think there is value, and I'm trying to do this in class this year...where they can see these are the things that my student has done up to this point.”

I think just understanding what the longitudinal assessment is, what the end game goal is, will be for longitudinal assessment then we can look at how to put you through that. What the final picture is supposed to look like. Is it individualized to each student? Like, this is the goal for this student... (Sue)

Well, I really think it comes down to every level...if you look at our students, all have different goals...when you get them...more involved in things and back to the idea of surface level over in-depth...they get a better grasp of what's going on, better understanding of what's going on...eager to apply it. (Paul)

The sub-theme “self-monitoring” involved the idea of students having a personal stake in their own education. Three of the seven teachers shared the importance of including students in conversation to create value-centered learning.



I really like...that idea of bringing the student into the conversation of where they're trying to go and how can we help them...be more of a team player with the students rather than us against them trying to force information at them. (Sue)

I think we've got to figure out a way to make it valuable to them...where they are wanting to monitor all the time...because if it has value to them, they will check and they will do a lot of the monitoring...it's not pushing the information out to them, it's them checking it on their own. If we can get the students to do that, that would be great. (Eugene)

I think that's just an important thing for the students to understand that it's important for them to learn how to monitor their own progress...really, it's the students themselves that have to take ownership of that...the ones who generally do the best in class are the ones...monitoring their own progress. (Paul)

Even though the participants agreed that students should be key players in their own progress monitoring, Paul shared how self-monitoring by students can be a struggle due to life outside of the brick and mortar building. He shares his concern:

I think a lot of the challenges that we see as far as monitoring the progress and possible remediation is that when they leave here, education isn't always the priority. Because we as teachers, we can give feedback to the students on how they are doing. We can talk with other teachers on how they are doing, but since they are only with us 50 minutes a day, there is a lot of things going on.

Participants in the interview protocol and the focus groups shared similar perceptions of progress monitoring. That is evidenced throughout the themes and sub-themes. There was one marked variation that was shared by members of the focus groups, but not the teachers. It can be found under the sub-theme of safety and fear.

The focus group data analyzed was organized through coding methods identified in Chapter III. These themes provided a structure for delving deeper into the participant responses that hyper-focused on research question two: What is the fidelity of implementation for

interventions through progress monitoring. That collection of data informed this specific portion of the study. Analysis of the themes provided captured a collage of personal responses from participants of the focus group and are presented below. The collective data is presented by group and not individual participants. These themes provided a structure for delving deeper into the participant responses specifically for research question number two that informed this study. A total of 80 codes were identified. An average of 26 codes were identified from each transcript. There was one other gerund code identified but had no relevance to the study and would be a recommendation for a future study. Three major themes were derived from the codes with nine sub-themes. The themes are: recognizing obstacles, understanding the impact of progress monitoring, and needing professional development. Table 4.7 provides a representation of the themes and sub-themes.

*Table 4.7 Themes and Sub-Themes: Focus Groups*

Recognizing Obstacles	Understanding the Impact of Progress Monitoring	Needing Professional Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Time</b></li> <li>• <b>Resources</b></li> <li>• <b>Safety and Fear</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition</li> <li>• Doing vs. Not</li> <li>• Using Data</li> <li>• Conversations and Accountability</li> <li>• Drive Instruction</li> <li>• Students own Data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a plan and timeline</li> <li>• Cultural Shift</li> </ul>

## Focus Group Theme 1: Recognizing Obstacles

All three focus groups shared what they recognized as obstacles of fidelity to progress monitoring. Within these obstacles, the sub-theme of time, resources, safety, and fear were identified early on in the discussion by all three focus groups.

The sub-theme of time was a common obstacle broached by all three focus groups. Quality of time, consuming of time, and finding the time for progress monitoring was initially identified by Focus Group 1 when they shared:

I would think like the time...to continuously progress monitor...to do all those things...are hug obstacles. But there are also the excuses, because I think teachers do have time. It's like a miscalculation of time, like personally, and sometimes systemically. Yeah, the data can lead you to be more effective and therefore you're not wasting as much time.

Focus Group 2 shared a comparison of the sub-theme time when they stated:

...if we're talking about progress monitoring as in a continual look at data throughout a semester, throughout like a year for a student. I see...especially at the secondary level an obstacle is how time consuming that is, versus the amount of time spent on instruction. So, whereas a lot of teachers they see the need for data. They see the need for monitoring how students are doing, but seeing the value like, if I've put this much time into assessing, what's that going to get me for what we're going to be teaching...what's the outcome...what's the return on that investment of time? I see that teachers not wanting to just spend that time assessing, even though that can be valuable data to know where students are at. It seems like a lot of time to them...they don't have that much time per day...so I don't have time to go back and reteach those things.

That theme of time was also present in the statement, "They understand those things...when it comes down to it, they're not actually doing those things...it is time consuming and you to understand, what's the return on that time, I'm going to spend towards that?"

For Focus Group 3, ‘finding time’ was identified as the *biggest* obstacle when they expressed that, “...finding the time to work together, the time to actually complete the progress monitoring...time to review it and the time to go back and address the standards that are lacking has been our biggest issue.”

The sub-theme “resources” was identified in the group responses as common and quality resources, as well as having, and using, the right tools to progress monitor. Focus Group 1 responded, “I think an obstacle we face on a regular basis is quality of resources used to progress monitor students...having common resources available...understanding the purpose.” Focus Group 2 responded, “The tools of progress monitoring might be the obstacle too, because they don’t have the right tools.” The third group responded with:

...do we just use one tool to figure out what needs to be progress monitored? Do I have resources to support them...how do we assess kids to figure out what their needs are...how am I getting the information, what tool do I use? So...really need to take the time to analyze common areas that kids are making and struggling with...matching the tool up...rather than just saying, progress monitoring here you go. (Focus Group 3)

Focus Group 1 believed that the sub-theme “safety and fear” was necessary to discuss and specifically directed it toward a suggested roadblock for fidelity of progress monitoring. They shared a concern of this fear hindering the practice of data driving instruction.

There is a lot of fear that goes into the progress monitoring as well. We have our PLCs that we claim are support groups for our staff members, but when you’re sitting in the middle of a PLC talking about your progress monitoring data and you happen to be the one on the very low end, that’s very intimidating. It’s not a safe environment. Those feelings of inadequacy and judgement, fear of judgment. As much as we focus on our...PLCs, they’re not feeling safe to the teachers. So, the fidelity part, I do what I need to do to get my kids to look good on paper, not necessarily drive my instruction.

So, there is supposed to be this collaborative environment where we share instructional strategies and support watch other. Often times it turns into a reflection, a personal reflection versus a professional reflection on what I'm doing in the classroom. I have reservations about data in the district that we're setting our teachers out to truly feel safe and secure. There are PLCs that are going on and all that other stuff ties into it. Because if teachers aren't comfortable asking questions and sharing where their strengths are and also where their areas of need are, we're not going to get anywhere.

There was a point in time in this district where it was all about the data, and I remember that I lived through that. Because it was all about the data and not about, not a personal reflection. We were much more open to sharing ideas and at different levels crossing some of those boundaries that we set for ourselves...it's a safety issue. You don't feel safe to share ideas.

### **Focus Group Theme 2: Understanding the Impact of Progress Monitoring**

This specific theme had the most connection amongst Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3. They believed that having a solid understanding of progress monitoring could eliminate the choice some teachers make to not 'do it', or even talk about the process with colleagues. The sub-themes of definition, doing vs. not, using data, conversations and accountability, drive instruction, and students own data were all a common thread throughout the Focus Groups discussions as the thinking or perception of progress monitoring. Focus Group 2 shared:

Some of the obstacles that teachers have with progress monitoring is their own thinking about how. What are they really assessing? What are they really monitoring? Is it about just a student's knowledge of the content or is it about the skills that they're gaining through what they're doing?

The sub-theme "definition" is in direct reference to the Focus Groups sharing a concern that some teachers may not have a working knowledge of what progress monitoring is. Some members of the focus believed that there was currently 'no formal system' for progress

monitoring and that ‘there was no way to tell that they’ve (students) been struggling the way the system is set up’. A participant shared that “I think that they might understand that data is not the enemy, that it actually can help you, it is valuable.”

I think that teachers do not understand how progress monitoring directly affects their instruction. It leads to misinformation or maybe negative feelings and that gets in the way of them actually doing progress monitoring. (Focus Group 1)

I just think that there is so much to consider when it comes to progress monitoring and all of our kids need different things...do we have a defined process for what needs to be progress monitored and how we’re going to do it? (Focus Group 3)

The sub-theme “doing vs. not” was expressed by Focus Groups 1 and 3 that some educators may simply choose not to progress monitor for varying reasons.

They may do it and then not do anything with it, and that’s what I see a lot. I think we’re away from using data-based progress monitoring to drive our instruction on a regular basis. There are many reasons or excuses that staff or teachers give us for why we have gotten away from some of the progress monitoring...it’s just a big symptom that is just simply not the larger problem that must not matter very much, which is too bad. (Focus Group 1)

I think that once you leave the elementary world, that (progress monitoring) is completely blown out of the water, because we are not doing any of these things. The students are only progress monitored quarterly. They get behind very quickly. (Focus Group 3)

The sub-theme “using data” could be summed up with the thought of ‘Now what?’ The participants shared that teachers collect data of some sort, but had questions concerning how to use it. It was also shared by multiple participants that there was a confusion of the right kind of data that was collected.

A participant even asked, “Where are their areas of need?”, and followed it up with the concern of “...if you are not monitoring anything...how do you provide those services...that’s how we get to the end of a quarter and know whether or not the kids are moving in the right direction.” Maybe that’s it. They are not using data to inform instruction. It’s just something you have to do. (Focus Group 1)

So, I don’t know that they are collecting the right kind of data. That brings in pre-testing and post-testing. You’ve got to see where they begin, where they end, and then what’s the plan. They want usable data...but in terms of how we structure it as a teacher every day, I don’t think I was ever shown that. Like, nobody had philosophical conversations about just how to do that. Is it going to give me usable data? Is it going to give me something that...actually helps my students? (Focus Group 1)

...it’s also looking at that quantitative kind of information? Like, so they just know the information versus like what do they do with it? Sometimes I think the hardest thing for teachers to see is...I can actually use data. It will help me and make my job easier. I can group my students, I can differentiate what I’m doing...these students get it...these students don’t...it pushes teachers out of their comfort zone to want to change the way they do things. (Focus Group 2)

The sub-theme “conversations and accountability” was expressed by Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2. They believed more open conversation and collaboration between teachers was important to understand the process and purpose of progress monitoring.

...if they understood how to and maybe I should say, if we understood how to better have meaningful conversations about the results of progress monitoring, assessment, and activities, then maybe those real conversations would translate into the specific changes and instruction. Even within departments, within people that you should absolutely be collaborating with. Sitting down with grade levels and not only doing that horizontal, but they’re vertically teaming with other grade levels and saying, “This is where we are strong...”. That lack of openness is what’s keeping quite a few of us from moving forward and really helping students grow. The response continued with, If they’re not feeling the need to be accountable for monitoring students’ progress across a semester, across a quarter...That’s where we are, so it takes that accountability and minimizes it. (Focus Group 1)

I think the idea of what is a reliable and valid test...really thinking about that. I've had questions. I've had conversation with teachers about that. If they all miss that question, then it's probably not a good question. So, you should probably throw that out and really think about that. Having other people look at your test and compare and collaborate. So, that your data is actually valid when you look at a big picture. (Focus Group 2)

The sub-theme "drive instruction" was challenged by the participants as they discussed the conflict between compliance-based practice and data driven practice. Specifically, they shared that data can be collected, but without a purpose (why) for use that ties into the understanding (how) for use, it is just an action of following directions from administration.

...why is this important...they (teachers) need to see it modeled beyond just compliance. I see a lot...of compliance-based progress monitoring and that data had to be turned in to somebody, and that's all it was about. You just had to have the certain data turned in and it was in compliance...it wasn't about what you really do with it. I think teachers want to use the data...they are not often shown how really to use it well...and to use it to inform instruction.

...just giving them (students) the book, giving them about 10 worksheets, then giving them a multiple-choice test really isn't telling me what they know. I've had this conversation with teachers...it needs to be useful to you. So, how are you collecting data that helps you...did they (students) actually grow or learn something? If not, what am I going to do about it? Teachers want relevant assessments, they want relevant data. (Focus Group 2)

Participants continued the conversation of "driving instruction" with the shared concern of the amount of expected curricula that is to be covered within the academic year and no real time to use the data to fill in the educational gaps that students may have. The teachers have "all this stuff to cover...got to move on...never revisited...just run to the next unit...they don't really use that progress for anything." Participants stated that "...they've moved on (students), we've moved on (teachers). So, there's no real point in investing in what the data actually means, because you can't do anything about it". Focus Group 1 expounded on that thought with,



“...we’re expecting them to get through all of this without having those check points along the way.”

Focus Group 2 also shared:

...what can I manage? Well, it’s easy if they all take the same test, they all do the same thing...then they all don’t grow...they all don’t actually learn. There are pressures in departments to be done by a certain time...you’ve got to be on this point. That doesn’t help teachers with progress monitoring. It’s all more about the testing. So, then it’s too much content...a lot of teachers I know are very much, “I’m supposed to have all this covered...I have to burrow through it...otherwise...I’m not doing what I’m supposed to be doing as a teacher”...so they cover content...it’s just something that they have to turn in that’s not anything that really is used for anything else other than to fulfill a requirement.

The sub-theme “students own data” was articulated by Focus Groups with the express interest to the fidelity of progress monitoring being a partnership between the educator and the student. The data goes beyond a set of numbers. It is a part of goal setting and continuous discussion for students.

...it’s the conversation with teacher and student, with teacher and family, with student, teacher, and family. (Focus Group 1)

Putting that data in the hands of the kids as well...along the way so that they can chat themselves. How do they relate...how could they use that to solve a problem and find something out? It’s about them researching and finding this information and pushing themselves to think deeper and using those skills. Because we live in a world that they...can have access to knowledge...and a place to practice those skills. (Focus Group 2)

### **Focus Group Theme 3: Needing Professional Development**

Participants identified the need for professional development through two sub-themes, “having a plan and timeline” for progress monitoring and the “cultural shift” of educators. The perception of the Focus Group participants was that there was not a consistent plan for progress

monitoring. They also believed that building and district culture had changed over time. Some of the cultural changes came with staff changes over time, which brought a lack of collaboration between teachers. A lack of a consistent longitudinal assessments was also believed to bring unpredictability and a need for specific professional development of how progress monitoring met the needs of students.

The sub-theme “having a plan and timeline” was shared through the lens of how teachers understand and manage classroom and longitudinal assessments. They expressed through personal experience how having a plan was key to ‘moving forward’ and understanding and managing comes from receiving the appropriate and necessary training.

I feel like we get snapshots and then our...key assessments a year later. We're not comparing apples to apples...we're comparing apples to oranges to bananas. (Focus Group 1)

They just don't give the information that we really need to make a difference. (Focus Group 2)

I think that there is that point where you can...learn about the philosophy of assessment...and you may have a certain philosophy. But come Monday morning, you've got to show up. You've got to have something for these kids to do. (Focus Group 2)

We never just sat down and made the timeline, the schedule to determine...all of these things, what, when, how? If we're spending all of our time progress monitoring, then when are we getting instruction done, right? I know as a classroom teacher...it took me a lot of years to understand what I need to do to monitor my students and know exactly when they knew it and when they didn't know it. It boiled down to having a set time weekly that we basically had to take a formative...but it had to be consistent...had to happen once a week. I think that defining and setting the schedules and defining the time, figuring out...when, how, where, how often. That's going to be the only way to really make it better...to see the breakdown of what they're missing. (Focus Group 3)

...in my first year, we looked at the standards that were going to be on the assessments and that's what shaped our year...there was no avoiding that...I think there are those teachers...this is where I want my students to be...how I'm going to get there, and they measure it. How do I measure how my students are doing? I think that many teachers see assessment as it's one of those evil buzz words of education. (Focus Group 2)

It doesn't help when the state is changing assessments on a regular basis. With so many changes we're not seeing the opportunity to see a reflection of what monitoring the progress of our students over a period of time can do and using that to drive our instruction. We're just not seeing the results. The importance of using some sort of progress monitoring system or a plan to guide instruction. I think it's a difference in perception of teaching as a career versus teaching as a job (Focus Group 1)

Participants identified the need for professional development as an obstacle in meeting the educator's progress monitoring needs.

I don't think there has been that much professional development on how to consistently administer progress monitoring. Like, when I do it and how it looks the same in my room as it does in your room. Maybe we should get some training and get...a little PD or something...what does it really mean? (Focus Group 1)

You've got this curriculum map you have to follow...all these other pieces, but...progress monitoring...that doesn't seem as important. We all know it's important...but we haven't really been shown...I think...they just don't have a mindset of how to use it. Especially in the secondary, it's all about the content. (Focus Group 2)

The sub-theme "cultural shift" was identified as a challenge to the fidelity of progress monitoring. The lack of connectivity to progress monitoring was recognized as an age factor amongst teachers, the relevance of assessments, and the lack of trust between teachers.

So, in the past 5 years we've had such a huge change of our staff. We have a lot of staff that lived through that No Child Left Behind era. Where data was driving everything that we did. So, we have a lot of new staff in our district that have no idea...the importance of data and how it can be used to drive our instruction. I think as a whole we have a lot of new teachers that come in and see education and being an educator as a job, not as a

profession. In the past, we did what it took to get our kids where they need to be. Now it seems to be somebody else's responsibility. (Focus Group 1)

It's just a huge cultural shift in our district as a whole as staff have transitioned out and others have moved on. I think our assistant superintendent said it best when she commented on the fact that our teachers have no idea what it's like to live through what we've lived through with the data and to see the growth. I think when we were going through No Child Left Behind and we were progress monitoring on a daily basis...at one point, we were daily assessing students' skills and documenting them. I had charts and at one point I remember feeling, "Oh my gosh, it does make a difference." Because you start to see that growth. Teachers have not lived with sitting down with a page full of data and going through and highlighting it and coding and figuring it out. (Focus Group 1)

Participants also shared their belief that a deficiency in collaboration hindered the culture of progress monitoring.

I think that the culture...is a lack of open, real communication. Even within departments...you should absolutely be collaborating. That lack of openness is what was keeping quite a few of us from moving forward and really helping students grow. Because we're not personally growing, we're not willing to be open...we don't have that culture of openness and support for each other. Reflecting teacher to teacher, reflecting on strengths, and reflecting on the areas that are of need at that time. (Focus Group 1)

## **Summary**

Findings of the study were presented through a qualitative analysis of seven participant interviews, three focus groups, and a summary of the demographic survey that describes teacher perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. Specifically, findings from the interview protocol were shared in three sections that expounded on the four themes that emerged from the data. These themes included: effective tools for assessments, teacher buy-in, collecting and using data, and students understanding of progress monitoring and longitudinal assessments systems. Within these themes, a continued

disaggregation of the data was identified as 13 sub-themes. Findings from the focus groups were shared through three identified themes that emerged from the data. These themes included: recognizing obstacles, understanding the need for progress monitoring, and needing professional development.

Research question one, (What are the teacher perceptions of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system?), was primarily answered through the findings from participant interview questions responses. It was found that participants' perceptions of progress monitoring varied from each other to the extent that some believed it was synonymous with grading assignments and not actually monitoring the progress of academic growth and students' skill mastery. This led to the teacher belief that there was a need for professional development, training, and open communication with other math teachers and educational support staff. Participants also identified a gap in student understanding of progress monitoring and the root purpose for longitudinal assessments. They also believed students should be a part of their own learning and progress monitoring.

Research question two, (What is the fidelity of implementation for interventions through progress monitoring?), was primarily answered through the findings from the focus group responses. Focus group participants had a shared belief that finding time and using the right tools was foundational in overcoming obstacles. Yet, recognized fear among classroom teachers as a hurdle that moved teachers from professional reflection (it's about data) to personal reflection (it's about me). Understanding progress monitoring went hand in hand with needing basic knowledge of longitudinal assessments. That included having an effective plan for the use of both, meaningful conversations, teacher accountability, and how all of those are used to drive instruction. In both the interview protocols and focus groups, two themes were shared.

Participants identified the importance of students owning their data and how younger age or lesser years of teaching correlated to lack of core knowledge of the problem of practice.

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the phenomenological study of teacher perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. The findings both meld and differ, and sometimes widely, as described among the seven teachers and focus group participants. With that consideration, Chapter V discusses the emerged themes from this study, recommendations for future studies, and implications for suggested changes in practice.

## Chapter V

### Introduction

Chapter five is separated into several descriptive sections. This study was directed by the two research questions presented to specific educators regarding their perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment. The goals of this study were to understand the encompassing perception of teachers regarding progress monitoring of students and the understanding educators have with fidelity of implementation of interventions. Overview of the problem of practice, the purpose statement and research questions, review of the methodology, and major findings are found within the summary. Following the summary is a discussion of the findings, recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research. Finally, this chapter ends with a reflection and conclusion from the study and the researcher.

### Study Summary

Overview of the problem of practice.

Implementing a viable means for progress monitoring that partners with a longitudinal assessment system into the instructional framework of the district will provide a partnership among staff to increase fidelity to the curriculum, data-drive conversations and increase student academic measures. Understanding teacher perception on progress monitoring and the fidelity of implementing an effective longitudinal assessment system is key to student improvement.

“Student progress monitoring is a practice that helps teachers use student performance data to continually evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions” (Safer and Fleishman, 2005, p. 81-83). Action steps for progress monitoring unfold data to show student growth that would support the goal of preparing students for college and career readiness as they graduate from high school. Effective systems in place allow for

continuous, observable means and continued collection of data. A reflective comparison of the findings from this study and the reviewed literature confirmed that implementation of an effective plan and solid fidelity of implementation of progress monitoring was imperative for student academic growth. This analysis is in alignment with Joseph (2014, p.86) when he stated that “Implementing a plan for ongoing collection and documentation of evidence of students’ performance in the classroom is a fundamental component of formative instructional practices, essential for ensuring student success”. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010, p. xxi) stated that, “Districts and schools that do not create a clear, simple system to implement specific plans at a specific time won’t be able to make real change at the level of the classroom.” The research literature was consistent in supporting the need for teacher understating and fidelity for progress monitoring to be successful. The teachers and support staff in this study shared a desire for a specific framework for understanding, training, and implementation of a progress monitoring plan. The collective findings from the mathematics teachers and the support staff of this study consistently resonated with the previously reviewed literature and are captured by Ysseldyke and Bolt when they stated that, “the overall goal of this type of instructional system is to frequently assess ongoing work, monitor individual progress, provide informative feedback to students, adapt instruction as needed, and ultimately improve student overall performance” (2007, p.455).

### **Purpose statement and research questions.**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. The study was specifically focused on understanding the perception of math teachers in high school located in a Midwestern town. The following two research questions informed this study:



1. What are the teacher perceptions of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system?
2. What is the fidelity of implementation for interventions through progress monitoring?

### **Review of methodology.**

A qualitative approach to this study was chosen and conducted to identify the perceptions of educators directly connected to progress monitoring and a longitudinal assessment system of mathematics. The approach that was followed was a pragmatic approach borrowing methods from the field of phenomenology. This approach was used by conducting interviews and focus groups to determine teacher perception and understanding of the current process and action of the progress monitoring structure. Personal interviews of a sampling of classroom teachers, a demographic survey of the classroom teachers, and an open-ended question presented to focus groups were used to collect data for this study. This data focused on progress monitoring and fidelity of implementation for interventions processed through progress monitoring. This was to gain an understanding of data that focused on progress monitoring and fidelity to interventions.

### **Major findings.**

Data collected from interviews and focus groups participants described their perception and understanding of progress monitoring by expounding on longitudinal assessment systems and the challenges of each. The interview protocol included 14 questions that tried to gain understanding and establish the perception of classroom teachers regarding progress monitoring as it relates to longitudinal assessment systems. Teachers within the mathematics department were given the opportunity to voluntarily participate in this study. From those, seven agreed to share their perception and understanding. The interviews ranged in time from 11:26 minutes to

34:42 minutes. Data collected from the interviews indicated that, effective tools for assessment, teacher buy-in, collecting and using data, and student understanding of progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems, was influential in affecting teacher participant perceptions. Effective tools for assessment brought to light that the teachers were not simply asking for an assessment tool to use. They desired to have an assessment tool that had a purpose more than a singular data point. Teachers also shared that it was imperative for the assessment tool to align to the curriculum. Some teachers identified specific assessments that had been used previously, but most of them just wanted one that did not change every few years or that provided appropriate data. Teacher buy-in came with the stipulation of understanding and training. Those interviewed shared that they desired to have a working knowledge of progress monitoring. What was keeping them from that was lack of understanding. Communication within the department was not around sharing student growth as much as they wanted. This was due to the department not comprehensively knowing the process. Beyond the understanding of the process, teachers expressed specific components of data collection and applicable use. Collecting meaningful data, making sense of it to provide reteach opportunities, and time to reteach was articulated. Overall, teachers shared that they indeed wanted to learn, practice, collaborate, and teach using the necessary tools for progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system.

Focus groups were given one open-ended question in which to dissect and respond. This question was asked in such a manner that tried to gain understanding and establish the perception of educational, support staff regarding progress monitoring and the biggest obstacles to its fidelity within the educational system. The focus groups responses ranged in time from 12:44 minutes to 23:09 minutes. Data collected from the focus groups also indicted that recognizing obstacles, understanding the impact of progress monitoring, and needing professional

development was influential in the responses provided by the focus group participants. Focus group participants shared that they believed teachers want to see students grow academically. Through focus group responses, they revealed having time and resources was hindering the progress monitoring process. They disclosed that they had also struggled with the understanding but received resources to gain that knowledge. Focus group participants believed that due to the lack of understanding, training and accountability of progress monitoring led to teachers being afraid to share data through conversations with other teachers and ultimately drive instruction. Suggestions to curb that fear and lack of knowledge was the need for professional development with an emphasis on progress monitoring. They believed that through this insight, a cultural shift of sharing, communicating, and collaborating amongst teachers would make strides toward eliminating hindering obstacles. These themes provided a structure for delving deeper into the participant responses that focused on research the research questions. These research questions established the foundation for the interview protocol questions and focus group question. The research questions were developed based upon the research objectives, the theoretical framework, and the methodology that was chosen for this particular study.

Prior to collecting data for this study, a review of literature exploring longitudinal assessment systems and progress monitoring was conducted. The current literature suggested that embedding progress monitoring in conjunction with a longitudinal assessment system into the instructional framework of the district provides a partnership among staff to increase fidelity to the curriculum, data-drive conversations and student academic measures. Outcomes from this type of monitoring will unfold data to show student growth that would support the goal of preparing students for college and career readiness as they graduate from high school. Themes derived from the interview protocol and focus groups are discussed below. A review of the

findings will show a web of connections that indicate a recognized need and want for progress monitoring along with the obstacles that have hindered the desired implementation. Participant and focus group quotes are used again in this chapter to support both analysis and discussions. Following the discussions are recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research. Finally, the chapter closes with concluding contemplations and reflections from the study.

***Interview: Effective tool for assessment.***

Findings from this study suggested that teachers understand the use and purpose for assessments, both interim and longitudinal. Yet, participants did not share the same positive opinion of them. In particular, Victor shared that:

I'm not a fan of them because I feel that a lot of times we take the thinking out and we concentrate on two or three main ideas and the students know those ideas and they can follow a recipe and do them rather than think for themselves.

Some participants believed that there needed to be an authenticity to each assessment and its alignment to the curriculum presented to the students. Paul shared:

I think that if they are well written, they can be useful to see if the student has really learned the concepts that are important. You try to make sure that the questions you are asking require more higher-level thinking, rather than just regurgitation of the material. So, these assessments, you kind of look and say okay, will they just get a surface knowledge or do they really understand the concepts so it's stuck with them...

***Interview: Teacher buy-in.***

Participants believed that a critical component to not having teacher buy-in for progress monitoring was that teachers simply did not understand how the process worked. Failure to understand the process showed that some teachers confused collecting grades on assignments with monitoring the progress of student growth over a period of time.

I do grades and I compare them from year to year and...see if we are on track if it's taking longer, shorter to see if students come in better prepared or further behind...to see

how well the students are comprehending things or remembering things from year to year. (Patty)

I mean, when you say progress monitoring that's a lot of things. I mean, we've got obviously, this year we're using Canvas to do grades. I mean that's one form of progress monitoring and the other thing is I have access to that same information. I am constantly looking to see who has done what to monitor. You know, what do you need to retake, do you need to finish something that you haven't completed, those types of things. (Eugene)

All of the participants agreed that there was a need for professional development specific to progress monitoring in preparation for longitudinal assessments. However, the participants did not all agree on who provided the support and training. Some believed that it was a shared obligation between the teachers, while others believed that it should come from support personnel.

Yes, I think that would be lovely to understand just why we're doing what we're doing. How is it trickling down to us and the like what we do, how does it trickle back up...just seeing the whole picture and if that was communicated better. (Sue)

I don't really know that there are, I might be able to get some support from our instructional coaches, but so far, I have not been assisted when I requested help. I ended up finding help from other people instead...they are very involved with a lot of different things and it's just too much stuff on their plate...I usually get help from someone else instead of waiting. (Victor)

***Interview: Collecting and using data.***

The gift of time was key to the findings in this theme. Having time to collect student data and then opportunities to reteach and monitor student growth was key. The process of collecting the data and making sense of it was a want and concern.

I think it is just really hard with the time constraints that we have, and topics we need to cover. So, if we have the time to like do more...and checking, then we can go back...if the kids aren't understanding you still have to move on. It's not necessarily a district policy, or a building policy, or department policy. It's more like it's an unstated, it's like

unwritten policy, like unwritten rules that we need to cover so much material to prepare them for the next years' math class. (Joan)

I do know one thing that I have kind of come around on in my teaching career. It is the notion of retaking tests...it was like, well, you know you really need to learn it by the deadline because life has deadlines and things like that...if you think about some of the assessments...like the bar exam for lawyers...even doctors get another shot at their medical boards. ACT allows you to do a retake. So, if a student didn't get it the first time...Maybe it's worth it if we get them to go back and learn the material and come back and show, I've got it now, I know what I'm doing now; then that's worth it. (Eugene)

In connection with collecting and making sense of the data, a shared concern was not getting the results in time to make a difference in student learning. If the results were received too late, then it diminished the meaningfulness of the data. Students end the school year with whatever data they may or may not have. Teachers end the school year sometimes without data. Then in the fall, a new set of students arrive, and the data does not truly pertain to them. This led to a frustration that was expressed by one participant.

...it was like well you know you really need to learn it by the deadline because life has deadlines and things like that...if you think about some of the assessments...like the bar exam for lawyers...even doctors get another shot at their medical boards, ACT allows you to do a retake. So, if a student didn't get it the first time...Maybe it's worth it if we get them to go back and learn the material and come back and show, I've got it now, I know what I'm doing now; then that's worth it. (Joan)

***Interview: Student understanding of progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems.***

Outside of the participants understanding of a progress monitoring system, some believed that students were a vital part to the process. Participants deemed it valuable when students owned their own learning, set goals for improvement, and obtained tools to self-monitor growth.

I really like...that idea of bringing the student into conversation of where they're trying to go and how can we help them...be more of a team player with the students rather than us against them trying to force information at them. (Sue)

I think we've got to figure out a way to make it valuable to them...where they are wanting to monitor all the time...because if it has value to them, they will check and they will do a lot of the monitoring...it's not pushing the information out to them, it's them checking it on their own. If we can get the students to do that, that would be great.  
(Eugene)

I think that's just an important thing for the students to understand that it's important for them to learn how to monitor their own progress...really, it's the students themselves that have to take ownership of that...(Paul)

As stated in Chapter IV, a couple of the participants could not answer some of the interview questions, or responded with a simple, "no". Demographic data aligned those two participants with the youngest in age and newest to the profession. One particular participant shared her belief in student awareness of progress monitoring and purpose for assessments.

I was thinking back to my high school and I'll let you know I was not cognitively aware that we were taking assessments...you are in like an auditorium...I never knew that that's what we were doing. I had no clue. No one explained it to me...do they even know why they are taking the assessments?

...like my generation of teachers came from this environment...what they are taking...why are they taking it...we're now teachers and we're doing the same thing to our students. Like repeating the cycle or just uncertainty of what is happening. (Sue)

Similarly, this same sub-theme was identified by the focus groups as a recommendation for practice, which will be shared below.

***Focus Group: Recognizing obstacles.***

Participants identified time, resources and concerns of safety and fear as sub-themes. Similar to a sub-theme identified in the interviews, time was recognized by all three focus groups. However, the focus groups separated the thought of time even or intricately by

identifying quality of time, consuming of time, and finding the time as additional specific areas of importance.

It's like a miscalculation of time like personally, and sometimes systemically. Yeah, the data can lead you to be more effective and therefore you're not wasting as much time. So, whereas a lot of teachers they see the need for data. They see the need for monitoring how students are doing, but seeing the value like, if I've put this much time into assessing, what's that going to get me for what we're going to be teaching...what's the outcome...what's the return on that investment of time? I see that teachers not wanting to just spend that time assessing even though that can be valuable data to know where students are at. It seems like a lot of time to them...they don't have that much time per day...so I don't have time to go back and reteach those things.

Common resources and quality resources were identified with a parallel to the interview responses that similarly identified having the right tools to appropriately monitor progress. The focus group participants recognized this as an obstacle to fidelity. Two groups specifically responded with:

I think an obstacle we face on a regular basis is quality of resources used to progress monitor students...having common resources available...understanding the purpose. (Focus Group 1)

The tools of progress monitoring might be the obstacle too, because they don't have the right tools. (Focus group 2)

Safety and fear were only identified by the focus groups, nonetheless, the lack of connectedness made sense in that the interview participants may not want to admit that fear of any sort was influential in not collecting data and monitoring progress of students.

There is a lot of fear that goes into the progress monitoring as well. We have our PLCs that we claim are support groups for our staff members, but when you're sitting in the middle of a PLC talking about your progress monitoring data and you happen to be the one on the very low end, that's very intimidating. It's not a safe environment. Those feelings of inadequacy and judgement, fear of judgment. Often times it turns into a reflection, a personal reflection versus a professional reflection on what I'm doing in the



classroom. Because if teachers aren't comfortable asking questions and sharing where their strengths are and also where their areas of need are, we're not going to get anywhere.

***Focus Group: Understanding the impact of progress monitoring.***

All three groups believed that teachers having a solid understanding of progress monitoring could eliminate the choice some teachers make to not 'do it', or even talk about the process with colleagues. Furthermore, the focus group participants believed that to truly understand the full scope of progress monitoring, teachers needed to have a defined explanation of progress monitoring, how to use the data that is actually collected, and how said data could be used for conversation and accountability.

They may do it and then not do anything with it, and that's what I see a lot. I think we're away from using data-based progress monitoring to drive our instruction on a regular basis. (Focus Group 2)

Some of the obstacles that teachers have with progress monitoring is their own thinking about how, what are they really assessing, what are they really monitoring. (Focus Group 2)

I think that teachers do not understand how progress monitoring directly affects their instruction. It leads to misinformation or maybe negative feelings and that gets in the way of them actually doing progress monitoring. (Focus Group 1)

You've got to see where they begin, where they end, and then what's the plan. They want usable data...but in terms of how we structure it as a teacher every day, I don't think I was ever shown that. Like, nobody had philosophical conversations about just how to do that. Is it going to give me usable data? Is it going to give me something that...actually helps my students? (Focus Group 2)

...if they understood how to and maybe I should say, if we understood how to better have meaningful conversations about the results of progress monitoring, assessment, and activities then maybe those real conversations would translate into the specific changes and instruction. That lack of openness is what's keeping quite a few of us from moving forward and really helping students grow. (Focus Group 1)

Understanding the impact of progress monitoring was not only recognized by focus group participants as an obstacle for teachers, it was also recognized as an obstacle for students. The focus groups identified this obstacle as a partnership between the educator and the students they progress monitored.

Putting that data in the hands of the kids as well...along the way so that they can chat themselves. How do they relate...how could they use that to solve a problem and find something out? It's about them researching and finding this information and pushing themselves to think deeper and using those skills. (Focus Group 2)

***Focus Group: Needing professional development.***

The perception of these participants was that there was not a consistent plan for progress monitoring. They also believed that building and district culture had changed over time which inherently brought upon the obstacle of unpredictability as well as a need for specific professional development of how progress monitoring was necessary to meet the needs of students.

I think that defining and setting the schedules and defining the time, figuring out...when, how, where, how often. That's going to be the only way to really make it better...to see the breakdown of what they're missing. (Focus Group 3)

It's just a huge cultural shift in our district as a whole as staff have transitioned out and others have moved on. In the past, we did what it took to get our kids where they need to be. Now it seems to be somebody else's responsibility. I think that the culture...is a lack of open, real communication. Even within departments...you should absolutely be collaborating. That lack of openness is what's keeping quite a few of us from moving forward and really helping students grow. Because we're not personally growing, we're not willing to be open...we don't have that culture of openness and support for each other. Reflecting teacher to teacher, reflecting on strengths, and reflecting on the areas that are of need at that time. (Focus Group 1)

Responses from interview and focus group participants led to further consideration of recommendations for practice and future research.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

### **Educational staff training.**

Participants in this study shared that they were not provided the necessary training or professional development to understanding progress monitoring. This lack of training led to the potential confusion that some the teachers had when they confused grading assignments, keeping record of grades, and checking to see which students had completed work and which students had not. Safer and Fleischman (2005), expressed that school success is defined as ensuring achievement for every student. To reach this, educators need tools to help the identify students who are at risk academically and adjust instructional strategies to better meet these students' needs.

From the demographic survey, six of the seven teachers responded that they had a moderate to high level of experience of progress monitoring. Of those six, three, who were all male, responded that they had a high level of experience, yet glaringly one of those high-level participants continually confused collecting and keeping grades on assignments with monitoring progress of students. Shores and Chester (2009) stressed the district team should develop an action plan that prioritizes long-term and short-term goals. Based on information obtained, the plan should include a workable and realistic time frame. It should also allow for refinement and customization at each school while maintaining consistent expectations and policies throughout the district. Providing specific, continual training conveys to teachers that wholly understanding progress monitoring, recognizing student academic growth, and ongoing preparation for longitudinal assessments is essential.

### **Fidelity of implementation to district initiatives.**

The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities published an article (2006) that identified important elements of accountability measures of implementation. Ensuring fidelity of implementation integrates the following three components of a school:

1. Instructional tools and strategies
2. Student achievement
3. Professional development

The article continues on by stating that “integration cannot occur if teachers are threatened by the system of observation and evaluation that will accompany this process. We emphasize that schools should have the opportunity to implement a system of fidelity checks within a collaborative and positive environment that promotes teacher improvement.” This speaks directly to the fear and safety sub-theme that emerged from the focus group discussions.

Conners (2000) shares in her book *If You Don't feed the Teachers They Eat the Students!* that a safe environment is nurtured by “leaders who care about people make certain that all who enter the school building are safe and secure...the physical, academic, organizational, and affective environments is people-friendly and protected” (p. 80). According to Jackson, Wenk Gotwalls, and Tarasawa (2017, p. 53), assessment has become a toxic word...yet assessment practices represent a critically important part of every school principal's job. The teachers need to understand the encompassing approach to progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system, to hold fidelity to implementation of the process, and to collaborate with colleagues without existing in fear and lack of safety by administration and other teachers. The framework for that process all begins with the building principal.

### **School leader awareness and influence.**

School leaders have an incredible task that mandates that they are aware of all the goings-on within the school building. This awareness reduces the amount of surprises and creates an environment of understanding and accountability. Chand states (2017), “far too often, leaders and their teams move instantly from a concept to the tactical details, without giving thought to the strategic concerns of the need, systems, and structure...systems must continually adapt to the needs and opportunities of the moment. Static systems gradually lose relevance, but dynamic systems anticipate evolving needs” (p. 14). According to Michael Fullen (2010), the most important factor in moving schools forward is that the principal is also a learner. Developing a learning environment where all students have an opportunity to learn is a key expectation of a school leader. In addition to student learning, Knight expressed that principals will be more effective if they walk the talk by being the first learner in the school (2011). Recognizing crucial areas of conditions, as reported by Wallace and Paulson (2003, p. 197), identified “alterable conditions likely to have direct effects on students, and to inquire about the nature and strength of the relationship between them and the leadership”. Specifically, the structural elements of a school system that rely on the involvement of school leadership are student engagement, instructional services, and policies and procedures.

### **Student engagement.**

According to Wallace and Paulson (2003), “If student engagement is as important a variable as we argue it is...a comprehensive understanding of the avenues through which leadership influences it is called for” (p. 199). Igniting student learning begins with the building leader engaging teachers in professional learning that in turn ignites the teachers to provide sound instruction in the classroom. That leader influence moves the teachers from receivers to

givers. Trickle down to the classroom, the teacher influence moves the students from receivers to ones who discover what is missing from their studying that resulted in gaps in their knowledge (Willis, 2006)

### **Instructional services and improvement.**

Curriculum, instruction and assessment systems, according to Wellman and Lipton (2004) are the center of what schools do. The work in this arena is ongoing and never ending. The research participants reflected on this thought but wanted dialogue and direction for a clearer understanding. This lack of understanding, training and follow through created the problem of practice driving this study. Wellman and Lipton (2004) continued by stating that alignment of these cultural arenas is a process, not a task. It is through dialogue and discussion organized around student information that professionals calibrate their practices on common standards. The work of alignment relies upon the practices of collaborative inquiry when student assessments are connected to important curricular outcomes and feedback loops are developed for linking instructional practices to that curriculum. Jim Knight (2011) expressed that if a principal does not vocally, symbolically, and authentically stress the importance of instructional improvement, then it most likely won't happen. This great responsibility of a school leader cannot be taken lightly. Knight (2011) provides a list of four capacities that principals should at least have. They are:

1. A deep understanding of the teaching practices described in the school improvement plan.
2. A precise understanding of what teaching looks like when teachers use the practices effectively.
3. A complete knowledge of how the school's various professional learning process (workshops, teams, coaching) can help each teacher achieve mastery of the practices described in the plan.
4. The emotional intelligence to guide teachers to use the professional learning supports successfully.

It must be understood that instructional improvement is not an option. Recent research (Jackson, Wenk, Gotwalls, and Tarasawa, 2017) suggests that both principals and teachers find many types of assessments useful. Yet, while more than 90 percent of the teachers say they use data to adjust instructional strategies, nearly 30 percent did not feel prepared to interpret results. These findings suggest that teachers need support to consistently and effectively use assessment to improve instruction and support student learning. This support from the building leader is crucial for an effective learning and assessment environment. Principals need to provide additional feedback on teaching practice to support teachers' use of assessment for learning (Jackson, Wenk, Gotwalls, and Tarasawa, 2017).

### **Policies and procedures.**

Principals communicating building policies and procedures aids in creating an environment of open dialogue. According to Lambert (2003), school practices last longer when they are enacted in to policy. The move from practice to policy cannot just be a hand-in-the-air vote. It has to be birthed from recognizing the problem, community exploration between the building leadership and the teaching staff, then developing a plan, or casting vision, that unfolds into a positive resolution. Chand (2017), shares that “casting vision is more than *what*; it must also include a clear and powerful *why* of the people involved will lack passion and the plans will be stiff and rote” (p. 15). This need was evidenced in the interviews and focus groups when they described a need to understand why progress monitoring and fidelity to implementation was important. Building leaders that provide this vision and understanding will have community and not a group of small islands working individual of each other.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

In Chapter II, literature was reviewed that included research and discussions of the studied phenomenon. The literature reinforced the findings in the study that a fundamental component of this strong and effective instructional practices is that a plan must be in place for collecting student performance data. Progress monitoring is such a tool, used appropriately, that affords educators to collect formative data, determine the academic needs of each student, and a plan for student growth. The literature review also reinforced that schools that did not have a system in place to monitor academic growth would potentially produce students who were not college and career ready once they exited high school.

Gaps in the reviewed literature were in the areas of student perception and understanding, a cross-comparison of academic disciplines, and across grade levels (elementary to secondary). In theory, it makes sense that the more knowledge that a person has regarding their educational gaps, the more they could potentially grow. Enabling students to understand and own their learning could spark an interest in goal setting, goal reaching, and goal surpassing for academic growth.

As in the literature review, there was a preponderance of data regarding elementary level classrooms or special education programs. However, there was very little research on secondary classrooms to be found. The current study included mathematics teachers from a small Midwest school district. Future research could be conducted on secondary student perception and academic growth. This same study could be conducted with a larger sample size of teachers, a different content area, across multiple disciplines, or across multiple high schools regarding progress monitoring and best practices reinforcing student growth.



### **Grade-level comparisons of progress monitoring.**

Focus group participants compared progress monitoring between elementary and secondary classrooms. This issue was not addressed in literature. Yet, there seemed to be significantly more research on teachers and students at the elementary level and in classrooms dedicated to special education than that of secondary teachers and students. The significance of this was apparent to me as a researcher both in the district that I am employed as well as the district in which I reside. There appears to be more communication with parents about student growth, among learning teams regarding student progress, and students knowing their growth goals. This area would benefit from further research to identify the reasons behind that lack of communication.

### **Progress monitoring between core disciplines.**

In addition to studies on grade-level comparisons, I believe that an area for further research would be a comparison of progress monitoring between core disciplines. With mathematics being mostly numerically driven, is the process easier or harder to monitor academic growth amongst students? If the same sampling of students were used, over time, and an accurate understanding of progress monitoring was made, would there be evidence to show one discipline was more straightforward? This suggestion was made by a participant in a focus group. She had heard a complaint from teachers of English language arts comparing themselves to teachers of mathematics, wondering if mathematics was easier to progress monitor.

### **Student perceptions of progress monitoring.**

This study has promoted several ideas for further research in examining student perception of progress monitoring. As evidenced by some participants, student ownership was deemed an important component of progress monitoring. It was compelling that some of the

participants lived through a period of time that high-stakes state testing and longitudinal assessments was on some sort of furlough. That gap produced educators who had no progress monitoring connection as students let alone teachers. Thus, formative instructional practices involve teachers and students engaging in the process of gathering and responding to evidence of learning (Pearson & Battelle for Kids, 2012; Joseph et al., 2014). Confirmed through the findings of this study, it is of note that participants wanted students to understand the process, but either were not doing it or did not know how to include students.

### **Reflection**

Throughout this study, I took different opportunities to reflect on a-ha moments that arose. As an educator who lived through the years of NCLB and the continual practice of progress monitoring, I had not made the connection until this study that there was a generation of new educators who have not lived through that time, while in secondary education. There were gap years in the state of Kansas in which there was not a state-wide summative assessment, and district-wide longitudinal assessments were not fully adopted. Since there was not a continual conversation of progress monitoring, there was not an awareness of this gap among teachers. There was also not an awareness that some educators misconstrued progress monitoring with assignment completion and mastery.

Longitudinal assessments within the district of study also changed throughout the duration of this study. That period of time was less than four years. That is evidence that continual conversation and professional development is imperative for students and staff. It is an assessment and monitoring vernacular that must be spoken and understood by all stakeholders.

Safety and fear was the sub-theme that struck the biggest cord with me as a researcher. As educators, we drive home the importance that students must have a safe learning

environment. I hold firm that teachers must feel safe as well. Fear and safety could potentially lead to so many additional issues, such as: fabricating student data, lack of communication amongst staff, lack of teacher and student participation, and ultimately non-renewal of a teachers' contract.

Completing this study in the district that I attended as a student was fascinating, challenging, and rewarding. The struggle is real, but passion for student learning must outweigh the work that it takes to monitor student learning. This study was personal on many levels. First, I grew up in this area. I taught in this area and saw the efforts that teachers could make to move students who had gaps in their learning to mastery of concepts. Since I have witnessed that, my desire to see that movement in progress monitoring is great. Second, making changes to impact student growth is not optional. Reviewing curriculum maps, content structure, classroom differentiation of instruction must be an ongoing conversation and action. Ultimately, providing training through differentiating instruction for expanded staff performance, monitoring student growth for increased academic success, and school leaders having a strong pulse on the school initiatives and culture only serves to build a stronger school structure. Once growth is observed and success is tasted by staff and students, the increase in momentum can lead to a cultural shift in the everyday life of the school building. At the end of the day, everything we do in education must circle back to what is best for kids.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perception and understanding of progress monitoring throughout a longitudinal assessment system. The focus of the study was to understand the perception of math teachers in high school located in a Midwestern town. The goals of this study were to understand the encompassing

perception of teachers regarding progress monitoring of students and the understanding educators have with fidelity of implementation of interventions.

This study was conducted to identify the perceptions of educators directly connected to progress monitoring and a longitudinal assessment system of mathematics. Data were collected from participant responses through interviews and focus groups. Interview respondents participated in a closed-door, face-to-face interview with the researcher. The interview protocol included 14 questions that tried to gain understanding and establish the perception of classroom teachers regarding progress monitoring as it relates to longitudinal assessment systems. The interview protocol participants also answered questions in a demographic survey. The survey asked 11 questions in order to collect specific demographic data to provide a concise snapshot of each individual teacher and how that potentially may impact their perception and understanding of the problem of practice. This survey was conducted in a separate setting from the interview and the researcher was not present. From the interviews, four major themes emerged. The major themes are: effective tools for assessment, teacher buy-in, collecting and using data, and student understanding of progress monitoring and longitudinal assessment systems. From these four themes, 13 sub-themes were derived.

For the purpose of this study, there were three separate focus groups. Two of the groups had three participants and one group had two participants. Each focus group participant took part in a closed door, small group setting that concentrated on a single, open-ended question. The open-ended question was presented by the researcher. This question was asked in such a manner that tried to gain understanding and establish the perception of educational, support staff regarding progress monitoring and the biggest obstacles to its fidelity within the educational system. Analysis of the themes provided captured a collage of personal responses from

participants of the focus groups and are presented below. The collective data is presented by group and not individual participants. Three major themes were derived from the codes with nine sub-themes. The major themes are: recognizing obstacles, understanding the impact of progress monitoring, and needing professional development.

Participants' shared perceptions of progress monitoring that varied from each other to the extent that some believed it was synonymous with grading assignments and not actually monitoring the progress of academic growth and students' skill mastery. This led to the teacher belief that there was a need for professional development, training and open communication with other math teachers and educational support staff. Participants also identified a gap in student understanding of progress monitoring and the root purpose for longitudinal assessments. They also believed students should be a part of their own learning and progress monitoring. Focus group participants had a shared belief that finding time and using the right tools was foundational in overcoming obstacles. Yet, they also recognized fear among classroom teachers as a hurdle that moved teachers from professional reflection (it's about data) to personal reflection (it's about me). Understanding progress monitoring went hand in hand with needing basic knowledge of longitudinal assessments.

The shared perceptions in this study presented an avenue for continued conversation within the district of study and other educational communities conversations that must continue until students are making adequate growth. "Teachers who begin to use a progress monitoring system will produce data showing that some students are not making acceptable progress. Teachers must have support (in the line of consultation or professional development) that prepares them to respond in this situation" (Foegen and Stecker, 2009, p. 6). When they shared responsibility of understanding progress monitoring and the fidelity of implementation is

commonplace amongst stakeholders, then will we see students' progress towards the ultimate goal of being college and/or career ready met.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. IRB Approval



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

April 28, 2016

#### MEMORANDUM

TO: Rena Duewel  
John Pijanowski

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-03-654

Protocol Title: *Teacher Perception and their Understanding of Progress Monitoring throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 04/28/2016 Expiration Date: 04/21/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 30 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

Appendix B. IRB Project Continuation



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

September 11, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rena Duewel  
John Pijanowski

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: PROJECT CONTINUATION

IRB Protocol #: 1709049043 (previously 16-03-654)

Protocol Title: *Teacher Perception and their Understanding of Progress Monitoring throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Previous Approval Period: Start Date: 04/28/2016 Expiration Date: 04/21/2017

New Approval Period: Start Date: 09/08/2017 Expiration Date: 09/07/2018

Your request to extend the referenced protocol has been approved by the IRB. If at the end of this period you wish to continue the project, you must submit a request using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. Failure to obtain approval for a continuation on or prior to this new expiration date will result in termination of the protocol and you will be required to submit a new protocol to the IRB before continuing the project. Data collected past the protocol expiration date may need to be eliminated from the dataset should you wish to publish. Only data collected under a currently approved protocol can be certified by the IRB for any purpose.

**This protocol is closed to enrollment.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling participants, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

## Appendix C. IRB Expedited Approval



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**To:** Rena Audrey Duewel  
**From:** Douglas James Adams, Chair  
IRB Committee  
**Date:** 09/10/2018  
**Action:** **Expedited Approval**  
**Action Date:** 09/07/2018  
**Protocol #:** 1709049043R002  
**Study Title:** Teacher Perception and their Understanding of Progress Monitoring throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System  
**Expiration Date:** 09/07/2019  
**Last Approval Date:** 09/08/2018

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

**Adverse Events:** Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: John C Pijanowski, Investigator

Appendix D. Interview Protocol

**Interview Protocol**

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Preliminary Script:** “This is [interviewer’s name **Rena Duewel**]. Today’s is [day and date \_\_\_\_\_]. It is \_\_\_\_\_ o’clock, and I am here in [location \_\_\_\_\_] with [name of interviewee \_\_\_\_\_], a [title **High School Mathematics Teacher**] in the [institution or System **Turner Unified School District**]. We’ll be discussing [Teacher Perception and Their Understanding of Progress Monitoring Throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System]

1. What has been your experience with progress monitoring?

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2. What is your perception of progress monitoring?

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3. What is your experience of longitudinal assessment systems?

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Appendix D. Interview Protocol

4. What is your perception of longitudinal assessment systems?

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5. What supports are currently in place to utilize an effective progress monitoring process?

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6. What challenges do you foresee in progress monitoring throughout an effective longitudinal assessment system?

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7. What is the greatest challenge in this district to implementing an effective progress monitoring process?

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8. What is the greatest challenge in this district to implementing an effective longitudinal assessment system?

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Appendix D. Interview Protocol

9. Have you experienced or observed effective longitudinal assessments systems in other districts?

a. How was that structure similar?

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b. How was that structure different?

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c. What components would you consider adopting?

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10. Have you experienced or observed an effective progress monitoring process in other districts?

a. How was that structure similar?

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b. How was that structure different?

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c. What components would you consider adopting?

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11. How could a progress monitoring process, in this district, be different or unique from other districts?

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12. What would professional learning and training encompass in preparation for an effective progress monitoring system?

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Appendix D. Interview Protocol

13. What would professional learning and training encompass in preparation for an effective longitudinal assessment system?

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14. Is there anything I haven't yet asked you that you think would help me better understand the process of a longitudinal assessment system in this district?

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Appendix E. Demographic Survey Questions

*Structured Survey Data – Teacher Demographics*

Teacher Name	Age	Gender	Years in District	Years in Education	Ethnicity	Level of Progress Monitoring Experience	Highest Degree Earned	Number of Courses	Number of Students
Teacher #1									
Teacher #2									
Teacher #3									
Teacher #4									
Teacher #5									
Teacher #6									
Teacher #7									
Teacher #8									
Teacher #9									
Teacher #10									
Teacher #11									
Teacher #12									
Teacher #13									
Teacher #14									
Teacher #15									
Teacher #16									
Teacher #17									
Teacher #18									
Teacher #19									
Teacher #20									

Appendix F. Focus Group Question

**Teacher Perception and Their Understanding of Progress Monitoring Throughout a Longitudinal Assessment System**

Focus Group Open-Ended Question

1. What do you see as the biggest obstacles of fidelity to progress monitoring?